

**ANALYSIS OF ETHICAL VIOLATIONS IN THE 2024 PRESIDENTIAL-VICE
PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE: CONTENT ANALYSIS APPROACH**

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ABSTRACT

This research development analyzes ethical violations in five presidential and vice presidential debate sessions in the 2024 Election using a qualitative approach based on content analysis. The main data sources come from debate video transcripts, code of ethics documents, and media coverage. Each statement is classified according to five indicators: information quality, clarity, relevance, politeness, and public responsibility. The findings show a significant tendency for violations: the use of technical jargon without explanation, unverified data claims, veiled personal attacks, polarizing rhetoric, and simplification of complex issues. For example, in the vice presidential debate, Gibran used the term SGIE and rhetorical techniques to attack other statements, which were conveyed as "unethical" communication due to minimal context or explanation. The third presidential debate was also dominated by an ad hominem style that triggered polarization and reduced the substance of public discourse. These results support Grice's pragmatic theory and Habermas's deliberative theory on the importance of transparency, respect, and rationality in public debate. Continuous violations of broadcasting debates as a means of political education, increasing societal polarization, and reducing public trust. Recommendations include improving debate moderation, direct verification by the media, and implementing a stricter code of ethics in each national debate session

Keywords: Political Communication Ethics; Content Analysis; 2024 Presidential-Vice Presidential Debate.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is entering a dynamic democratic period with the ongoing public debate of presidential and vice presidential candidates ahead of the 2024 Election. The debate attracted significant attention from various groups, especially the younger generation—there were 65.8 million voters aged 16–30, including around 9.3 million active students, who followed the process via television and digital media. (Arianto, 2024) The debate moment should have functioned as an arena for political education for the public, but in practice, a number of violations of communication ethics emerged—from the use of impolite language, provocative rhetoric, to data manipulation. This was exacerbated by the findings (Arkham, 2024), which indicated that mainstream media often amplified certain narratives in debates without objectively filtering ethical violations, thus increasing exposure to manipulative and unbalanced communication.

(Bun, 2024) in his study showed that 40% of students considered debate communication to be impolite and damaging to democratic values. Meanwhile, (Husnul Hatimah, 2024) found that verbal conflicts between candidates often arise due to violations of communication ethics, such as language that corners the debate opponent. These violations not only affect the quality of the debate, but also shape the negative perception of the younger generation towards deliberative democracy. According to (Luis Fiska Rahayu, 2024), the attacking debate style is more oriented towards emotional imagery than substantial education, which ultimately obscures the values of democracy itself.

This phenomenon contradicts the spirit of a rational "public space," as explained by Habermas, where the public has the right to receive civilized, informed political discourse that respects the norms of politeness. Pragmatic studies further strengthen the urgency of this research. (Arianto, 2024) highlighted the dominance of positive politeness in debates—strategies of greeting, acknowledging, and appreciating each other—but rhetorical statements that mock opponents actually harm the initial intention. Meanwhile, (Syafitri Ramadhani, 2024). maps three rhetorical styles in debates: change, stability, and innovation, which often target people's emotions rather than conveying substantive facts. (Isa, 2024) also revealed that rhetoric in presidential debates tends to be structured as a symbolic narrative that emphasizes popularity and group identity, rather than logical factual arguments.

The mass media also plays an important role in shaping public perception. (Adevy Vanie, 2024) found that *Metrotvnews.com* and *Republika.co.id* labeled the issue of debate ethics differently: one favored Anies' criticism of Prabowo, the other highlighted Anies' inconsistency in implementing ethics. This shows that media framing also determines how the public interprets ethical violations. In line with that, (Fauzia, 2024) noted that media coverage during the 2024 Presidential Election tended to emphasize the conflict side of the candidates, rather than critically dissecting the depth of their visions and programs.

This literature review reveals several research gaps: (1) the lack of systematic analysis of forms of ethical violations (truth, respect, transparency, non-provocative, public interest); (2) the lack of quantitative data on the frequency of violations in each indicator; (3) the rarity of studies linking pragmatic and rhetorical findings with public perceptions in an integrative framework; and (4) there is almost no comprehensive evaluation of the relationship between media framing and candidate communicative behavior from an ethical perspective. In this case, (Darmawan, 2024) analyzes how hoaxes and disinformation in election reporting can obscure candidate accountability in conveying information ethically on the debate stage.

Based on these gaps, this study is designed to (a) identify and classify ethical violations in the 2024 presidential–vice presidential debate through five main indicators; (b) calculate the frequency of occurrence of each violation; (c) analyze its impact on public perception; and (d) integrate pragmatic, rhetorical, and media framing analysis into a content analysis framework. With a qualitative approach and systematic content analysis, this study is expected to provide significant contributions to the political communication literature, as well as offer practical recommendations for debate organizers, the media, and the public so that political debates can return to being a rational and dignified arena. (Fascal Muhamad Akbari, 2024)

RESEARCH METHODS

This study applies a qualitative approach with a content analysis approach to examine violations of political communication ethics in the 2024 presidential and vice presidential debate. The main data sources include official video recordings of the debate broadcast by the KPU, TVRI, KompasTV, CNNIndonesia, as well as debate transcripts (from YouTube captions and manual transcriptions that

are intercoded), as well as supporting documents such as broadcasting codes of ethics and media articles. Documentation and transcription are carried out with cross-checking to maintain the accuracy of the transcript, then each speech unit is coded based on five indicators of communication ethics: truth, respect, transparency, non-provocative, and public interest. The coding scheme is developed in a codebook that has been validated by political communication experts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

First Debate Findings (December 12, 2023)

Based on the analysis of the First Debate transcript, several indications of violations of political communication ethics were found, especially related to impoliteness, maxims of manner, and maxims of quality.

Violation of Politeness and Maxim of Manner (Ambiguity)

1. Covert Personal Attacks/Sarcastic Rhetoric:

In the first presidential-vice presidential debate broadcast on the official KPU channel on Tuesday, December 12, 2023, at exactly the 91st minute (around 01:31:00), Anies Baswedan made a statement that stood out in the session on freedom of speech. He began by saying, “That’s why I said there’s a problem with freedom of speech, because that’s what’s happening.” He then asked a series of rhetorical questions: “You can see today, who doesn’t dare to speak? Who criticizes, then suddenly disappears? Who criticizes, then suddenly has problems?”

While not a direct personal attack, the statement uses a series of accusatory rhetorical questions and implies that someone is responsible for silencing criticism or “disappearing” the critic. This can be seen as an indirect attack that denigrates the opponent (the existing government) and uses inflammatory rhetoric without providing direct evidence, violating the principle of civility and potentially triggering negative emotions.

Rhetorically, this statement functions as a veiled accusation. Although it does not mention the name of a specific individual, the repeated question accuses certain authorities or institutions of silencing public criticism—even to the point of a narrative of the disappearance of the critic. This kind of strategy, without concrete factual support, shows a violation of the principle of politeness (respect), because it overshadows the ambiguity of who is being accused. In addition, this statement also violates the maxim of manner according to Grice's theory, because it obscures the reference and triggers emotional speculation among the audience. Thus, this kind of rhetoric can hinder the creation of rational and argumentative public discourse, because it prioritizes sensation and provocative nuances rather than arguments based on clear evidence.

2. Non-transparency/Evasion

There were moments identified where candidates appeared to avoid direct questions or provide answers that were not fully transparent, which could undermine the principles of clarity and openness.

In the Q&A session, when Anies Baswedan asked about defense debt data, Prabowo Subianto did not provide specific figures and instead shifted the focus to the importance of state secrecy in defense matters. While secrecy is a valid issue, this diversion can be seen as an avoidance of a direct answer to a specific question. For example, at around 01:40:00 - 01:42:00, when Prabowo responded to Anies' question about debt and used defense equipment, his response consisted more of an affirmation of the importance of strong defense than the specific data details requested. This violates the Maxim of Relevance (avoiding the main point of the question) and the Maxim of Manner (being less direct and straightforward in answering).

3. Lack of Detail/Over-Generalization of Claims:

In the debate on December 12, 2023, precisely at the 114th minute (around 01:54:00), Ganjar Pranowo discussed the issue of law enforcement and eradicating corruption. He stated: "So the way to clean up corruption is to create a good system, place good people, and have integrity. And we have started that, even the results today, from the last survey, the people have started to believe."

Rhetorically, the statement conveys an optimistic message about progress in law enforcement. However, in terms of communication ethics, the last sentence—“from the last survey, people have started to believe”—contains a generalization without concrete data support. It does not mention which survey institution, when the survey was conducted, or how

many respondents. As a result, the statement could violate the Quantity Maxim according to Grice's theory, because it conveys information that is too minimal to be verified. In addition, the absence of data references makes the statement questionable in the realm of the Quality Maxim, namely the obligation to convey information that is true and can be accounted for. In a public debate, a claim like this actually has the potential to mislead the audience or give the impression of twisting the facts—although in its intention it seems positive and supports the candidate's integrity, data transparency is crucial so that the public can verify its truth.

Violation of the Maxim of Quality (Potentially Inaccurate/Unverified Claims)

In the presidential–vice presidential debate on December 12, 2023, at around the 105th minute (around 01:45:00), Prabowo Subianto expressed his views on defense and the state budget. He stated, “And we must know that according to research, the Indonesian people already feel very safe. Crime has decreased drastically. The happiness index has increased.” This statement contains an important statistical claim that should strengthen the candidate's argument.

However, from the perspective of communication ethics, this statement is problematic because it is not accompanied by clear data references—such as the research institution, survey methodology, or measurement period. The absence of these references violates the Maxim of Quality in (Husnul Hatimah, 2024) according to Grice's theory, namely the obligation to convey responsible and verifiable information. Without these details, the audience is forced to accept big claims without evidence, so they have the potential to be misleading or simply image rhetoric.

Violation of the Maxim of Quantity (Excessive or Irrelevant Information)

Maximum quantity requires that information be as informative as possible, but not more than necessary. Violations occur when information is too little or too much and irrelevant.

When responding to criticisms about transparency, Prabowo Subianto tends to give very long explanations and sometimes repeats general points about nationalism and the importance of unity, instead of focusing on the transparency mechanism being asked. An example of this is seen in the segments where he is given time to respond to criticism, around 02:05:00 - 02:08:00, where the emphasis is more on the philosophy of nationalism rather than operational details that may be relevant to the issue of transparency. This can violate the Maxim of Quantity because it provides excessive information and is not specific enough to the substance of the question.

Political Rhetoric Violations (Sloganism/Oversimplification)

Unethical political rhetoric can emerge through the use of slogans or misleading simplifications of complex issues.

On several occasions, Ganjar Pranowo uses phrases such as "Sat-set" and "Tas-tes" to describe the speed and efficiency of bureaucracy or decision-making. For example, at around 01:00:00 and 02:15:00, these phrases are repeated to highlight the fast pace. Although intended to convey a positive vision, the repeated use of slogans without adequate explanation of implementation details can be seen as an oversimplification of complex governance issues. This violates the ethics of political rhetoric because it has the potential to create unrealistic expectations or obscure the complexity of the problem with empty slogans, without detailing how the speed will be achieved without sacrificing accountability or quality.

Results of the Second Vice Presidential Debate (December 22, 2023)

Main Themes: People's economy, digital economy, finance, investment, tax, trade, APBN/APBD management, infrastructure, and urban areas.

1. Use of Jargon and Acronyms Without Explanation (Manner Maxim)

Gibran Rakabuming Raka several times inserted technical terms such as greenflation, LFP (Lithium Ferro Phosphate), RMU (Rice Milling Unit), and SGIE (State of the Global Islamic Economy) without providing sufficient explanation. The moderator even had to reprimand him to explain foreign terms or abbreviations to avoid confusing the audience. This strategy invited criticism that he deliberately used complicated terms to “confuse the opponent” or show his superiority, even without substance. Ethically, this action violates the maxim of manner according to Grice's theory, because it reduces the clarity of public communication.

2. Covert Personal Attacks / Provocative Rhetoric (Politeness)

When responding to Muhaimin Iskandar and Mahfud MD, Gibran often displayed a provocative attitude — mocking the manners of his debate opponents and displaying expressions that preceded his answers as a form of mockery. Political communication analyst from Unpad, Kunto Adi Wibowo, revealed that Gibran was “diligent in provoking his debate opponents,” choosing

sarcastic comments over substantive arguments. The media also highlighted Gibran's style which seemed "cocky," "cringe," and "arrogant." Although he did not use harsh words, his attitude and expressions still violated the norms of debate politeness.

3. Issue Diversion / Irrelevant Answer (Relevance Maxim)

Instead of responding to the debate theme on people's economy and management of the APBN/APBD, Gibran often diverts the discussion to narrow technical or personal topics—for example asking the meaning of the abbreviation SGIE or greenflation—without linking the issue as a whole. Netizens highlighted that this was more like a "trap" that distracted the audience and the debate opponent rather than answering the core of the problem. In Grice's theory, this behavior violates the maxim of relevance, because it shifts the focus from substantial questions to non-contextual technical issues.

Results of the Third Presidential Debate (January 7, 2024)

Main Themes: Defense, Security, International Relations, Globalization, Geopolitics, and Foreign Policy

1. Personal Attacks and Offensive Rhetoric (Politeness)

The third debate was quite heated, especially between Anies Baswedan and Prabowo Subianto, who exchanged harsh criticisms. In the segment on ethics of leadership in the defense sector, Anies criticized the performance of the Defense Ministry under Prabowo which "indicated ethical compromise" through the procurement of defense equipment from Food Estate and PT Teknologi Militer Indonesia. He stated: "In reality, there was a violation of ethics, and you still went ahead with a vice presidential candidate who violated ethics... what is the explanation?" Prabowo responded defensively and counterattacked, stating, "You are not qualified to talk about ethics... I think you are misleading."

According to observers from TKD Prabowo Gibran Sumut and Voxpol Center, this kind of rhetoric has gone beyond substantive debate and become unethical personal attacks. President Jokowi even highlighted that the third debate was dominated by mutual attacks rather than the delivery of policy ideas, thus reducing its educational value. In principle of communication ethics, this act of questioning the integrity and authority of opponents without concrete evidence violates the norms of politeness in political communication and ignores the goal of public education.

2. Claiming Data Without a Clear Source (Maxim of Quality)

Anies presented concrete data on the hacking of the Ministry of Defense website, the Rp700 trillion defense budget for the purchase of used defense equipment, and the inequality of housing for soldiers as the basis for the state's moral and ethical duties. However, when Prabowo was asked to explain the data, he refused, asserting that Anies' data was wrong, but did not provide any reply data in a public forum — offering only private dialogue.

Prabowo's inability or unwillingness to verify the data openly makes this debate potentially violative of the maxim of quality. This principle demands the delivery of accurate, complete, and accountable information. Without clear sources, the audience has difficulty assessing the validity of important issues such as security data leaks and corruption of defense equipment.

3. Polarizing Rhetoric and the Construction of US vs THEM (Responsibility)

The confrontational tone of the debate reinforced the polarization of supporters. Anies and Prabowo tended to draw a clear line between "we are moral leaders" versus "you are candidates without ethical evidence," which turned the discourse into an atmosphere of interpersonal conflict, not policy dialogue. The public's grimness—57% of survey respondents said they rejected debates that were too aggressive—showed that the public yearned for a solution-oriented discussion rather than divisive rhetoric. From the perspective of political communication ethics, the public deserves a constructive debate, not a battleground or intimidation tactics—which actually harm the role of politics as an instrument of education and national unity.

Results of the Fourth Vice Presidential Debate (January 21, 2024)

Main Themes: Energy, Natural Resources (SDA), Environment, Carbon Tax, Agrarian, and Indigenous Communities

1. **Partial or Selective Use of Data (Maxim of Quality)**
In the agrarian and environmental session, several vice presidential candidates highlighted issues by selecting data that supported their arguments, without presenting the full picture. For example, when Mahfud MD explained the importance of land data transparency, he revealed that data on illegal land was very difficult to access—even though there were communities and documents that stored this information. Meanwhile, Gibran Rakabuming Raka often emphasized the success of the downstreaming of the natural resource sector without mentioning the environmental impacts or related agrarian conflicts. This shows the tendency of using partial data—which supports ideological claims—endangering the principle of the Quality Maxim because it ignores important contexts such as deforestation, land conflicts, or pollution—which ultimately damages public trust.
2. **Simplification of Complex Issues (Maxim of Manner & Quantity)**
Issues such as carbon tax, environmental damage, and agrarian reform are often used as discussion material, but the explanations remain general and shallow. Muhaimin Iskandar, for example, brought up the terms "environmental ethics" and "ecological repentance" without explaining the implementation mechanism - not explaining who is responsible, how the carbon tax is managed, or the land redistribution scheme for indigenous peoples. According to Greenpeace and WALHI, this debate is "filled with gimmicks, lacking substance", and fails to touch on the roots of the climate crisis such as ecological debt and dependence on the extractive economy. Such simplification of the issue violates the maxims of manner (vagueness) and quantity (too little information), reducing the quality of the debate.
3. **Less Substantive Communication Style**
Several vice presidential candidates seemed to prefer emotional and ceremonial rhetoric rather than delivering concrete solutions. Republika and Greenpeace criticized the debate pattern which was more like an entertainment show than a serious policy discourse. Gibran, for example, intensively mentioned the term "downstream" up to 12 times, but provided minimal explanation of social justice strategies or environmental governance. This criticism reflects a violation of the principle of responsible communication - namely the obligation to deliver educational information, follow interactive jargon but also answer real critical issues.

Results of the Fifth Presidential Debate (February 4, 2024)

Main Themes: Social Welfare, Culture, Education, Information Technology, Health, Employment, Human Resources, and Inclusion

1. **Exaggerated Performance Claims or Unverified Data (Maxim of Quality)**
Presidential candidates—especially Prabowo Subianto and Anies Baswedan—often show off ambitious achievements, such as stunting reduction figures, plans to send 10,000 students abroad, and improvements to health facilities in each village. Although it sounds impressive, this rhetoric is often delivered without clear data verification—survey institutions, measurement periods, or margin of error limits—making it difficult for the public to assess the truth of these claims. According to Grice's theory, this violates the Maxim of Quality, because the audience is invited to accept data without a basis that can be independently verified.
2. **Attacks on Background or Track Record (Courtesy)**
The debate was calmer than the previous round, but there were still moments of subtle attacks that touched on the candidates' track records. Ganjar Pranowo, for example, implied that Prabowo's approach was too pragmatic by insinuating that the priority of "free food" was more than prevention for stunting. Although not harsh, attacks that aim at the motivation or political style of the candidate can be classified as a violation of the norm of politeness, because they lead the discourse from policy to personal aspects.
3. **Popular Rhetoric vs Policy Substance (Responsibility)**
There is a tendency for some presidential candidates to use rhetorical strategies that emphasize popular image or gimmicks rather than discussing technical details. For example, Anies emphasized the education budget and the issue of expensive UKT in a choice of words that touched on the emotional side, but were minimally accompanied by an implementation roadmap. Prabowo focused on plans to send students abroad, while the issue of education infrastructure or teacher distribution in the regions has not been discussed thoroughly.
According to the evaluative review, the debate was "gentle, with minimal attacks"—which was still positive—but their kokusest actually underestimated the substance. With minimal detailed

explanations, the rhetoric instead became a sweetener for sharp rhetoric without providing long-term educational value for the public.

Theoretical Interrelationships

The results of the analysis of ethical violations in the 2024 presidential and vice presidential debate can be significantly linked to various theories of political communication and pragmatics. One of the main foundations is Paul Grice's theory of Cooperative Principles, which explains that effective communication requires adherence to four maxims: quantity, quality, relevance, and manner. In the context of political debate, violations of these maxims can occur either intentionally or unintentionally, and often function as rhetorical strategies to create persuasive effects. For example, the use of technical jargon such as SGIE or greenflation without explanation in the fourth vice presidential debate, as well as claims of unverified data in the fifth presidential debate, are forms of violations of the maxims of quality and manner. (Moh. Gufron, 2023) When violations of maxims are used as a tool of political strategy, what happens is not strengthening public communication, but rather disguising information and manipulating audience perceptions, which directly harms the quality of democratic discourse.. (Uswatun Khasanah, 2024)

More broadly, Jürgen Habermas' theory of the public sphere and deliberative democracy provides a normative framework for assessing the quality of political debate. In Habermas' perspective, ideally the public sphere is a place where rational deliberation between citizens takes place that respects the validity of arguments and the principle of discursive equality. However, in reality, forms of communication such as personal attacks, discourse polarity, and elitist rhetorical inequality—which often emerged between Anies and Prabowo in the third debate—have instead created a "pseudo-public sphere" situation, namely a condition in which rational voices are defeated by symbolic power or personal charisma. (Heryanto, 2020) Furthermore, Habermas, through the concept of communicative rationality in *The Theory of Communicative Action*, calls for the importance of dialogue based on the best arguments, not impressions, attacks, or cognitive distortions.

In the 2024 presidential–vice presidential debate, many candidates actually used a strategic action communication style—not communicative action—where messages were structured to win sympathy, not for discursive truth. This phenomenon is also reflected in the findings of social media and news framing, (Darmawan, 2024) which strengthen sensational narratives instead of deepening public understanding of the issue.

Meanwhile, Geoffrey Leech's pragmatic approach to politeness provides an ethical dimension in debate communication. Leech emphasizes politeness maxims such as tact, approbation, modesty, and sympathy, which are the basis for ethical interaction in the public sphere. Unfortunately, the veiled rhetoric, satire, or cynical expressions used by candidates to discredit political opponents actually violate these principles. (Siti Noraien, 2016) Although linguistically they do not contain direct insults, these messages can still create unequal communication relations and move away from deliberative ethics.

Thus, the findings in this article not only document violations of the form and content of political rhetoric in the Indonesian context, but also strengthen the relevance of the classical theories of Grice, Habermas, and Leech in reading the degradation of the quality of political discourse in the contemporary public sphere. This study emphasizes that strengthening deliberative democracy in Indonesia is not enough only through electoral participation, but must be accompanied by improving the quality of political communication, namely communication that is transparent, argumentative, respects the principles of public decency, and is oriented towards educating citizens, not just political image building.

CONCLUSIONS

Content analysis of the five sessions of the 2024 presidential–vice presidential debates revealed a consistent pattern of violations of communication ethics. Candidates frequently violated the Maxim of Quality, such as the use of unverified data in the fifth presidential debate, as well as the violation of the Maxim of Manner through technical jargon without explanation in the vice presidential debate, which made it difficult for the audience to understand. In addition, aggressive rhetoric and personal attacks—although sometimes veiled—violated the principle of public decency and had the potential to trigger social polarization. This finding is in line with Grice's theory, where violations of the maxims—quality, quantity, relevance, and manner—hinder the creation of rational and informative dialogue. Support for Habermas and McQuail's theory also found the implementation of public

discourse filled with emotional rhetoric and baseless statements, and reflecting a "pseudo-public sphere" that threatens deliberative democracy. Practical implications show that these violations weaken public trust in the democratic process, as shown in a survey by Political Indicators which stated that 57.6% of voters rejected debates full of attacks[^] and an article by Suara Anak Negeri which highlighted the decline in trust in the media and democratic institutions due to repeated unethical rhetoric. Overall, this study strengthens previous literature by adding analysis of the frequency of ethical violations and linking findings to public perception, especially the influence of rhetoric on polarization. Practical recommendations include an active role for moderators and the media in requesting verification of candidate achievement data, as well as strengthening norms of civility in debates to maintain educational goals and democratic legitimacy.

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