

The Failure of the ‘Playing Victim’ Strategy in Gaining Support: A Study of the 2024 Presidential Election in Indonesia

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Abstract

This article examines the dynamics of the 2024 Presidential Election in Indonesia. This study aims to understand how presidential candidates are portrayed as victims of oppression caused by the cruelty of the ruling powers, which favor the candidate pair Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka. The main question posed in this study is why the victimization scenario needs to be implemented. The primary reason is that the candidate pairs Anies Rasyid Baswedan and Muhaimin Iskandar, and Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfudz MD, did not receive support from President Jokowi. In order to gain the public's favor, these two pairs created a narrative of being victims of the ruling powers to garner electoral support. This research uses a qualitative method with a case study approach, aiming to gain a deeper understanding of the electoral experience in Indonesia, especially after the collapse of the New Order regime. We found that the construction of how to gain electoral support amidst the government's lack of neutrality involves the politicization of social assistance, manipulation of legal regulations, and other forms of politicization that create a backlash to gain sympathy from voters in the 2024 presidential election. However, the facts show that the efforts to gain sympathy from voters in the 2024 presidential election have failed.

Keywords: Playing the Victim; Electoral Democracy; Presidential Election; Elections in Indonesia

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Introduction

This study explores the general development of democracy in Indonesia by examining various important political issues both before and after the 2024 election. There are at least two important issues, the first regarding the election actors themselves: presidential candidates and public support for presidential candidate actors. It is very common for presidential candidates to implement various strategies before an election is held, including image politics, campaigns to attract sympathy from voters, and strategies to make themselves victims. This study focuses primarily on examining campaign practices by presidential candidates and examining the construction of victimhood by presidential candidates. In various studies that have been collected from an assortment of previous research, this study is interesting, especially for political scholars in Indonesia.

There are many political studies on the game of being a victim; for example, Jacoby (2015) explained that being a victim as a result of current violent conflicts, such as violence between Israel and Palestine, Russia-Ukraine, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Sierra Leone, or Rwanda, is constructed based on identity complaints from the process of a power struggle, while the boundaries between victims and perpetrators are blurred by the ongoing cycle of hostility and retribution. When victims are subsumed into broader political campaigns, it is almost impossible to separate them from political issues. Myler's (2017) study detailed victims from a psychological perspective. Victimization is a classic stance in counseling, psychotherapy, and welfare. In his paper, Myler explored a patient on the psychotherapy theater stage in acting out his position as a victim. This

action strove to seek attention, obtain help, and justify saving. Another explanation in research by Chang, Mukherjee, and Coppel (2020) revealed that social media activists in India have become victims of misinformation and fake news, almost not recognizing themselves as victims, although some social media users recognize themselves as victims of the dissemination of content that is considered new. It is not realized by others that the distribution of content carried out by politicians is deliberate to gain support for the victims themselves. In fact, the perception of being a victim lies in looking for the victim.

This article does not examine real victims of incidents such as child abuse, crime, or social injustice but rather focuses on perceived victims. We have found examples of various situations in presidential election campaigns in Indonesia. As reviewed by Christie (1977) and Madlingozi (2010), we have found the most problematic variants in the campaigns in Northern Ireland, namely that victims' voices can be managed, co-opted, and instrumentalized for politicians' political purposes who claim to speak 'on behalf of' the victims. Lawther (2020) considered the intersection between politics and the construction of victimhood, the conduct of elections or vote acquisitions, and the agency of victims used to restore the truth as a campaign platform.

The phenomenon of presidential election campaigns being perceived as "victims" has occurred in parts of the world and has even become an important study in modern politics. Horwitz (2018) found that "Victimhood has become one of the most important identity positions in American politics." Becoming a

victim was not an accident. For example, one Republican strategist observed, 'At Trump's winning team rallies, the heart of the event was the idea of collective victimization. Trump reveled in it, consistently portraying himself as a victim of his media and political opponents' (Rucker, 2019).

Scholars worldwide have also contributed knowledge about the "victim game." For instance, a study on the perception of being a political victim in America conducted by Armaly and Enders (2021) revealed that the perception of being a victim can make someone feel better about their political and social status and guide the formation of attitudes toward political objects that may exacerbate or ameliorate feelings of victimization (e.g., certain policies have asymmetric impacts on citizens and political candidates).

An important question that needs to be addressed in this study is why presidential candidates play themselves as victims. One reason for this is seeking attention, asking for a sympathetic response from the public, and hoping for support from voters. However, implementing a strategy such as this may not always be successful in winning voters' sympathy. In the 2024 presidential election in Indonesia, the scenario of being a victim did not receive votes. The opposite happened due to continuous attacks on the government, which triggered voters to punish these candidates and turn to the choices of candidates that were supported by the government.

Finally, we had to determine the focus of the theme in this study, which was the failure to play "victim" politics in the 2024 presidential election with the locus of study in Indonesia. This study will certainly examine a lot about

victimhood as a perception and how its construction will be reviewed comprehensively, so that we can scientifically describe the construction of "being a victim" in all its variants. Whether "becoming a victim" is a deliberate effort of an election campaign process to get support from voters, and who becomes a victim in this game has not been widely studied by political scientists in Indonesia. This study provides a new model for future presidential election campaigns.

Playing the Victim Theory

"Being a victim" is the way political actors carry out political communication to the public. They wanted to receive public attention and assessments. Being a victim seems to describe a fact; even though the facts do not describe the actual reality, being a victim is just a game. This study depicts various political perspectives. We want to put forth a theory that was discovered by William Stephenson, namely, Game Theory. This theory is closely related to political communication because according to him, politics is nothing more than a game. In other words, politics is a game, image-building, and thought-provoking, which can not only be fun but also surprise (1967). As games, those who play are free to determine the direction of the game, and in the context of the game, certain parties feel that what is being played is not the actual reality of life (Huizinga, 1955).

Claiming to be a victim or being created to be a victim can, of course, cause people to try to save the victim and even become angry with those who act as perpetrators. This, in turn, can cause anger as an expression of emotion so that in the public's perception, people who are persecuted, both sociologically and

psychologically, receive special attention from the public. Jacoby (2015), in his study on the theme of “being a victim,” attempted to place it as a political theory. He strove to differentiate between victimization as an act of harm committed against a person or group and victimization as a form of collective identity based on loss. He then divided it into five stages, starting from the act of becoming a victim to recognizing a victim-based identity: (1) structural conduciveness, (2) political awareness, (3) ideological similarity, (4) political mobilization, and (5) political recognition.

Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research method using a case study approach. The choice of this approach was based on the influence of the perspective of society in general in Indonesia towards playing the victim case in the post-reform direct presidential election. We found facts about playing the victim starting with the presidential candidate Susilo Bambang Yudoyono in the 2004 election, and found facts about the dynamics of local politics in Central Java Province, where Joko Widodo as the mayor of Solo in 2011 had been ostracized by his superior Bibit Waluyo as the Governor of Central Java related to the rejection of the policy of establishing a mall in the city of Solo. Based on these two realities, we wanted to construct a complete picture of the victim's plate. Making both of them “victims” was not a fact. It was just a game of politicians to make themselves victims.

Therefore, we examined carefully and in depth the case of playing a victim in the presidential elections in Indonesia. A case study

involves careful and thorough examination of the consciousness of human experience. The main aim of this study is to uncover cases of playing victims. Meaning is an important context that emerges from human consciousness. To identify the essential qualities of the experience of consciousness, it should be done in depth and thoroughly (Smith, et al., 2009: 11).

We also analyzed the data we found in the field for three months from observations and in-depth interviews. In our opinion, this in-depth case study research was very meaningful for gaining a detailed understanding of the playing of the victim case in the presidential elections that we studied. In-depth also means going into something deep to get a sense of what seems straightforward and is potentially more complicated. On the other hand, we also had to formulate the truth of events or occurrences through in-depth interviews. We scrutinized the data obtained from in-depth interviews using an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis devised by Smith (2009:79-107).

Why ‘Playing the Victim’?

Who claims to be a victim, from what position, with what purpose, what consequences, and how is it constructed? By asking questions like this, it certainly helps us to examine the social context in which the claim of status as a victim is made and is connected to the power that has reproduced the status as a victim. “Being a victim” in the context of the history of the democracy in Indonesia, starting from before the collapse of the New Order regime and the beginning of the Reformation Order, especially when the presidential election system was implemented directly by the people.

“Being a victim” is a way of doing politics in parts of the world now, including in Indonesia. The main motive for “being a victim” is social disruptive behavior, whether carried out by the majority group against minorities or by the ruling elite against individuals. Two types of victims are referred to here: fact victims (actual victims) and perceived victims (not actual victims). No one of the statuses wants to be a victim. Presidential candidates cannot avoid having their status attacked by their opponents, or even accept it as a victim. Why is that? It is a reality that every presidential candidate will consciously identify or project himself to get the label of “being a victim.” Being a victim generally gives individuals psychological or social self-perceptions, such as a sense of having friends who will defend them or social connectedness (Huddy et al. 2015). Campbell and Manning (2018) argued that victims are seen as morally and socially superior to those who are not. Horwitz (2018) revealed that the victim’s whereabouts must be established before he or she nominates himself/herself as a candidate in an election, such as a presidential election.

Being a victim can significantly influence political discourse in various ways. First, the perception of being a victim can be influenced by political elites and their messages, which can impact people’s opinions, attitudes, and behavior. This can lead to the formation of different political groups based on their perceptions of victimhood, which can contribute to political polarization. Second, narratives about victims and blame can be used to mobilize support for political candidates or certain ideologies (Armaly, 2021). These narratives can create a sense of moral superiority and become an arena for contestation in society, further

contributing to political polarization. Third, egocentric and systemic victimization was observed. Egocentric victimization only involves the perception of oneself as a victim, while systemic victimization, which focuses on blaming “the system,” can also contribute to political polarization. Manifestations of this victim status can be influenced by political elites and their messages, which ultimately impact public opinion, attitudes, and behavior. Fourth, polarization based on ideology and sociodemographics is feelings of victimhood that are not only limited to “real” victims or certain partisans, but these feelings can be influenced by political elites and the messages they convey (Gharib, 2021). This can lead to the formation of different political groups based on their perceptions of victimhood, which can contribute to political polarization based on ideology and sociodemographics. Fifth, affective polarization occurs when victim narratives can exacerbate affective polarization because these narratives can create a sense of moral superiority and become an arena for contestation in society. This can further contribute to political polarization by deepening the emotional divisions between political groups.

How do you “become victims” of the presidential election in Indonesia? Political tradition in Indonesia is strongly influenced by sectarian politics. Leading anthropologist Clifford Geertz contributed to sectarianism. According to him, sectarianism in Indonesia influences various political tensions. The political affiliation of the Javanese is related to their culture, which he defines as historically inherited patterns of meanings contained in symbols, which are inherited systems of

conceptions expressed in a symbolic form to communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about attitudes towards life (Geertz, 1973).

Based on this understanding, being a victim of the political structure of Indonesia cannot be separated from Javanese political traditions. Javanese society maintains social values, for example, good manners, mutual cooperation (helping each other), and *mendem jero* (maintaining dignity) in social interactions. In his research, there were three forms of Javanese culture: *Santri*, *Abangan*, and *Priyayi*. *Santri* are devout Muslims who are associated with the market social structure affiliated with the modernist Islamic party (*Masyumi*) and the traditionalist Islamic party (*Nahdlatul Ulama*). The *Abangan* are associated with Javanese Muslim farmers who practice a partial Islamic religion, strongly influenced by pre-Islamic traditions affiliated with the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) and Indonesian National Party (PNI). *Priyayi* was a Javanese nobleman and bureaucrat who was influenced by Indian traditions and associated with the PNI (Geertz, 1973).

In another viewpoint, Feith (1962) distinguished two types of Indonesian elites, namely “administrators” and “solidarity makers. The first elite are those who are “leaders with administrative, technical, legal, and foreign language skills. This is reflected in the figure of Muhammad Hatta. Meanwhile, the second elite are those who are “skilled as mediators between groups at different levels of modernity and affective politics, as mass organizers, and as manipulators of integrative symbols” personified by President Sukarno. In traditional political culture, Indonesia is dominated by

Javanese ideology, which relates to the ruling elite and society, with a relationship characterized by being a patron-client. In this kind of relationship, Liddle (1988) highlighted that “leaders should be benevolent and society should be so obedient.

To a certain extent, a nation’s political culture is very different and influences the nature of its democracy (Marijan, 1999, p. 2). Verba stated that there were two sources of political culture. First, it comes from individual experiences in non-political situations such as families, schools, and peer groups. The values and beliefs of these institutions are assumed to influence individuals’ attitudes towards political objects. Second, it originated directly from the political process. As he postulated, “A person’s attitudes are caused by policies made by the government, and a person’s cultural actions are influenced by the nation’s political history (Almond & Verba, 1989). However, this statement has been refuted by Diamond (1994). In his opinion, democracy is not only shaped by culture but also by other factors such as changes in economic and social structures, international politics, and political system practices.

The 2024 Presidential Election in Indonesia had interesting events during the campaign period between the perceived victims and those who actually became victims. These two occurrences are difficult to differentiate because each has different arguments. When the decision of the Constitutional Court (MK) No. 90/PUU-XXI/2023 concerning the age limit for presidential and vice presidential candidates was considered by political scientists and religious figures as an attempt to allow a candidate who had not yet reached the age of 40, there was an additional editorial

amendment, except for those who had served as regional heads who were elected through general elections. This decision has been controversial as long as the Constitutional Court has existed. Presidential candidates who had declared their vice-presidential candidates before this decision were over the age of 40. The Anis Baswedan-Muhaimin Iskandar and Ganjar Pranowo-Mahfudz MD teams felt that they were victims of legal engineering carried out by the ruling elite. Both teams felt aggrieved by the Constitutional Court's decision because it was decided after the two presidential candidates declared their partners, apart from various protests that coincided with the fact that the chairperson of the Constitutional Court was the uncle of the vice presidential candidate. Gibran Rakabuming Raka was chosen as Prabowo Subianto's presidential runmate. Gibran is the son of President Joko Widodo, who is still in office.

Various legal experts considered this decision to have many political interests; therefore, legal experts submitted a note of protest against this decision, and the Honorary Council of the Constitutional Court (MKMK) issued a warning to the Constitutional Court that the Constitutional Court had violated ethics. However, MKMK's warning of the Constitutional Court could not be overturned. A decision made by the Constitutional Court is final and binding. Several non-supporting parties, such as the Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan (PDIP) and its coalition, as well as the Partai Nasional Demokrat (Nasdem), Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa (PKB), and the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), tried to convey public opinion that the parties supporting the two prospective presidential and vice presidential candidates

had become victims of the arbitrariness of President Joko Widodo, who supported the Prabowo-Gibran team. In particular, PDIP protested MK's decision to be the strongest. It should be emphasized here that the PDIP supported Joko Widodo in the 2014 and 2019 elections. Many politicians responded negatively by openly questioning this decision because it was considered a form of engineering by the president to let his son, Gibran Rakabuming Raka, who from the start was on Ganjar Pranowo's volunteer team, run for office.

The parties supporting Anis-Imin and Ganjar-Mahfud did this because being a victim in contemporary political studies will be rewarded with the social respect that people who are not victims do not have. Thus, one can achieve greater social or political status by defining oneself as a victim (Zitek et al., 2010). Such a goal is reasonable; achieving status has long been recognized as an important behavioral motivation (Harsanyi, 1980; Zink et al., 2008). Thus, there is some incentive to portray oneself as a victim, even if the label is not "earned" or used explicitly (i.e., feeling like a victim as self-described). The parties supporting these two teams wanted to assert social or political authority so that people would be more willing to listen to the victims.

As is the case experienced by several countries around the world, in conflicts elites often "play the victim" which has become a winning factor in election contestations. Certain figures considered to have been persecuted often receive support from voters until the votes are cast. This is a form of backlash from individuals who have attacked them so that in general, certain figures have been perceived as victims. Victimization can take three forms: (1)

legal, experiencing several criminal injustices; (2) socio-cultural, a group is systematically persecuted; and (3) natural due to events (Druliolle & Brett, 2018).

In politics, there are two types of victimhood, namely individual victimization because of a crime and group nature; for example, there is a certain group that experiences a crime and thus becomes a victim. In the US presidential election there is an interesting phenomenon of President Trump's use of victimization. There are still many people who feel as if they are victims; even those who do not appear to be victims of Trump's policies have attempted to make themselves victims. This study focuses on explaining who is a victim, what the individual's construction of being a victim is, and what is perceived as being a victim is the truth (Bayley, 1991; Garkawe, 2004). The perception of being persecuted means being a victim (Zitek et al., 2010). This research does not explain the actual victim or the truth of someone being a victim, but there is a phenomenon of positioning oneself as having become a victim. Therefore, concepts such as intent to harm or genuine injustice do not necessarily entail suffering as they define themselves. A person must think of themselves in such terms or behave in such a way as to "become" a victim (Jacoby, 2015).

The consequences of self-defining oneself as a victim must remain true. Indeed, many kinds of political evaluations and attitudes are influenced by subjective judgments, which often have no basis in reality. For example, a person's subjective perception of their ideological similarity to the U.S. Supreme Court influences support for that institution more than the actual endorsement of ideological similarity (Bartels & Johnston, 2013). Many Americans agree on

political issues, but individuals perceive wide gaps between opposing parties on these issues (Levendusky & Malhotra, 2016). These perceptions matter more than just benign bias. For example, individuals who perceive substantial differences between themselves and less political outgroups are more likely to believe in and participate in politics than are those who are actually more different from outgroups (Enders & Armaly, 2019). As the behavioral and attitudinal consequences of perceptions relate to being a victim, a person does not need to be an actual victim (i.e., a legal or socio-cultural victim) to think and behave as "real" victims do. Instead, they simply need to understand themselves as victims to feel like victims.

Becoming a Victim: An Overview of the Journey to Become the President

As previously explained, during the three months of field research, we found detailed phenomena of the victimization game in the presidential elections in Indonesia. We then studied this thoroughly. This research was conducted before the presidential election and after the presidential election. Before the election began, we found the phenomena of the presidential candidate campaigns, which we considered to be "unique campaigns" and different from previous presidential election campaigns. For instance, in the 2014 and 2019 presidential election campaigns, the use of religious identity sentiments was predominant, whereas in the presidential election campaign, religious identity sentiments were barely found. What emerged instead was a campaign for change and sustainability that was framed as pro- and anti-government.

The campaign with the issue of change was carried out by candidate team No. 01, namely Anis Rasyid Baswedan & Muhamin Iskandar, while candidate teams 02 and 03 carried out the campaign with the issue of sustainability, namely Prabowo Subianto & Gibran Rakabuming Raka, Ganjar Pranowo, and Mahfudz MD. The campaign for the issue of change received the most public attention in relation to the Development of the Capital of the Archipelago (IKN) to be re-evaluated and did not need to continue. According to an AMIN National Team spokesperson, Angga Saputra Fidrian, "The process and preparation of IKN Development are considered to have been rushed and carried out in a very short time. IKN development plans do not involve experts; therefore, IKN needs to be re-evaluated (Antara, December 13, 2023). Meanwhile, a campaign on sustainability issues will continue the development of IKN.

Clearly, the presidential candidate team of Anis Muhaimin was the antithesis of President Joko Widodo's (Jokowi) policies. According to them, Jokowi had failed to maintain democracy. The decline in the democracy index began in 2016 and 2017 when there was very strong polarization, increasing religious conservatism, and increasing government repression, which created a political atmosphere in which an increasing number of people became afraid of the abuses carried out by the Jokowi government (Setiawan & Tomsa, 2023, p. 351). Meanwhile, the teams of Prabowo-Gibran and Ganjar-Mahfudz had the same campaign tendencies, namely that they would continue President Jokowi's IKN policy. The difference between the two teams is in their policies related to handling the legal sector. According to

the Ganjar-Mahfudz team, Jokowi failed to handle various legal cases, especially the problem of corruption. The corruption index in Indonesia is based on international transparency during Jokowi's second term. The perception of corruption in Indonesia was very bad and decreased sharply until 2022, when Indonesia ranked 110 with a score of 34 (transparency.org, 2022).

Explanations such as this illustrate that the three pairs of presidential candidates differed in choosing issues. The Prabowo-Gibran team openly supported all of Jokowi's policies and continued them towards a golden Indonesia in 2045, while the Ganjar-Mahfudz team had ambiguity regarding the issues they chose. One side supported Jokowi's government policies, while the other side criticized President Jokowi, who supported the Prabowo-Gibran team. One candidate team rejected and did not agree with the Jokowi government's policies, namely, the presidential candidate team of Anis-Muhaimin. Interestingly, we found that the two presidential candidate teams, Anis-Muhaimin and Ganjar Mahfudz, perceived themselves as victims of Jokowi's arbitrariness. For example, in a speech by Megawati, the PDIP general chairperson, in front of cadres at a national coordination meeting (Rakornas) of Ganjar-Mahfudz volunteers at the Jakarta International Expo Kemayoran Jakarta on November 11, 2023, openly accused Jokowi of practicing authoritarian methods as practiced in the New Order government. Why did the PDIP general chairperson, Megawati Soekarno Putri, accuse Jokowi of doing campaign practices as carried out by the authoritarian New Order government?

We wanted to start this explanation by examining the political journey during the New Order era. Indonesian people will never forget the arbitrariness of the New Order regime under President Soeharto. This regime is known as an authoritarian regime that has practiced a militaristic leadership model. Soeharto used the military and bureaucracy to support himself to strengthen his power for approximately 32 years. As a result, many people have become victims of totalitarianism, including campus intellectuals, party activists, and ordinary people. Soeharto designed the regime in an authoritarian manner: The bureaucracy and military were mobilized to support the working group (Golkar) in becoming a single majority party. Of course, his leadership was met with resistance from democratic activists. At that time, those in opposition to him were eliminated with his authority in various ways.

Towards the fall of Soeharto, Indonesian history recorded the cruelty of the New Order regime in its treatment of the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI) under the general chairperson, Megawati. Megawati's election at the Special Congress in Surabaya in 1993 discouraged Soeharto at that time. Megawati was the daughter of the proclaimer and first president of the Republic of Indonesia, Sukarno. However, Soeharto did not simply let it abide. The New Order regime tried to disrupt Megawati by intervening in the PDI's internal affairs, so that in May 1996, at the IV PDI Congress in Medan, an attempt was made to thwart Megawati. The New Order regime used Soerjadi as a pawn. Soerjadi was elected as a general chairperson at the PDI Congress in Medan. On July 27, 1996, Soerjadi's supporters attacked the PDI office, which was filled with

megawati supporters. This event was known as the July 27 incident, which claimed quite a few victims.

A similar incident was experienced by the 4th president, KH Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur). At the 29th Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Community Organization Conference in 1994 in Cipasung, Tasikmalaya, West Java, and at the pinnacle of the New Order regime's abuses against NU. At that time, NU and Gus Dur, with all his courage in 'fighting' the government, were seen by Soeharto as the most dangerous threat. This made Soeharto, with his power, want to 'break' Gus Dur's authority in PBNU, which he had led since 1984. One of the methods adopted by Soeharto was to overthrow the Gus Dur at the Cipasung NU Congress. President Soeharto carried out various interventions by fully supporting one of the candidates for the General Chairperson of PBNU to oppose KH Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) as incumbent. Soeharto raised a challenger from within NU himself, who was definitely anti-Gus Dur, namely, Abu Hasan. Even Gus Dur's uncle, KH Yusuf Hasyim, was influenced by his nephew. In contrast to Gus Dur, a number of agitations emerged with the slogan ABG (as long as it is not Gus Dur). They expressed 'scathing' criticism of Gus Dur, namely that the NU management under Gus Dur's leadership was considered weak and autocratic. In fact, according to them, Gus Dur's steps, which were often 'at odds' with the government, were considered not only to deviate from NU's *khittah*, but also contrary to NU's own interests. These were the various issues they created to win the hearts of all *mukhtamirin* (Faisol, 2016).

The New Order regime was finally overthrown in May 1998 by a mass movement,

followed by a new era called the reform era, in which a multi-party system was implemented. PDI under the general chairperson, Megawati, turned into PDI Perjuangan (PDIP), and the PDIP under Megawati was the victim of arbitrariness from the authority of the New Order regime. For the first time, elections were held in the reform era. In the 1999 elections, PDIP won significant votes, became the winning party, and received the most seats in parliament. Gus Dur and Megawati were real victims, and not figures who were perceived as victims. These two presidents were victims of an authoritarian political system. If they are compared with the phenomenon of the two presidents who followed, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) and Joko Widodo (Jokowi), they are both figures, but there are differences from a historical perspective.

President SBY and President Jokowi were elected in the direct presidential elections in Indonesia. Towards the 2004 election, President Megawati's feud of SBY became known to the public because of a statement by Taufiq Kiemas, Megawati's husband, who said words that offended SBY, "The General is childish," he said. Taufiq's statement was widely circulated in various media and continued until SBY was resigned as the Coordinating Minister for Politics and Security in the cabinet. SBY's resignation from Megawati's cabinet made SBY's name increasingly popular in various surveys because SBY was considered a figure who was "persecuted" by the authorities. SBY acted as a victim of arbitrariness by the authorities. As a result, the public response to SBY generated feelings of sympathy from citizens until he was elected as the 5th president

of the Republic of Indonesia in the 2004 election.

Likewise, Joko Widodo's feud between losing as mayor of Solo and Bibit Waluyo as the governor of Central Java Province. In 2011, the defeated Bibit Waluyo made a policy to build a mall in the city of Solo on the land of the former Saripetejo ice factory, which had been founded in 1888, but this was rejected by Jokowi as mayor of Solo because it was planned that the land would be used as a cultural heritage for the city of Solo. Jokowi's refusal then received an angry reaction by Bibit Waluyo as Jokowi's superior, and he called Jokowi a "stupid Mayor.

Bibit Waluyo's statement received a strong reaction from the residents of Solo. The people of Solo flocked to fully support the mayor for the treatment of Jokowi's superior, who behaved arbitrarily towards his subordinate. Jokowi received a good response from the public, not only the people of Solo, but also the national public also condemned the statement. The Governor of Central Java, Jokowi, was perceived as a victim of arbitrariness, so Jokowi's name became increasingly known nationally due to massive coverage from various media. Jokowi's high level of electability led him to be elected governor of DKI Jakarta in 2012, and this continued with him becoming president in the 2014 presidential election.

Political Failure Becomes a Victim and Prabowo-Gibran's Victory

In 2011, after the 1945 Constitution was amended for the third time regarding the election of the president and vice president who were elected directly by the people, it was stated in Law No. 23 of 2003 Article 6A paragraph (1) of the 1945 Constitution which read, "The

President and the Vice President are elected as a pair directly by the people.” This regulation was automatically applied to the 2004 presidential election, and was the first time the president and vice president were elected directly. Furthermore, Article 5, paragraph (4) of the Law, stated that the president and vice president candidates can only be nominated by political parties or a combination of political parties that obtain at least 15 percent of the total number of seats in the DPR or 20 percent of the valid votes cast nationally in the DPR member elections.

In the first round of presidential elections held on July 5, 2004, five candidate pairs competed for presidential and vice presidential seats: Wiranto-Salahuddin Wahid, Megawati Soekarnoputri-Hasyim Muzadi, Amien Rais-Siswono Yudo Husodo, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono-Yusuf Kalla, and Hamzah Haz-Agum Gumelar. In the first round, none of the pairs received more than 50% of the votes, so a second round was held with the most votes based on the ranking of votes, namely, the pairs of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono-Yusuf Kalla and Megawati Soekarno Putri-Hasyim Muzadi. In the second round, Susilo Bambang Yudoyono was declared president-elect because he received 60.80% of the vote, while Megawati and Hasyim Muzadi received only 39.38% of the vote.

Political observers have studied the victory of Susilo Bambang Yudoyono (SBY) in the first presidential election, which was directly elected by people. According to various studies, SBY’s victory cannot be separated from the political branding carried out by the SBY campaign team, where SBY was portrayed as a figure who was persecuted by the arbitrariness of the

government in this case, President Megawati Soekarnoputri. The tit for the tat conflict between SBY and Megawati was made into an ongoing issue. SBY was one of Megawati’s cabinet ministers. As a result of him establishment of a political party and wanting to run as a presidential candidate, then deliberately going out of his way, Taufiq Kiemas, none other than Megawati’s husband, had offended the public’s feelings by saying “the general is like a child.

This is where the trigger for the Megawati versus SBY conflict began to gain steam. SBY is perceived as a figure that is psychologically persecuted. SBY became a perceived victim of the presidential elections in Indonesia. The issue of SBY being a victim continued to spread, so that the game of being a victim had succeeded in getting sympathy from voters, namely the Indonesian people. This tactic was used not only by SBY but also by the 7th president, Joko Widodo. In the third direct presidential election in 2014, there were not as many presidential candidates as there were in the first election. The presidential election was attended by only two pairs of presidential candidates, namely Joko Widodo-Yusuf Kalla, competing with the presidential candidate pair Prabowo Subianto-Hatta Rajasa. Jokowi ran against Prabowo and won for the second time in a row. Political scholars have paid attention to the election of both SBY and Jokowi, which cannot be separated from the design of the “being a victim” ’sgame. The following table shows the voting results for the 2004-2024 presidential elections.

Table 1: Votes Obtained in the 2004-2024 Presidential Elections

Electio n Year	Candida te Teams	Ca ndidat e Series Numb er	Vot es Obtain ed	Per centag e
2004 first round	Wiranto & Sholahudin Wahid	01	26,286,788	22.15%
	Megawati Sukarno putri & Hasyim Muzadi	02	31,569,104	26.61%
	Amin Rais & Siswono Yudo Husodo	03	17,392,931	14.66%
	Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono & Yusuf Kalla	04	39,838,184	33.57%
	Hamzah Haz & Agum Gumelar	05	3,569,861	3.01%
2004 secon d	Megawati Sukarno putri &	02	44,990,704	39.38%

round	Hasyim Muzadi			
	Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono & Yusuf Kalla	04	69,266,350	60.80%
2009	Megawati Soekarno putri & Prabowo Subianto	01	32,548,105	26.79%
	Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono & Boediono	02	73,874,562	60.80%
	Yusuf Kalla & Wiranto	03	15,081,814	12.41%
	Joko Widodo & Yusuf Kalla	01	70,997,850	53.15%
2014	Prabowo Subianto & Hatta Rajasa	02	62,576,444	46.85%
	Joko Widodo & Ma'ruf Amin	01	84,654,894	55.32%

	Parbawo Subianto & Sandiaga Solahudin Uno	02	68,359,086	44.68%
2024	Anis Rasyid Basweda & Muhaimin Iskandar	01	40,971,906	24.95%
	Prabowo Subianto & Gibran Rakabuming Raka	02	96,214,691	58.59%
	Ganjar Pranowo & Mahfud MD	03	27,040,878	16.47%

Source: KPU RI

Being a victim is basically political; playing as one depends on the skill of playing the resources possessed by the designer. The victim defined by the designer itself is a psychological state that occurs, whatever the etiology of the feeling or "truth" of the problem is, with someone who considers himself as a victim (Bayley, 1991; Garkawe, 2004). The perception of being persecuted means being a victim (Zitek et al., 2010). The designer does not care about the "truth" of someone being the victim. Therefore, concepts such as intent to harm or genuine injustice do not necessarily entail

suffering, as they define themselves. One must think of oneself in such terms, or behave in such a way, to "become" a victim (Jacoby, 2015).

In short, recognition of victimhood can be attached to identity or social status. Likewise, the victim category seemed to be more concerned with issues of identity and status. Some people identify themselves as victims, whereas others are recognized as victims. Categories such as these usually overlap and are not congruent. Common understandings of victimization combine a subjective "sense of injustice" (Shklar, 1990, p. 7) with an intersubjectively verifiable feeling of a violation resulting in psychological and/or physical suffering (Lu, 2005; Nagy, 2006).

The subjective dimension of "being a victim" cannot be reduced to the verifiable dimension of not meeting desired expectations. In contrast, being a victim is an expression of disappointment because "we do not get what we believe is our right" (Shklar, 1990, p. 83). This "sense of injustice" allows a person to identify themselves as a victim, regardless of their intersubjective or governmental assessment of the scope and causes of their suffering. The understanding of becoming a victim as an identity emphasizes the dimension of "feeling unfair." The status as a victim can only be known and enforced publicly through another dimension: an "objective" and verifiable violation of norms to the detriment of the victim.

From this perspective, victimhood is a social status created through past exclusion and victimization that can give rise to the new status of "an acknowledged victim," which is a status tied to an action for restitution. What is meant by the experience as a victim? Social status, for

example, when the state actively participates in victimization, it is when the state creates or uses coercive mechanisms, creating status differences. Social status groups need to be protected and fought, while others are ignored (Weber, 1946). In other words, the state institutes “institutionalized patterns of cultural values” that “perceive some actors as inferior, marginalized, or simply invisible, while others need to be defended” (Fraser, 2000, p. 113).

In general, victimization can occur in three forms: (1) legal (experiencing criminal injustice), (2) socio-cultural (a group is systematically persecuted), and (3) self-defined (Druliolle & Brett, 2018). The consequences of being self-defined as a victim must still make victimization visible. Indeed, many kinds of political evaluations and attitudes are influenced by subjective judgments, which often have no basis in reality. These include Taufiq Kiemas’s subjective perception of the general as a child towards SBY, Bibit Waluyo’s perception of a stupid mayor towards Solo Mayor Jokowi, and individuals who perceive substantial differences between groups outside the government and those within the circle of power, such as the use of social assistance in a presidential election to support the Prabowo-Gibran team. As with the behavioral and attitudinal consequences of being perceived as a victim, a person need not be an actual victim (i.e. a legal or socio-cultural victim) to think and behave as “real” victims do. On the contrary, one just needs to understand that he/she is a victim and feels like a victim, such as the result of the Constitutional Court’s decision that allowed a 37-year-old to become a vice presidential candidate if the individual previously held the position of mayor.

Several incidents during a presidential election campaign can be used as an initial trigger to play the victim. First, the Ganjar-Mahfudz billboards were removed in Bali Province on October 31, 2023, which was carried out by the authorities and had been used as media framing, especially on social media, as a systematic effort so that the Ganjar-Mahfudz team gained sympathy from the Balinese people, who, in fact, in this province were the basis of PDIP voters who contributed 54.3 percent of the vote in the 2019 election. PDIP politicians questioned the neutral attitude of the state apparatus in Bali and other provinces. The PDIP general chairperson, Megawati Soekarno Putri, in her speech at the National Coordination Meeting for volunteers in Jakarta emphasized that the disagreement had started because Jokowi was acting authoritarily like the new order. Megawati’s speech received government response. President Jokowi immediately instructed his officials to act fairly and always emphasized coordination with local political parties. As explained above, the media framing game of “being a victim” of the two incidents did not produce any sympathy from the public. On the contrary, based on the survey results from several survey institutions, the Ganjar-Mahfudz votes in October-November 2023 experienced a very sharp decline.

Second, the case of the beating of TNI officers by soldiers from Company B Yonif Raider 408 against Ganjar-Mahfudz sympathizers in Boyolali Regency, Central Java Province on December 30, 2023, which was caused by the noise of “loud exhaust” in front of the TNI headquarters, became a special concern for presidential candidate number 03 and framed the issue in the media that encouraged the TNI

elite to get involved in this matter, both the TNI commander and the TNI Army Chief of Staff. Looking at this incident, there are two sides that can be seen, the 6 sympathizers were the real victims of the attack on the state apparatus. The incident naturally occurred on December 30, 2023, coinciding with the completion of the Ganjar-Mahfudz campaign. The event itself was not a political issue but just an ordinary criminal incident, but after the incident, it became a political issue.

Being a “victim” became an important theme broadcasted in various media that favored the Ganjar-Mahfudz candidate pair, so at least this incident was in the PDIP base area (Kandang Banteng). The Ganjar-Mahfudz team tried to turn the incident of abuse carried out by state officials into a trigger. If this incident obtained a response from the Boyolali community, the Ganjar-Mahfudz team would receive additional votes. However, the facts revealed that, from this incident, the public was more supportive of what the TNI was doing because the sound of the exhaust pipe was very disturbing and tended to be noisy. Here are some of the campaign incidents and cases used to make the ‘playing a victim’ game.

Table 2: Campaign Issues and Cases

No.	Presidential-Vice Presidential Candidates	Campaign Issue	Case
1	Anis-Muhaimin	The government officials are not neutral.	- Jokowi’s blocking of Anis as a presidential candidate

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anis’ threat of being killed by supporters of other presidential candidates - Helicopters could not land during the campaign - Ethical violations of the Constitutional Court (MK) - Not getting campaign location permission
2	Prabowo-Gibran	The government officials are neutral.	- The mobilization of regional leaders to obtain a victory
3	Ganjar-Mahfudz	- The government officials are not neutral.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The removal of billboards - The persecution of Ganjar-Mahfudz sympathizers by the authority - Ethical violations

			of the Constitutional Court (MK)
			- Flying the PDIP flag when Jokowi came to Central Java
			- Gibran was considered as disrespecting Mahfudz in the 2 nd vice presidential debate

Source: Processed from various information sources

It is important to clarify in this research that the systematic framing in the media of “being a victim” over a short time span during a campaign is not something that is easy. It must be formulated such that the designer does not experience any difficulties. Each candidate has a fixed vote, which is difficult to be influenced by various issues in the campaign; therefore, it is difficult to change the choice of a particular candidate to another candidate with the condition of voter behavior in Indonesia being very paternalistic. Political scientists have highlighted the failure of the Anis-Muhaimin and Ganjar-Mahfudz pairs, using the strategy of playing the victim, which is important as to why the electability of these two pairs could not increase significantly and instead declined sharply. Based on the results of the LSI Deny JA survey conducted on 4-12 September 2023, the

electability of Anies decreased from 19.7 percent to 14.5 percent in September (republika.com, 2023).

Several other survey institutions also found that the electability of presidential candidate Anis Baswedan significantly decreased after collaborating with the PKB General Chairperson, Muhaimin Iskandar. For example, as stated by an observer from the Indonesian Political Parameters Institute, Adi Prayitno, in the Republika media, the decline in electability confirmed that there was a difference in the mass bases of Anies and Muhaimin. He considered PKB voters incompatible with Anis Baswedan’s current base. They were distant from each other, and even if the two could be united, this would only happen among the elite. Anies had so far been attached to the mass base of the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), whose ideology was considered to be at odds with the PKB, whose mass base was mostly Nahdliyin. Therefore, it is difficult to combine the mass bases of both.

The same findings were obtained from the Denny JA Indonesian Survey Institute (LSI), which showed a sharp decline in the electability of Ganjar-Mahfudz. Based on the Denny JA LSI and Indonesian Political Opinion (IPO) versions of the survey, their electability was outmatched by the team of Anies Baswedan-Muhaimin Iskandar. Denny noted that for the November 2023 period, the electability of the Prabowo Subianto-Gibran Rakabuming Raka team was 40.3 percent, followed by the Ganjar-Mahfud (28.6 percent) and AMIN teams (20.3%). This survey was conducted on 6-13 November 2023 on 1,200 respondents using a multistage random sampling method with a margin of error of approximately 2.9 percent. Based on

the Denny JA LSI survey, Prabowo-Gibran's electability continued to increase. For example, in September 2023, Prabowo-Gibran had an electability of 39.3 percent. Then, it rose to 40.3 percent the next month. Ganjar-Mahfud had an electability of 36.9 percent in September. Their electability then plummeted to 28.6 percent. Meanwhile, the Anies-Cak Imin team had approximately 8.8 percent in the results of the Denny JA LSI survey in October, which increased to 20.3 percent. The results of a survey conducted by the IPO in November 2023 also showed that the Prabowo-Gibran team was in the top position with an electability of 36.2 percent. Meanwhile, Anies' personal electability compared to Muhaimin Iskandar was 34.1 percent. On the other hand, Ganjar's personal score, compared to Mahfud, was 27.1 percent. The IPO conducted this survey on 10-17 November 2023 with 1,400 respondents using a multistage random sampling method and a margin of error of approximately 2.50 percent with a confidence level of 95 percent (CNN Indonesia.com, 2023).

The electability of these two pairs tends to decline because of several factors. First, the two presidential candidate pairs, Anis-Muhaimin and Ganjar-Mahfudz, were always opposed to President Joko Widodo (Jokowi), while the level of public satisfaction with President Jokowi's government was still quite high, at almost 50 percent. Amid this high level of satisfaction, Ganjar as a presidential candidate often criticized the government's performance. Ganjar gave a score of five to the performance of law enforcement during the Jokowi administration. Meanwhile, Ganjar's loyalist voters were mostly Jokowi. Therefore, this kind of difference of opinion made Ganjar Pranowo's voters prefer

Jokowi, and it was certain that they would switch to voting for Prabowo-Gibran.

Second, it was influenced by the decline in PDIP's dominance in several areas known as the voting base for the party bearing the bull symbol. For example, these regions include Central Java, Bali, Lampung, and West Kalimantan. Based on the survey, the Ganjar-Mahfud team still occupied the top position, but was no longer dominant. In Central Java, as a mass base for PDIP supporters, they did not automatically support Ganjar-Mahfudz. At the end of the campaign period, the Ganjar-Mahfudz national winning team (TPN) provided input to change their political communication patterns and not attack or criticize the government. The criticism of the government was like panning for water or patting water, but instead splashing yourself in the face. Showing your achievements rather than self-criticism is better. The following is a graph of Jokowi's support for presidential candidate pairs.

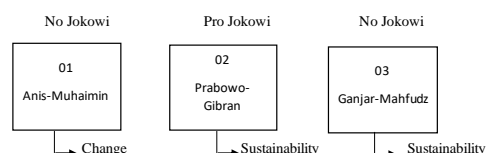


Figure 1: Presidential Support and Campaign Issues

A different question was raised from the previous one as to what factors could cause Prabowo-Gibran to be on top. Several factors need to be considered. First, Jokowi siding with the Prabowo-Gibran pair could not be hidden and became news in various media. Jokowi became a magnet for this pair, so Jokowi's votes in the 2019 presidential election shifted support to Prabowo-Gibran in the 2024 presidential election. As noted in this study, Jokowi-Ma'ruf

Amin in the 2019 presidential election received 55.5 percent of the vote, while Prabowo-Sandi received 44.5 percent of the vote. Based on a survey conducted by Kompas Research and Development, Jokowi's estimated vote contribution in the 2019 election was 29.6 percent. Prabowo's estimated contribution was only 24.8 percent. The survey was conducted in February 2024 after the presidential election.

Second, the contribution to Prabowo-Gibran's victory cannot be separated from Prabowo's own factors. Where Prabowo was in three consecutive presidential elections as a candidate, there is no doubt that Prabowo's militant supporters were still the determining factor in his victory. According to a Kompas research and development survey, 24.8 percent of Prabowo-Gibran's votes came from their own supporters. Third, contributions to Prabowo-Gibran's victory cannot be separated from those of young people, especially first-time voters. Based on survey results from first-time voters, it was estimated that 55.6 percent, meaning that more than half said they chose Pabowo-Gibran (Bestian, 2024).

Furthermore, after the determination of the results of the presidential election by the General Election Commission (KPU), with Prabowo-Gibran's victory, it did not stop there, as there were parties from both pairs of presidential candidates who accused and questioned the validity of the presidential election results that had been announced by the KPU. The presidential candidates Anis-Muhaimin and Ganjar-Mahfudz considered that the 2024 presidential election still had problems. They felt that there had been a lot of fraud during the campaign and voting, so they decided to file a lawsuit with the Constitutional

Court (MK) as an institution that could handle the election result dispute.

The General Election Results Dispute (PHPU) was then sued by Anis Baswedan, a presidential candidate, as the Petitioner in Case No. 1/PHPU. PRES-XXII/2024, and Mahfudz MD, a vice presidential candidate as the Petitioner in Case No. 2/PHPU. PRES-XXII/2024. As is known, in the 2024 Presidential Election dispute decision hearing, which was held on Monday (April 22, 2024), the Constitutional Court rejected the lawsuit by Anies-Muhaimin and Ganjar-Mahfud. Nevertheless, there was a dissenting opinion from three constitutional judges, namely the Deputy Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court, Saldi Isra, and the Constitutional Justices, Enny Nurbaningsih and Arief Hidayat. Essentially, the lawsuits of the two candidate pairs were considered legally groundless. "The applicants' petitions are rejected in their entirety," said Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court, Suhartoyo. Therefore, with the Constitutional Court's decision regarding PHPU in the 2024 presidential election, as a consequence, KPU Article No. 360 of 2024 concerning the Determination of National Election Results was declared correct and remained valid, and the Prabowo-Gibran team was legally the winner in the 2024 presidential election.

Conclusion

From the research findings explained in this article, several important points were noted regarding the failure of the victimization game in the 2024 Indonesian presidential election. From several findings and discussions with political scholars, we arrived at several conclusions: First, the political game of being a

victim of the two pairs of candidates, both Anis-Muhaimin and Ganjar-Mahfudz, experienced an information deadlock in selecting strategic issues that resulted in the absence of psychological feedback, which could be the initial trigger at the grassroots level. The choices of issues were only spun and could be accepted by politicians at the political elite level and some educated groups in several universities, such as the responses of professors at several universities that did not have a mass base at the grassroots level. Second, the political game of being a victim was not systemically designed by the parties who designed the campaign strategy of the two presidential candidate pairs into the campaign agenda, and it tended to be a common issue, like other issues in previous presidential campaigns. For example, regarding dynastic politics, the neutrality of the state apparatus and fraudulent elections were not important issues at the root of the problems faced by the people regarding employment opportunities and cheap prices for basic necessities, while the Prabowo-Gibran team was intensively campaigning about a golden Indonesia 2045 that promises to bring citizens to a developed Indonesia. Third, the integrity and capability of the figures of the two pairs of candidates also had a strong influence on voters' choices of who they voted for. Consequently, the game of being a victim was not successful as a campaign strategy, in addition to the achievements of the two pairs of candidates not having provided a prominent legacy while they were both governors. As a note, the citizens' assessments of Anis Baswedan and Ganjar Pranowo were as having failed as officials, with Anis Baswedan, who was once the Governor of DKI Jakarta and was deemed to have not had any outstanding achievements, as did Ganjar Parnowo as the

Governor of Central Java Province. Fourth, there was refraction with overlapping issues perceived by voters, which was a factor that also determined why the political game of being a victim was not successful. One side was related to the issue of dynastic politics that affected Gibran Rakabuming Raka as the son of the president. On the other hand, the same thing was also the practice of dynastic politics, which was considered normal in the phenomenon of political culture in Indonesia. Fifth, the uniting of Jokowi and Prabowo in a campaign to support the Prabowo-Gibran team provided a special assessment for Jokowi's militant supporters who initially had planned to vote for Ganjar suddenly shifted to Prabowo. As noted in this study, both had a very high electability.

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