

Conflict language and polarisation: analysing TVOne's YouTube comments on PERSIB-PERSIJA riots

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Abstract This study analysed the conflict expression and polarisation in digital communication through the YouTube comment section on TV One's coverage of riots between the Persib Bandung and Persija Jakarta supporters. Through a qualitative content analysis approach with NVivo, the study systematically examined 1,200 user comments collected from the video titled 'Mob Attack on Supporters During Persija vs Persib Match, Two People Arrested', which was released on 20 February 2025. The analysis combined three techniques: frequency analysis, sentiment analysis, and Social Network Analysis (SNA). Frequency analysis revealed the dominance of conflict-related terms such as supporters, violence, provocation, fanaticism, and anarchy, reflecting how language is used to reinforce group identity and deepen polarisation between Bobotoh and Jakmania. Sentiment analysis showed that 60% of comments carried a negative tone, 25% were neutral, and 15% were positive, indicating strong public emotions of anger, disappointment, and demands for legal action. SNA further identified key accounts functioning as hubs of discussion, amplifying narratives of conflict and shaping collective perceptions through interaction patterns and subgroup debates. These findings confirm that digital platforms such as YouTube do not merely reflect public opinion but actively serve as arenas for discursive conflict, where language, identity, and polarisation are reproduced and intensified. This study underscores the urgency of stronger content moderation on digital platforms, balanced framing by mass media, and preventive monitoring by relevant authorities. It provides theoretical insights for discourse analysis in digital communication and practical recommendations for managing conflict in both online and offline contexts.

Keywords: conflict expression; digital communication; polarisation

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INTRODUCTION

Football in Indonesia is not only a popular sport but also a powerful social phenomenon where emotions, identity, and group loyalty are intensely expressed (Ferdiansyah & Athilla, 2024). The long-standing rivalry between Persib Bandung (*Persatuan Sepak Bola Indonesia Bandung* - Bandung Indonesian Football Association) and Persija Jakarta (*Persatuan Sepak Bola Indonesia Jakarta* - Jakarta Indonesian Football Association) has evolved beyond sport turning into a broader social and cultural phenomenon. Persib, based in Bandung (West Java), is supported by a large fan community known as the Bobotoh, while Persija, from Jakarta, is backed by Jakmania, one of Indonesia's biggest supporter groups. Their encounters, both on and off the pitch, often spark intense emotional reactions and have occasionally resulted in violent clashes. This rivalry provides a critical context for analysing conflict language and digital polarisation among Indonesian football supporters (Kardani & Erlina, 2025).

TV One, as a leading national broadcaster, has frequently reported on these conflicts, and its YouTube channel has become a digital arena where thousands of comments reflect not only public opinion but also conflict language, provocation, and polarisation. These dynamics are significant because online discussions do not merely mirror reality but actively construct and reinforce group boundaries, sometimes intensifying hostility. This study is therefore grounded in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which views language as a social practice that constructs identity and power relations (Statham, 2022), and in the concept of digital polarisation, which explains how online platforms reinforce group identities and intensify echo chambers (Costa Netto & Maçada, 2019; Diaz Ruiz & Nilsson, 2023). By examining YouTube comments on TV One's coverage of the Persib-Persija riots, this research seeks to understand how conflict is discursively represented in digital communication and how media platforms contribute to shaping social polarisation.

These comments reflect the dynamics of digital communication, which not only convey public opinions but also express conflict language and social polarisation. Therefore, discourse analysis of these comments is essential to understand how conflict is represented in digital communication. The revelation of conflict language and social polarisation in digital spaces is expected not only to illustrate group rivalries but also to provide concrete contributions to public communication management. Theoretically, it enriches digital communication studies on hate speech and polarisation, while practically it serves as a basis for media, government, and digital platforms to design content moderation strategies and conflict prevention. For society, these findings offer a reflection to foster healthier, more inclusive, and constructive digital communication spaces.

Research on conflict language in digital communication indicates that online discourse does not merely reflect individual emotions but also functions as a process of identity construction and social boundary reinforcement. Kianpour et al. (2024); Perdana & Gempita et al. (2024) emphasises that language in digital spaces actively shapes group identity and strengthens social divisions, which is highly relevant to football rivalries where supporter identities are strongly expressed. Gallacher (2021) adds that social media platforms such as YouTube often serve as arenas of polarisation, where echo chambers reinforce group biases and limit the possibility of cross-group dialogue. This pattern is evident in the Persib-Persija rivalry, where online discussions frequently reproduce antagonistic narratives. Furthermore, Miranda et al. (2024) highlight that hate speech in digital spaces can escalate social conflicts, which helps explain why hostility among football supporters in online forums can spill over into real-world violence.

Meanwhile, Cilla et al (2023) explained that supporter communication is often driven by emotional and provocative language that reinforces in-group solidarity while intensifying hostility toward rival groups. Taken together, these studies reveal consistent patterns of identity reinforcement, polarisation, and conflict escalation in digital environments; however, very few have specifically examined how these dynamics manifest in the Indonesian context of football rivalries, or how they can be systematically analysed using digital tools such as NVivo. This study seeks to address this gap by combining frequency analysis, sentiment analysis, and Social Network Analysis (SNA) to uncover communication patterns in YouTube comments on TV One's coverage of the Persib-Persija riots.

Studies on conflict language in digital communication have long highlighted how language functions as a tool for shaping identity and reinforcing group boundaries. Wodak (in Novrel et al., 2024) and Fairclough's CDA framework view digital discourse as a socially situated practice that constructs power relations, while Barus et al. (2023) and Recuero (2024) show that online interactions often reproduce collective aggression. Rantona et al. (2024) and Chen & Chen (2025) note that algorithmic filtering and emotional reactivity in social media intensify polarisation, whereas Ibrahim (2025) explains how hate speech circulation in digital spaces escalates conflict. Methodologically, Shahzad (2020) and Lacarcel & Huete (2023) emphasise NVivo's role in exploring online communication patterns, while Nurdiantara et al. (2024) confirm that emotional and provocative language is central in football supporter communication, deepening intergroup hostility.

Despite extensive studies, few have explored how these dynamics manifest in Indonesia's football rivalries or have been systematically examined using digital tools like NVivo. Research in this area has mostly focused on political polarisation (Diaz Ruiz & Nilsson, 2023) or hate speech (Miranda et al., 2024), leaving a gap in understanding sport-related online conflicts. Addressing this, the present study examines YouTube discussions on TV One's coverage of the Persib-Persija riots, integrating frequency, sentiment, and Social Network Analysis (Jost, 2025) to reveal patterns of conflict language and digital polarisation.

The novelty of this research lies in its multi-method approach combining frequency analysis, sentiment analysis, and SNA; its focus on the local Indonesian context—particularly the Bobotoh-Jakmania rivalry; and its analysis of how TV One's framing influences online narratives. Theoretically, the study contributes to CDA and digital communication research by showing how conflict language constructs group identity and reinforces polarisation. Practically, it informs digital platforms and media institutions about the need for stronger moderation and balanced framing, while offering policymakers and supporters communities' data-driven insights to foster digital literacy, dialogue, and sportsmanship (Tenriliweng & Fridayanti, 2025; Mayrita et al., 2025).

The results of this study to provide both theoretical and practical benefits. Theoretically, this research can enrich the study of digital communication, particularly regarding conflict language and polarisation within football supporter communities. In practice, the findings can serve as a reference for media and stakeholders in better understanding digital communication dynamics and managing conflict issues more effectively.

The implications of this study are broad, particularly for online discussion management and media policies. Understanding the digital communication patterns emerging in YouTube comments can help media platforms design better content moderation strategies while providing insights for the government and security authorities in handling conflicts between supporters more proactively and data-driven. Thus, this research can contribute to the development of more inclusive and constructive digital communication policies for public discourse.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative approach using NVivo-based content analysis techniques, which are considered the most appropriate for exploring patterns of digital communication in user-generated comments on social media. Content analysis is suitable because it allows researchers to systematically interpret textual data while maintaining attention to the broader communication context (Kuckartz & Radiker, 2023). Moreover, the integration of software such as NVivo strengthens this approach by increasing both efficiency and validity in the qualitative analysis process (Lumivero, 2023). The choice of this method is also based on the nature of the research problem, particularly to identify how conflict language and polarisation are expressed through online comments and how such discourse reflects broader social dynamics.

The research data were drawn from comments on the TV One YouTube channel, particularly the video titled 'Mob Attack on Supporters During Persija vs Persib Match, Two People Arrested' released on February 20, 2025, which had reached 47,000 views at the time of data collection. This source was chosen because TV One is a leading news broadcaster in Indonesia, and its coverage of supporter riots often triggers widespread public responses. The comments section of its YouTube channel therefore, provides a rich corpus of naturally occurring digital discourse directly related to the rivalry between Persib Bandung and Persija Jakarta supporters.

The data collection process was conducted systematically. First, comments were extracted from the selected YouTube video using keywords related to supporter riots to ensure relevance to the research focus. Next, irrelevant or off-topic comments were filtered out to maintain analytical consistency. The filtered comments were then exported into formats compatible with NVivo, enabling a structured process of coding and categorisation.

The analysis was carried out in several stages using NVivo. The first stage was categorisation and coding, aimed at identifying themes and organising data based on patterns that emerged in the comments. This stage was essential to capture the nuances of conflict language and how supporters articulated group identities. The second stage was a frequency analysis, which identified the most frequent words and phrases, providing insights into dominant linguistic tendencies in the discourse. The third stage was sentiment analysis, in which comments were classified into three categories—positive, negative, and neutral—to map the emotional dynamics and evaluate how differing perspectives were articulated through tone. The fourth stage was Social Network Analysis (SNA), which examined interaction structures among users. Through NVivo's network analysis features, the study identified central actors, discussion clusters, and how narratives circulated and gained influence within the digital community.

After completing these analytical stages, the results were interpreted and compared with existing literature to deepen understanding of digital communication in the context of football supporter rivalries. This systematic approach not only allowed for the identification of patterns of language use and sentiment in online discourse but also offered insights into how digital communication contributes to the escalation of conflict and the reinforcement of polarisation. Thus, the methodological design of this study—anchored in qualitative content analysis with NVivo—was chosen as the most effective means to capture the complexity of conflict language in digital spaces.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

At this stage, the researcher will present the findings from frequency analysis, sentiment analysis, and Social Network Analysis (SNA) and analyse them in line with the referenced literature. Frequency analysis reveals dominant themes in the comments, such as conflict, provocation, and group identity, reflecting how language is used to reinforce social boundaries and polarisation. Sentiment analysis shows a dominance of negative sentiment, illustrating the public's emotional reaction to the riots, while SNA maps interaction patterns among users, identifies key actors, and shows how opinions spread within the digital discussion network.

Frequency Analysis

In the context of digital communication, conflict language expression often reflects group identity and loyalty, especially within football supporter communities. Analysis of comments on TVONE's YouTube channel regarding the riots between Persib and Persija supporters reveals that words such as supporters, conflict, provocation, violence, and fanaticism dominate the discussion. This indicates that digital spaces are not only platforms for sharing information but also arenas for the formation of discourse that reinforce boundaries between groups. The language used in these comments not only conveys opinions but also sharpens differences between groups, deepening polarisation between Persija and Persib supporters. This phenomenon illustrates how digital communication can reinforce group identity while deepening divides, especially in emotionally charged rivalries such as football.

The word cloud generated (Figure 1) from the comments shows that terms such as supporters, conflict, provocation, violence, and fanaticism dominate the discussion. This indicates that digital discussions are not only a means of sharing information but also a platform for the formation of discourse that reinforces boundaries between groups. The language used in these comments not only conveys opinions but also sharpens differences between groups, deepening polarisation between Persija and Persib supporters.



Figure 1. Frequent use of words like conflict, provocation, and violence highlights strong group identity and rivalry in digital discussions.

Source: Researcher's analysis using NVivo (2025)

In digital spaces, communication often occurs without the social filters typically present in face-to-face interactions. Anonymity and the ease of expressing opinions on social media platforms like YouTube allow individuals to express their feelings more openly, sometimes without restraint. Words such as emotion and fanaticism in the word cloud indicate that many comments are based on emotional outbursts rather than rational analysis of the events. This aligns Statham, (2022), which states that language not only reflects social reality but also shapes and constructs social meaning based on the emotions and collective experiences of specific groups.

The presence of terms like Jakmania and Bobotoh in the word cloud further emphasizes that group identity is a central element in this discussion. Strong supporter identities often form boundaries between 'us' and 'them', reinforcing group exclusivity and intensifying rivalries. Explains that social identity is formed through categorisation and social comparison processes, where individuals tend to strengthen their group membership by emphasising differences from other groups. In this context, the language used in YouTube comments not only serves as individual expression but also as a tool for building group solidarity and maintaining boundaries of supporter identity.

However, this conflict language expression also contributes to deepening polarisation. Rantona et al. (2024) study shows that digital platforms often create echo chambers, where individuals are only exposed to information and opinions that reinforce their own beliefs. In discussions about football supporters, this phenomenon reinforces narratives of specific groups and reduces the likelihood of more objective, neutral dialogue. Words like provocation and anarchy in the word cloud illustrate how language is used to shape perceptions of other groups, often in negative or even discrediting ways.

Moreover, the language used in these comments indicates a normalisation of violence and anarchic actions. Terms such as brawls and thuggery reflect that much of the discussion no longer focuses on the sporting aspects of football but rather on clashes between groups. According to Chaudhary et al. (2021), digital media often become breeding grounds for hate speech due to minimal control and low consequences for users spreading provocative narratives. In this case, the comments not only reflect tensions between supporters but can also worsen the situation by reinforcing justifications for violent actions.

Interestingly, words like police and criminal also appear in the word cloud, indicating that legal aspects are part of the discussion. This shows that the public is not only debating rivalries among supporters but also discussing how law enforcement handles such incidents. Chaudhary et al., (2021), study mentions that digital media are often used as tools to monitor and criticise government or public institution actions, including in the context of football match security. Thus, YouTube discussions are not limited to expressions of emotion and supporter loyalty but also reflect public perceptions of policies and law enforcement responses to incidents.

The word cloud also shows that digitalisation has changed supporter communication patterns. While supporter rivalries were once confined to stadiums or local environments, debates now extend to digital spaces, where anyone can participate without geographical limitations. De Rosa, (2024) study explains that social media has transformed how individuals express themselves, with increased use of more emotional and provocative language. In this context, YouTube comments not only reflect real-world conflicts but also serve as new arenas for continuing disputes in verbal form.

From a digital communication perspective, this analysis also shows how symbols and representations of supporter identity are reinforced through language. Words like stadium, jersey, and colour often appear in debates about pride in their respective teams. De Rosa, (2024) study shows that language is a primary tool in social representation, where individuals use specific symbols to assert their identity. In supporter discussions, attributes such as team colours, group names, and match venues become part of the language that reinforces a sense of belonging to the club and its community.

However, behind all this conflict expression and polarisation, the lack of words reflecting sportsmanship indicates that these discussions are more filled with disputes than a spirit of unity in sports. Mayrita et al., (2025) study highlights that in digital environments, sportsmanship is harder to maintain because anonymity allows individuals to express opinions more freely, including in the form of provocation and hate speech. Therefore, this phenomenon poses a challenge for the football community in building healthier and more productive discussion spaces. The implications of this phenomenon are far-reaching. Polarisation in digital discussions can lead to deeper divisions in the real world, especially if hate narratives continue to be reinforced in online interactions. Mayrita et al.'s (2025) study shows that digital media not only reflect public opinion but also have the power to construct new social realities that can intensify tensions between groups. If discussions about football supporters on YouTube continue to be dominated by narratives of conflict and verbal violence, it is possible that these rivalries will become increasingly difficult to quell, both online and in stadiums.

The frequency analysis demonstrates that the most dominant terms in the YouTube comments are directly associated with conflict and group identity, including supporters, violence, provocation, fanaticism, and anarchy. The prominence of these words reflects that the discourse surrounding the Persib-Persija riots is not neutral but framed through language that emphasises hostility and confrontation. Equally significant is the frequent use of identity markers such as Bobotoh and Jakmania, which indicates that football rivalries are discursively constructed as markers of collective belonging and exclusion. These findings show that frequency patterns are not merely quantitative outcomes but reveal how online communities use language to reproduce antagonism, reinforce group boundaries, and legitimize conflict narratives. In this sense, frequency analysis provides empirical evidence that digital communication in supporter contexts functions as a site where conflict is symbolically staged and continuously intensified, highlighting the inseparable link between language use and the social construction of rivalry.

The implication of these findings is twofold. For digital platforms such as YouTube, the frequency of hostile language highlights the need for more robust content moderation strategies to prevent escalation of online hostility. For media outlets, it underscores the responsibility to avoid framing that amplifies conflict language, as repetition of provocative terms may reinforce polarisation among audiences. For policymakers and security authorities, frequency patterns can serve as early indicators of rising tensions, providing an empirical basis for monitoring digital spaces and implementing preventive interventions. For supporter communities themselves, these results reveal the importance of fostering alternative narratives that emphasise sportsmanship and collective pride, thereby shifting online discussions toward more constructive expressions of identity.

Sentiment analysis

In the digital era, social media has become a dynamic space for football fans to express their opinions, including their responses to supporter riot incidents. Sentiment analysis of comments on the TVONE channel about the Persib Bandung vs Persija Jakarta match, which ended in

chaos, reveals a range of opinions. Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of comment sentiments, categorised into three types: positive, neutral, and negative.

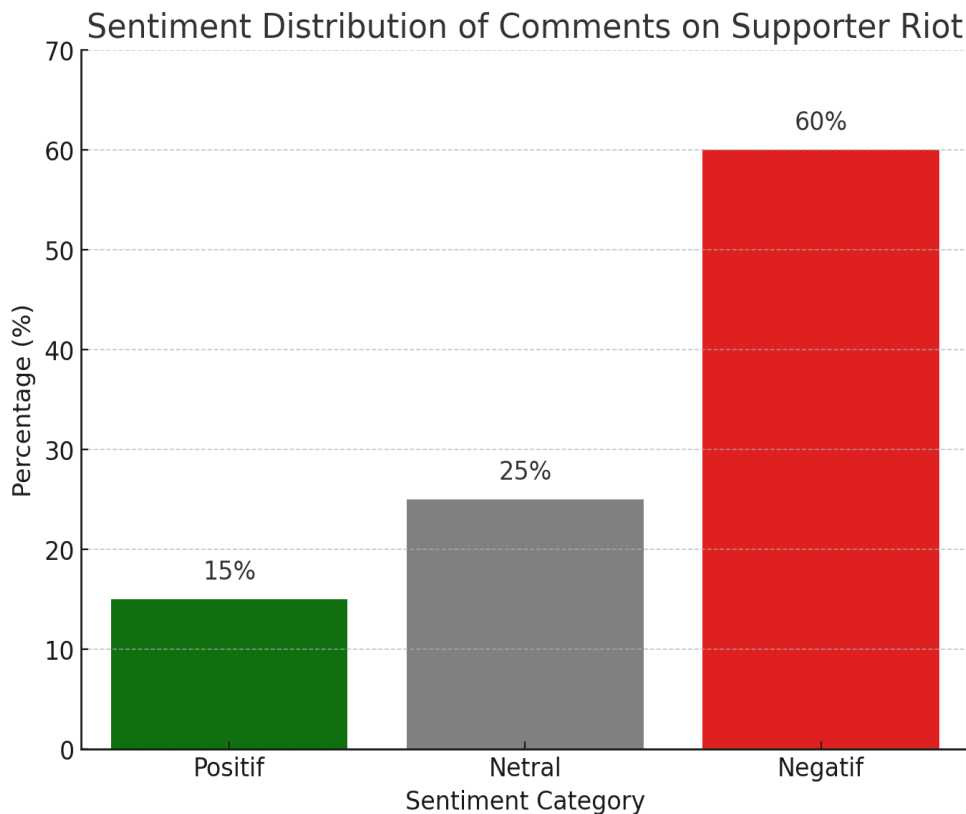


Figure 2. Comments on the Persib vs. Persija riots are dominated by negative sentiment, reflecting public anger and disappointment
Source: Researcher's analysis using NVivo (2025)

Based on the data in Figure 2, the distribution of sentiment in comments from Persib and Persija supporters shows that 60% are negative, 25% are neutral, and 15% are positive. The dominance of negative sentiment reflects the public's emotional reaction to the incident, likely driven by disappointment, anger, or dissatisfaction with the behaviour of the supporters involved in the riots.

In the digital age, social media has become a primary platform for individuals to express their opinions and feelings. However, this freedom of expression often triggers conflict, especially when the language used contains elements of provocation or hate speech. Comment sections, as analysed in this case, often become arenas for 'language wars' where users exchange sharp criticisms, insults, or even threats. Such expressions can escalate conflicts and worsen situations. According to Suryandari & Lutviana (2020), hate speech in social media comments often includes insults, defamation, provocation, and incitement that can trigger societal divisions.

The use of aggressive and impolite language in digital communication can exacerbate tensions and deepen divides between groups. This aligns with the findings of Mayrita et al., (2025), who state that conflicts in cyberspace are often triggered by the use of provocative language and a lack of politeness in online interactions. Therefore, it is crucial for social media users to apply politeness strategies and think before commenting to prevent broader conflicts.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) highlights how language is used to construct meaning, reinforce power relations, and reproduce social ideologies. In this study, CDA helps interpret the results of frequency analysis, sentiment analysis, and Social Network Analysis (SNA). At the textual level, the dominance of terms such as supporters, violence, provocation, and anarchy demonstrates how conflict-oriented language frames the Persib-Persija riots as acts of disorder and hostility. The frequent mention of Bobotoh and Jakmania shows how identity markers are strategically invoked to strengthen in-group solidarity while simultaneously excluding rival

groups. At the level of discursive practice, the finding that 60% of comments are negative illustrates how digital communication fosters a snowball effect: users encountering hostile or condemnatory language are more likely to reproduce similar expressions, thereby amplifying negativity and reinforcing polarisation. At the level of social practice, the SNA results, which identify central accounts acting as hubs of discussion, reveal how narratives are disseminated and contested within the broader cultural context of a historical Persib-Persija rivalry.

These actors not only spread conflict-laden discourse but also shape the dynamics of public opinion, showing how digital interactions reflect and intensify offline antagonisms. Through this lens, CDA clarifies that the online discourse surrounding supporter riots is not a neutral exchange of views but rather a socially situated practice that both reflects and sustains conflict, highlighting the urgent need for inclusive digital communication policies and preventive strategies by applying critical discourse analysis, we can understand how discourse about supporter riots is constructed and how it can reinforce stereotypes or even trigger discriminatory actions against certain groups. This aligns with the emphasis that language is never neutral and is always tied to social context and power.

Mass media play a central role in shaping public discourse about specific events. In the case of supporter riots, how the media reports the incident can influence public perception and attitudes. Coverage that emphasises negative aspects without providing space for alternative perspectives can reinforce stigma and worsen intergroup conflict. Facciani et al. (2023) found that online news coverage of low literacy in Indonesia tends to highlight negative aspects without sufficiently showcasing improvement efforts, which can create a fatalistic perception among the public.

In the context of supporter riots, it is crucial for the media to present balanced coverage, not only highlighting negative actions but also efforts toward peace and reconciliation by various parties. Such an approach can help ease tensions and encourage constructive dialogue between conflicting groups.

The digital era has transformed how individuals interact and communicate. Social media enables the rapid spread of information but also opens opportunities for the dissemination of misinformation and provocation that can trigger conflicts (Schirch, 2021). Siregar et al. (2022) highlight that before Indonesia's 2019 presidential election, social media became a battleground for conflicts between candidates' supporters, often posting provocative comments that could trigger debates and divisions.

In the context of supporter riots, the dominance of negative comments can worsen the situation by spreading hatred and reinforcing negative stereotypes between groups. Therefore, digital literacy is crucial to enable social media users to filter information wisely and avoid being caught up in waves of provocation that can further escalate conflicts.

The implication is that digital platforms need stronger moderation to manage emotionally charged discourse, while media outlets should adopt more balanced framing to prevent further escalation. For policymakers, the distribution of sentiment can serve as an indicator of public tension, while for supporter communities, it highlights the importance of digital literacy and fostering constructive narratives to counter hostility.

Social Network Analysis (SNA)

In the digital age, social media has become a primary space for society to discuss and express opinions, including in the context of sports. One phenomenon worth analysing is how social media interactions reflect tensions between supporter groups, as seen in the match between Persib Bandung and Persija Jakarta. Using the Social Network Analysis (SNA) approach, we can understand interaction patterns in online discussions related to the incident and how public opinion is formed and spreads in digital spaces (See Figure 3).

The football match between Persib Bandung and Persija Jakarta not only takes place on the field but also sparks lively discussions on social media. The riots between supporters of the two teams attracted significant attention from internet users, especially on TVONE's YouTube channel. The comments reflect a range of emotions, from support and condemnation to sarcasm toward the incident (Dezhboro et al., 2024).

The SNA visualisation (Figure 3) of these comments shows a complex interaction pattern. In this network, several accounts act as discussion hubs with many connections, while others

contribute on a smaller scale. This pattern reflects how public opinion is formed and spreads through digital media (Solihin et al., 2023)

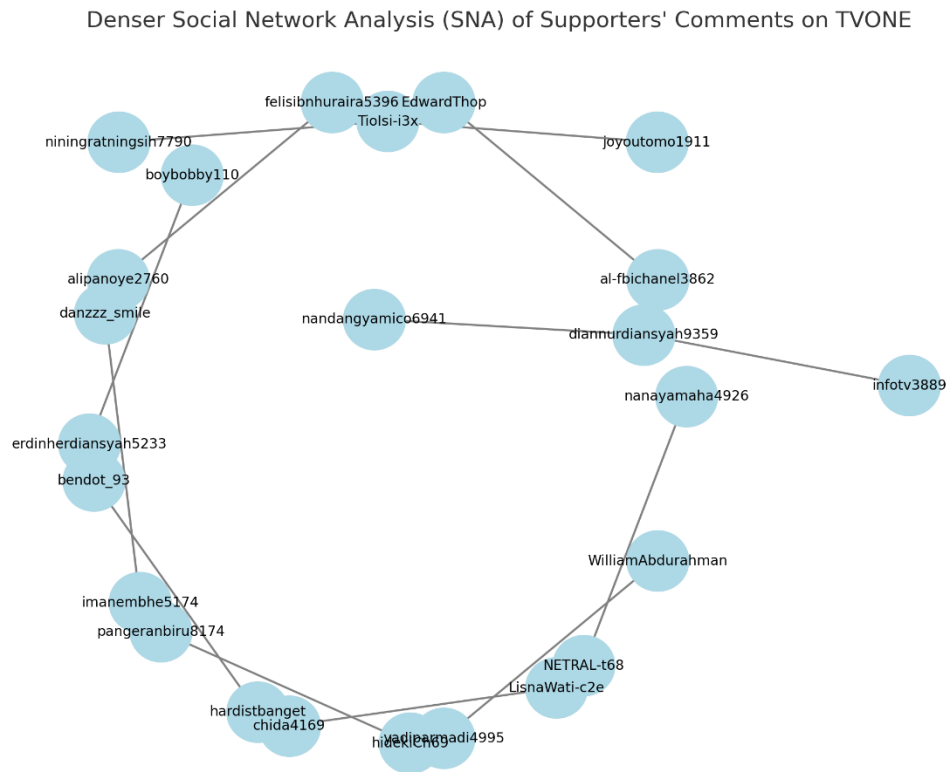


Figure 3. SNA reveals how social media interactions shape and spread tensions between Persib and Persija supporter groups.
Source: Researcher's analysis using NVivo (2025)

Some accounts, such as 'diannurdiansyah9359' and 'Tiolsi-i3x', stand out due to their many connections with other accounts. This indicates their influence in shaping narratives related to the incident. Their comments receive numerous responses, both supportive and contentious (Dezhboro et al., 2024).

Additionally, smaller groups are discussing specific aspects of the incident. Some focus on responses to law enforcement, while others highlight how the media reported the event. These groups form sub-discussions within the network (Dezhboro et al., 2024).

In these discussions, the expression of conflict language is highly visible. The language used often shows polarisation between Persib and Persija supporters. Phrases like 'orange eating orange' or 'Bobotoh respect' indicate the reinforcement of group identity in this discourse.

The language used also reflects provocation and high emotions. Comments such as "Arrest all rioters" and "Give harsh punishments" emphasise the public's demand for strict legal action in response to the incident (Statham, 2022). On the other hand, sarcasm is also part of digital communication in these discussions. Some users mock the rioters with comments like "Great orange outfit, still loyal!" referring to the orange prison uniforms resembling Persija's colours.

Digital communication in such conflict discussions reflects how information and opinions spread rapidly. The concept of virality, as explained in social media theory, is evident here, where comments with high emotional content spread more quickly than those with lower emotional content (Rantona et al., 2024).

Additionally, the echo chamber phenomenon occurs, where users tend to interact with comments that support their own opinions. Kaniah et al. (2024) explain that social media reinforces existing biases, making opinion differences increasingly sharp.

In critical discourse analysis, language is not only a tool for communication but also for building ideology and power. In these discussions, language is used to normalise violence, as seen in comments implying that conflicts between supporters are normal (Statham, 2022).

Some comments also reflect a discourse of justice, where users demand strict action against the rioters. Comments like "Must be severely punished" illustrate the use of legal language to shape public opinion, Fairclough in (Statham, 2022).

Furthermore, some users attempt to construct collective supporter identity. Phrases like "We are the true Jak" or "Bobotoh will not stay silent" show how group identity is asserted through language in online discussions (Coombs, 2019). The presence of central actors in the SNA network also demonstrates how certain individuals can shape public perception. Some accounts with many connections act as primary disseminators of specific narratives (Sunstein, 2018).

With these patterns, we can understand how real-world conflicts extend into digital spaces and become debates among netizens. In the context of digital communication, these patterns can create conflict escalation if not managed properly (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). It is crucial to understand how language in digital discourse can influence real-world actions. In many cases, hate speech or provocation on social media can contribute to real-world violence (Pang et al., 2018). Conversely, if used wisely, social media can be a tool to mitigate conflicts and strengthen solidarity between groups. By spreading messages of peace and education, online discussions can become more constructive (Coombs, 2019). The SNA analysis of comments related to the riots between Persib and Persija supporters shows complex and emotionally charged communication patterns. Polarisation of opinions, provocation, and group identity are clearly visible in the interactions (Statham, 2022).

From a linguistic analysis perspective, this phenomenon illustrates how conflict discourse forms and spreads in digital media. The language used not only reflects individual opinions but also builds broader narratives within the online community (Statham, 2022).

In the digital age, understanding such communication patterns becomes increasingly important. By recognising how conflicts develop and spread online, policymakers and stakeholders can design more inclusive and constructive digital communication policies that encourage respectful dialogue, promote intergroup understanding, and minimise the spread of hate speech or provocative content (Sunstein, 2018). Such policies may include strengthening content moderation systems, fostering digital literacy programmes and encouraging media outlets to adopt more balanced framing in their reporting. Thus, this study provides insights into the role of social media in shaping social conflicts and highlights how digital communication, if managed wisely, can serve not only as a tool for conflict escalation but also as a medium for promoting peace, inclusivity, and constructive public discourse.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study demonstrate that digital discourse about the Persib-Persija riots is strongly shaped by a focus on conflict and group identity. The dominance of terms such as supporters, violence, provocation, and fanaticism illustrates that YouTube comments function not merely as spontaneous reactions but as linguistic practices that reinforce in-group solidarity and sharpen intergroup boundaries. The prevalence of Bobotoh and Jakmania further confirms that identity markers are central in sustaining polarisation. The distribution of sentiments—60% negative, 25% neutral, and only 15% positive—reveals that digital spaces primarily amplify anger, disappointment, and demands for justice, indicating how online communication intensifies rather than mitigates conflict. Social Network Analysis (SNA) adds another layer, showing how certain accounts act as hubs that spread narratives and escalate debates, while subgroup formations demonstrate that conflict discourse is fragmented and multi-directional. Taken together, these findings confirm that YouTube serves as fertile ground for reproducing and amplifying conflict language, and underscore the urgent need for inclusive digital communication policies, stronger content moderation, and literacy programmes to reduce polarisation. Future research should extend this analysis across platforms and over time to capture how online narratives of rivalry evolve and connect to real-world conflicts.

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