

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

On 14 February 2024, Indonesia held another election after President Joko Widodo's 10-year term ended in October 2024. There are three pairs of presidential and vice-presidential candidates in this election, which are Anies Baswedan-Muhaimin Iskandar, Prabowo-Gibran, and Ganjar Pranowo-Mahfud MD. According to the KPU, the Prabowo-Gibran pair won in 36 provinces and overseas with 96,214,691 votes (58.58%). Anies Baswedan-Muhaimin Iskandar pair won in two provinces, Aceh and West Sumatra, with 40,971,906 votes (24.94%). Ganjar Pranowo-Mahfud MD pair received 27,040,878 votes (16.46%). The presidential inauguration was held on 20 October 2024, with Prabowo Subianto as President and Gibran Rakabuming Raka as his vice president (Farisa, 2024; mza, 2024; Sanur L., 2024).

It is important to note that several noteworthy events occurred during this year's election. One significant issue was Gibran Rakabuming Raka's eligibility, as he was allowed to run despite not meeting the minimum age requirement of 40 years according to the Election Law. Not to mention, he is also the eldest son of President Joko Widodo, which made this election coloured by the element of nepotism (Muhid et al., 2024; Reliubun, 2024; Suhenda & Janti, 2024). Additionally, among the noteworthy events during 2024 was the emergence of fan activism in support of Anies Baswedan,

particularly through the activities of the @aniesbubble account on X. Aniesbubble is an X account, similar to a K-pop fanbase account, that was created on December 29, 2023. The term 'bubble' in usernames refers to a fan platform called Bubble, allowing K-pop idols to share exclusive photos and videos with fans who subscribe for access. This has led to the emergence of fan accounts on X that share this paid content for free, often incorporating "bubble" or "bbl" in their usernames, like aniesbubble. (S. Lee & Prey, 2025).

The account @aniesbubble on social media platform X became a trending topic. This account, which claims it is not affiliated with Anies' campaign team or any online buzzers, promotes Anies Baswedan like a South Korean idol. Anies Baswedan also gained the Korean nickname 'Park Ahn Nice', while his running mate, Muhaimin Iskandar, is referred to as Cha I Min, a variation of his nickname Cak Imin (BBC Indonesia, 2024; Fairuz, 2024). He has received an official emoji, represented by an owl, from @aniesbubble, which he has included in his bio on X. A lightstick called "olpbong" was showcased by him during the Desak Anies event held at Da'Coffe Coffee & Eatery, Samarinda, on Thursday, January 11, 2023. Additionally, the name "Humanies," created by @aniesbubble for his fandom, is frequently mentioned by him as he expresses gratitude for their positive contributions to both his presidential campaign and social service initiatives. His live TikTok sessions while traveling in the car have been compared to K-Pop idols greeting fans on social media after music events (Regar, 2024; Setiawanty, 2024; Setiawanty, 2024a).

Anies Baswedan himself admitted that the phenomenon of 'kpopfication' towards him only occurred in this year's election, "This is a breakthrough in political involvement that has not existed before," said the former Governor of DKI Jakarta at the event, Sunday, 25 February 2024 (Putra, 2024). The BBC Indonesia also stated that political observers argue that the emergence of K-pop fandom in the form of the @aniesbubble account on social media X during the 2024 presidential election campaign, especially the phenomenon experienced by Anies Baswedan, is very surprising considering that this has never happened in previous elections. They consider that this phenomenon will have a major effect on the vote, as K-pop fans in Indonesia are very large and known for their militancy (BBC Indonesia, 2024; Revanda, 2024). Anies Baswedan is also given a familiar greeting from his fans on TikTok, including the followers of the @aniesbubble account on X, namely Abah. This is due to Anies Baswedan's character, who is like a father figure because he gives advice about life and family (Ayu, 2024; Jasmine, 2024). Consequently, the role of @aniesbubble is significant in shaping how Anies Baswedan is represented on social media. Abel, the person behind the account, employs K-pop fan culture to reshape Anies Baswedan's public image into that of a K-pop idol, particularly appealing to Gen Z. A 2022 Katadata Insight Centre Survey shows that most K-pop fans on Twitter are primarily Gen Z (ages 15-17), followed by Millennials (ages 26-41) (Ahdiat, 2022).

The symbolic representation created by @aniesbubble differs significantly from the public perception of Anies Baswedan during the 2017

Jakarta gubernatorial election. At that time, Baswedan's political image was closely tied to discussions about religion and ethnicity, largely because he received support from several Islamic groups, especially the FPI, also known as the Islamic Defenders Front, which was involved in the 212 movement. This movement called for the imprisonment of his opponent, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, on charges of blasphemy and was seen as a political agenda to win a particular candidate (Anies-Sandiaga Uno). At the beginning of his term, Anies also received various nicknames, one of which was 'The Anti-Diversity Governor.' While he was still governor, he inaugurated four non-Muslim places of worship. He was also reported to visit places of worship during major religious holidays frequently, but issues related to the phenomenon that occurred in the 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election resurfaced when Baswedan became a presidential candidate in the 2024 election (Aziz, 2017; Bonasir, 2017; Ibrahim, 2023; CNN Indonesia, 2022). This illustrates that political image is not fixed, rather, it can be tailored to resonate with specific target audiences. Lalancette & Cormack (2020) argues that a political image serves as a strategic plan through which individuals or groups create an impression using verbal and visual symbols to influence how audiences perceive them. For example, @aniesbubble has constructed a new, more approachable image of Anies Baswedan, aligning it with the cultural references of K-pop fandom. Enli (2017) emphasises that social media platforms enable candidates to communicate directly with voters, employing a particular communication style to capture attention and develop their public image. This political phenomenon also reflects Pierre



Bourdieu's concept of habitus, where social structures, in this case, K-pop fan culture, influence the formation of new dispositions among audiences, reshaping how they engage with political figures.

In the context of habitus, disposition refers to the tendencies individuals have to think, feel, and act based on their social experiences. This indicates that disposition is not inherent but is shaped by ongoing circumstances that influence a person (Halewood, 2023). This aligns with Bourdieu's explanation, where habitus refers to a system of internalised dispositions, including attitudes and values, developed through social interactions. It arises from repeated social activities and is influenced by cultural norms acquired from family, education, and media. While habitus is generally consistent, individuals can adapt it through new experiences and various social contexts (Bourdieu, 1990). An example can be seen in research conducted by Situ et al. (2020), the case of the Chinese government using political ideology to influence the Corporate Environmental Reporting (CER) practices of state-owned and private companies. As a result, the Chinese government succeeded in shaping corporate behaviour in environmental reporting, resulting in practices aligned with government interests.

Additionally, Milani et al. (2021) explored migration management in Sweden using Pierre Bourdieu's habitus theory. Their research emphasised policy changes that prioritise mastering the Swedish language and adopting the culture and values of Swedish society. The state plays a significant role in shaping the political dispositions of its citizens and

institutions, such as the media and public policy. In Bourdieu's perspective, these two studies reflect how habitus is formed in a group, not only individuals, in a way that is by the disposition instilled by the state, especially in politics. In line with this, in Foucault's perspective on power, public policy includes the manifestation of power in society. It influences every facet of life, from family relationships to educational institutions, government, and the healthcare system (Sarvesh, 2022; Foucault, 1980).

The depiction of disposition in the previous two cases illustrates how a group's habitus can be shaped by the instilled disposition of a regulation. However, it does not imply that this disposition always leads to the same actions. Bourdieu noted that individuals and groups respond to changes based on their social experiences and positions in society. As in the frontier concept explained by Schetter & Müller-Koné (2021), neglected areas that the apparatuses want to take over will bring out the people's dispositions that reflect efforts to survive or resist political domination.

Moreover, Ancelovici (2021) introduced the Field Opportunity Structure (FOS) concept, opening new social mobilisation opportunities. This study shows that a group's disposition affects their readiness to use political opportunities. This could be due to their habitus, which creates a feeling of unpreparedness to respond to change. In line with this case, Foucault also argues that power is not only repressive, as in the previous example, but also productive, one of which creates space for the emergence of resistance. Through his book, Foucault explains that resistance does not mean building a massively organised counterforce but rather resistance that

arises at points where power works, even in small forms, exactly as described in the case study above (Sarvesh, 2022; Foucault, 1980).

In the digital sphere, the online campaign by @aniesbubble on social media platform X utilises elements of K-pop culture that have helped create a symbolic representation of Anies Baswedan. This phenomenon has contributed to shaping a different political disposition of him. Instead of merely presenting him as a politician, the campaign successfully portrays Anies Baswedan as an approachable figure, promoting a relationship with his fans on the @aniesbubble X account that goes beyond the conventional voter-candidate dynamic. This case illustrates how power operates in everyday life, as Foucault described. However, the analysis primarily draws on Bourdieu's theory of habitus, particularly field-specific habitus where the field refers to digital politic, which explains how online political campaign can shape political dispositions toward public figures.

Previous studies have described how K-pop fandom actively engages in political issues and focuses on K-pop fans as protestors. Phoborisut & Jiwoo (2024) emphasised how K-pop fandoms in Thailand leveraged their digital skills to organize and support social movements in 2020 amidst a repressive political environment and shortages of medical supplies due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These fandoms utilised Twitter to protest using the hashtag #WhatsHappeningInThailand, along with creative content such as memes, posters, and videos. This study demonstrates that K-pop fandoms can facilitate collective action, provide financial support, and use Twitter as a platform to promote political activities. On domestic

political issues, Fadillah et al. (2022) highlights K-pop fans in Indonesia who actively participated in a digital campaign against The Job Creation Act, also known as the Indonesian Omnibus Law in October 2020. Using Social Network Analysis (SNA) and Standpoint theory, the writers analyse K-Pop fans' activities on social media, focusing on their involvement in supporting social issues. It aims to offer a new perspective, which is concerning K-pop fandom engagement in political issues and emphasizes their potential as a valuable national asset that can be mobilised by the public.

Fadillah et al. (2022) and Phoborisut & Jiwoo (2024)'s studies show how K-pop fandom has characteristics when spreading awareness in their circle by raising hashtags, creating memes from their idol's photos or videos, and calling on fellow fandoms to tweet or retweet massively on X. The campaign strategy by @aniesbubble on X uses the same pattern as fan activism activities carried out by K-pop fandom, such as creating hashtags and sharing information related to Anies Baswedan's activities during the 2024 general election campaign. With this political phenomenon, this study offers a fresh perspective on politics by examining how K-pop fandom culture is used to reimagine a political figure. Unlike previous research that focuses on K-pop fans as activists or protestors, this study highlights how @aniesbubble as an actor campaigning for a politician in the context of an election, not as a protestor activist. Anies Baswedan is symbolically represented as a K-pop idol through @aniesbubble's fan-based campaign strategies. This symbolic representation contributes to shaping a new



political disposition that moves away from previous conservative associations and toward a more emotional, inclusive, and idol-like image. Thus, this study also provides a novel contribution to the study of politics and popular culture in the context of digital campaigning.

The writer chooses Multimodal Discourse Analysis by Kress and van Leeuwen because it allows for a comprehensive examination of different modes of communication, including text, images, and symbols. This theory is particularly relevant for analysing the @aniesbubble X account, as the campaign incorporates various semiotic elements from K-pop fandom culture. Additionally, Bourdieu's theory of Habitus is selected because it helps explain how social experiences shape an individual's thoughts, feelings, and actions. This is important for the research's goal of understanding how the representation affects Anies Baswedan's political disposition. The choice of @aniesbubble account as the primary data source is significant due to its role in promoting Anies Baswedan using K-pop terminologies and symbols. This account serves as a digital space where political discourse is reshaped through the lens of K-pop fandom culture, making it an ideal case study for analysing Anies Baswedan's disposition through a symbolic approach based on popular culture.

## 1.2 Research Questions

How is Anies Baswedan's political disposition transformed through symbolic representation in @aniesbubble's online campaign on X?

### 1.3 Purpose of the Study

To analyse how Anies Baswedan's political disposition transformed through symbolic representation in @aniesbubble's online campaign on X.

### 1.4 Scope of the Study

The scope of this research focused on tweets posted by the @aniesbubble X account during the 2024 Indonesian presidential election campaign. The data was limited to tweets published from 30/12/2023 to 10/02/2024 that contained multimodal elements that were considered Kpopfication of Anies Baswedan's. Furthermore, the data collection period was selected for two key reasons: 1) it included the initial stages of the @aniesbubble account, and 2) it captured the peak of the 2024 Indonesian presidential election campaign, specifically, the portrayal of the campaign using Kpopfication for Anies Baswedan by @aniesbubble.

### 1.5 Significance of the Study

This research aimed to significantly enhance understanding symbolic representation and political disposition in digital campaigns by examining how @aniesbubble constructs Anies Baswedan's image not as a traditional political figure, but as a K-pop idol. Utilising Multimodal Discourse Analysis and Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of Habitus and Disposition, this study explored how textual, visual, and cultural elements contributed to transforming disposition for individuals. Additionally, this research provided valuable insights for academics regarding modern

political communication strategies that leverage popular culture to establish a more relatable candidate image in the digital space.

## 1.6 State of the Art

Previous studies have examined how K-pop fandom culture is utilised in political discourse as a form of activism on social media platforms. Kang (2023) highlighting the application of K-pop fandom culture: fan activism. During the 2019 Korea-Japan trade dispute, K-pop fans used social media to protest, demanding that entertainment agencies cancel upcoming concerts in Japan as part of a nationwide boycott of Japanese brands. The method used in this study is critical discourse analysis (CDA), which involved analysing tweets by EXO and Seventeen fans during the Cancel the Japan Tour protest with data set consisted of 2,360 tweets generated by identifying major themes and related keyword. The analysis reveals how fans balance their identities as consumers and protectors, emphasizing their role in shaping the K-pop industry while reflecting on the interplay between local politics and global fandom.

Chang et al. (2023), in an article titled Parasocial Diffusion: K-pop Fandoms Help Drive COVID-19 Public Health Messaging on social media published in the *Online Social Networks and Media Journal*, also highlighted fan activism from K-pop fandom on X during COVID-19. Through this research, the writers study the effectiveness of how K-pop fans promote health campaigns about COVID-19 on social media X on a global scale. The results of this study suggest that public health agencies can utilise

audience markets (such as K-pop fandom) to target underserved communities domestically and abroad, especially during health crises.

Phoborisut & Jiwoo (2024) emphasised how K-pop fandoms in Thailand leveraged their digital skills to organize and support social movements in 2020 amidst a repressive political environment and shortages of medical supplies due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These fandoms utilised Twitter to protest using the hashtag #WhatsHappeningInThailand, along with creative content such as memes, posters, and videos. This study demonstrates that K-pop fandoms can facilitate collective action, provide financial support, and use Twitter as a platform to promote political activities.

Shifting focus to more localised issues, a study conducted by Mulyana & Wahyuningroem (2025) discussed how K-pop fans, particularly fangirls, utilised Twitter to engage in digital activism against the Omnibus Law. While the article primarily focuses on gender issues related to fangirls, it also emphasises how K-pop fans shared information, educated others, and organised the movement to reject the law. They used hashtags such as #MotionNoTrust, #RefuseOmnibusLaw, #CancelOmnibusLaw, and others to amplify their message.

Fadillah et al. (2022) highlights K-pop fans in Indonesia who actively participated in a digital campaign against The Job Creation Act, also known as the Indonesian Omnibus Law in October 2020. Using Social Network Analysis (SNA) and Standpoint theory, the writers analyse K-Pop



fans' activities on social media, focusing on their involvement in supporting social issues.

Previous studies have primarily concentrated on K-pop fandom as a form of activism. However, there has been little exploration into how K-pop fandom culture is employed in election campaigns to create a symbolic representation of a political figure akin to a K-pop idol. Additionally, the impact of "Kpopfication" on transforming a politician's image into one that is inclusive and appealing to young voters is still limited.

