



## FIFA Hegemony in Indonesia: The Removal of U-20 World Cup Hosting

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### Abstract

*Indonesia has one of football's biggest fan bases. This study explores public reactions to Indonesia losing its U-20 World Cup hosting status. It aims to: 1) trace responses on Twitter, 2) analyze reactions from national figures opposing the Israeli team, and 3) examine public sentiments towards FIFA's influence. The removal sparked mixed reactions, affecting the image of various political figures in Indonesia. Data was gathered through content analysis of 5,000 tweets from March 30 to April 7, 2023, focusing on comments related to the U-20 World Cup. The findings indicated that the public predominantly criticized political figures who opposed hosting the event, mainly due to the controversy surrounding the Israeli national team's participation. The 2023 FIFA cancellation coincided with a significant political moment in Indonesia, where GP and IWK, from the PDI-P party, opposed the Israeli team's participation in FIFA, citing support for Palestine. In contrast, ET, as both PSSI chairman and Minister of State-Owned Enterprises, aimed to maintain Indonesia's reputation in the football community. This rejection led to public backlash against GP, ET, and IWK, negatively impacting their popularity, particularly GP's presidential electability. The lack of a detailed explanation behind FIFA's decision highlights its global authority in football.*

**Keywords:** hegemony, public reactions, FIFA U-20 World Cup, content analysis, Indonesian football

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## INTRODUCTION

Football is the ballet of the masses. It is the most popular sport in Indonesia (Fuller 2015). The Indonesian people's interest in football is reflected in diverse occasions (Fuller and Junaedi 2020). Nowadays, football is a cultural institution and practice that is run globally, no longer dominated and organized only by the West (Akindes 2013; Horton 2011). In the context of Asian football, through the AID27 Project, the Asian Football Confederation initiated financing for the promotion of football in Asia as a form of social responsibility campaign by utilizing football as a vehicle for achieving development, peace, and social justice (Weinberg 2012).

The U-20 World Cup in 2023 was planned to be hosted in Indonesia. But the host status was withdrawn due to several reasons. It was not concisely explained by the International Federation de Football Association (FIFA 2023). The U-20 World Cup event in Indonesia has been anticipated for 3 (three) years. Indonesia succeeded in eliminating several countries that applied for the hosting of the World Cup. With this removal, the reactions of netizens are very diverse. Several political figures were criticized. Although 79.6% of citizens tend not to want to mix politics with football (LSI 2023).

The netizen reactions are often measured as a reflection of the public in the real world (Kruse, Norris, and Flinchum 2018). The reactions to removing the U-20 World Cup are intriguing, both pro and con. Some linked the rejection by political figures of the arrival of the Israeli national team. Others also argue that there is a Kanjuruhan tragedy in Malang. The technical preparation was also an issue. Research showed that Twitter can be analyzed as a monitor of public opinion (Giachanou and Crestani 2016). It is because public opinion is the output of social processes (Dong and Lian 2021). It means that public opinion is related to various social forces and institutions, demographic profiles of media users, urban or rural issues, and family conditions. Public opinion is linked to the local culture and must always be considered in its social context.

Mettadewi (2023) highlighted how the information about the removal reached the public. The mediators played an important role in disseminating information about Indonesia's removal as a U-20 host (Mettadewi and Prawira 2023). Maksum (2024) highlights the President's statement as a public confusion. The President was trying to gain global recognition by a symbolic gesture to accept

Israel. On the other hand, he is trying to maintain Indonesia's alignment with the #freepalestine movement. The politicization of football amid the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Maksum et al. 2024). This politicization strengthened when the media began to mention the names of public figures who rejected Israel to coincide with entering the political year in Indonesia, one of which was GP, although the name of the Governor of Bali, IWK, was also mentioned (Praditya, Pradana, and Fensi 2023). Thus, the media's news slant towards Israel's rejection of the U20 in Indonesia has the potential for multiple interpretations and tends to be perceived as drawing sympathy on behalf of one of the political celebrities in Indonesia. This kind of public interpretation obscures the constitutional mandate of the Indonesian Preamble of 1945 to reject all occupation and colonialism.

Influencers on Twitter trigger intense public interest in issues that shape public opinion (Bakshy et al. 2011). The discourse debated through mass media and other media also influences many people. Public opinion reflects a consensus, which emerges after a while, from all views directed toward a problem in the discussion, and the consensus has the power (Price 1992). Public opinion in this case is a communication process that takes place in society, which involves thoughts and feelings expressed privately (Price 1992). Mass media, especially social media, becomes a configuration, even the center of attention as an information intermediary, and determines the topic of discussion discourse, such as the news of the removal of the World Cup in Indonesia, which plays an important role and becomes the focus of public attention (McGregor 2019). Social media allows the public to have broad opinions and express them more easily (Shirky 2011).

Recent research findings regarding the removal of Indonesia as the host for the U-20 World Cup reveal a significant shift in how football is perceived and valued within society. It highlights that football has evolved beyond being merely a standalone sports commodity; rather, it encapsulates a complex interplay of cultural, economic, and political dimensions that influence its enjoyment and significance. The sport is no longer just about the game itself, defined solely by the rules and the competitive spirit it embodies. Instead, it has emerged as a multifaceted entity that engages a broad audience and serves various interests, from local community pride to international recognition.

The vast market surrounding football transforms it into a platform for pursuing hegemonic recognition. This phenomenon is evident in how stakeholders, including government officials, media personalities, and influential social media figures, leverage the sport to garner attention and sway public opinion. The recent decision to revoke Indonesia's U-20 World Cup host status has underscored this dynamic, prompting a significant reaction from a diverse array of football fans and the broader public. The passionate debates that erupted across social media platforms, particularly Twitter, illustrate how such decisions spark intense discussions and emotional responses among various groups.

The presence of micro-celeb influencers and political figures has played a crucial role in shaping the discourse around the U-20 revocation. These individuals often hold sway over public sentiment, expertly tapping into the emotions of football enthusiasts and framing the narrative to highlight their ideological positions. This interplay exemplifies how hegemony operates—wielding influence not through overt coercion but rather through the subtle promotion of certain ideologies, practices, and values. By triggering emotional reactions and engaging fans in a dialogue about national pride and identity, these influencers can guide public perception and establish a dominant narrative.

The repercussions of the U-20 World Cup host removal extend beyond the realm of sports; they penetrate deeper into the social fabric of the nation, revealing underlying tensions tied to national identity, political sentiment, and global positioning. The polarized views surrounding the decision reflect a broader societal conflict over how Indonesia perceives its role within the global football community and the implications of such events on national pride.

This situation serves as a powerful reminder that football can be wielded as a tool for navigating the complex interests and influences of those in positions of power. By leveraging the emotional and cultural resonance of the sport, various stakeholders can assert their influence and garner support for differing agendas, whether those are political, social, or economic in nature. Ultimately, the cancellation of Indonesia's role as a host for the U-20 World Cup and the heated reactions that followed represent a microcosm of the larger dynamics at play in the world of football and its intersection with societal values and beliefs. As debates continue to unfold, it becomes increasingly clear that football is intricately woven

into the societal fabric, serving not just as a form of entertainment, but as a significant vehicle for grappling with broader issues of power, identity, and recognition on both national and global stages.

### **Identity Politics and Public Opinion on Twitter**

Twitter is one of the largest virtual public spheres today. The politicians try to look their best here (Ekman and Widholm 2014). In recent years, the stretching of Identity Politics, which often leads to populism in many countries, has attracted intellectual attention (Najib 2020). The strengthening of identity politics in the local realm coincides with decentralization politics (Soenjoto 2019). The power of this identity in Agnes Heller is interpreted as a political strategy of differentiation and the utilization of primordial ties (Santoso 2019). Many local and national political actors consciously use this issue in power sharing and social framing so that exploitation can occur, especially in the millennial generation. Recently, social media has often been associated with teenagers, who spend their time surfing (Zakirah 2020). With the presence of social media today, humans have changed their view of communication in society. It even makes the way humans communicate not necessarily face-to-face, such as meeting in person (Marchellia and Siahaan 2022).

Identity politics is distinct from "political identity" (Fukuyama 2018). Political identity tends to be an identity owned by a person or group. It is different from others. Meanwhile, "identity politics" is an effort made towards identity ownership to build a difference ("us" and "not us") with an emphasis on racial, ethnic, cultural, or even religious diversity (Fernandes 2018). Identity politics involves political understandings, attitudes, and actions (movements). It is based on emotions, concepts, characteristics, or categorizations that differentiate from other groups or communities (Alfaqi 2015)

Identity politics is a dominant issue for democracies with heterogeneous societies (Ardipandanto 2020). The strong influence of identity politics in the local realm is feared to cause segregation in the sustainable social life of the community. Identity politics, as far as the implementation of general elections, both at the national and local levels, has become a powerful tool to knock down the defenses of political opponents. These elements include ethnicity, religion, race, and

intergroup (Aboi 2024; Eriksen 2001). Identity politics can be implemented in various ways (Faraidiany and Kusmanto 2019).

### **Content Analysis on Twitter**

Social media has become a limitless expressive space for netizens (Gündüz 2017). Twitter is one of the most widely studied expressive spaces, including those related to sports (Yoon, Petrick, and Backman 2017). Twitter has 24 million active users in Indonesia and is the fifth-largest user in the world (WeAreSocial 2023). In many research results on content analysis on social media, most social media have become a preferred medium for netizens to express comments, materializing sentences or words containing hate speech to attack certain entities or other people (Fauzi and Yuniarti 2018). Not infrequently, netizens dare to "vulgar" expose videos containing hatred to blaspheme others (Wibowo 2018) or voice criticism for the government (Wijaya and Ida 2021). Content analysis in the social media space is widely used as an object of research, ranging from comments, video analysis, sentences, or words, to memes, which are indeed used as a way of expressive visualization for netizens on social media (Hakim et al., 2018; Prayoga 2022). Content analysis is a deepening of dynamics in social structures formed from the effects of social media penetration correlated with the meaning of the content of the issues or discourses that arise (Krippendorff 2019). Therefore, it is not uncommon for social media to become a chamber for reactions that cause friction in every interaction, connection activity, and usually have a chain effect.

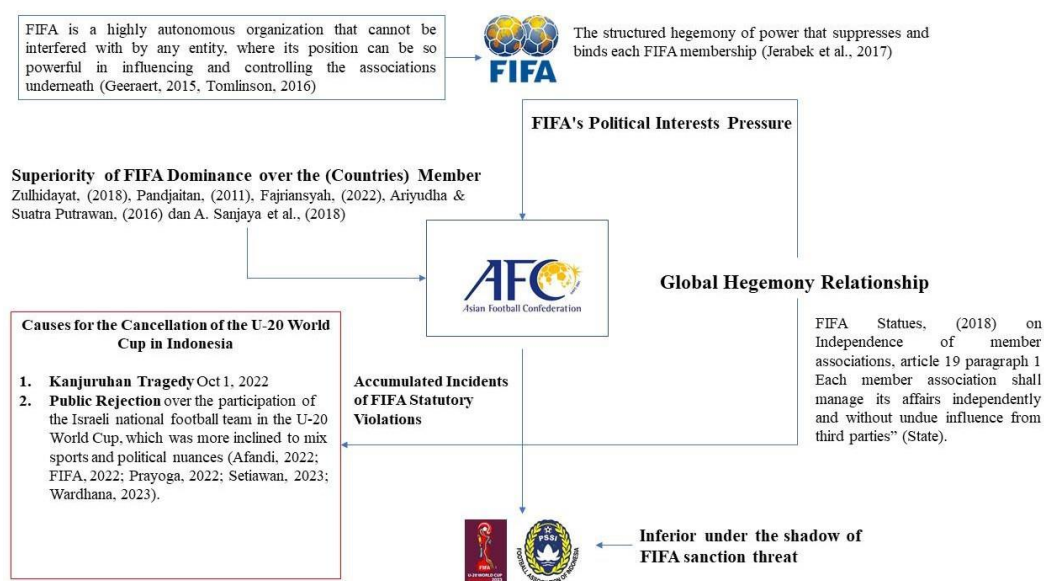
The consequences of the removal status caused a frictional effect of hot debate, polarization, and pro-con tempest among netizens. Therefore, this paper explores netizens' reactions to the removal of the U-20 World Cup. It examined the comments on the Twitter social media platform in a textual content analysis of netizens. There are 2 (two) considerations for Twitter to be the locus of data, the speed of dissemination of information circulating in society on Twitter (Azmi et al. 2021), the chain allure effect caused by the accelerated dissemination of popular information on Twitter often causes various upheavals among netizens (Wisnantiasri, Wisnantiasri, and Mutira 2020). This research was conducted when the Twitter API still allowed data to be crawled for free.

## PSSI under the shadow of FIFA Hegemony

The findings of research reviewing FIFA's relationship to global power in soccer are a unique concern. FIFA is an entity that represents the power of world soccer governance (Bainus et al., 2018). (Jerabek, Ferreira de Andrade, and Figueroa 2017) Explains that FIFA's hegemonic power on the global stage has placed this organization as a superpower entity in the world of football sports that can intervene in the national legal system in sports, thus diffusing power that places it under the shadow of the transnational legal system brought by FIFA. This hegemonic power diffused to PSSI as one of the subunits (members) under FIFA. PSSI is an extension of FIFA in Indonesia (Bahtra 2022).

**Figure 1.**

### Framework for the Relationship of FIFA's Political Hegemony over PSSI in the Removal of the U-20 World Cup in Indonesia



*Source: Author's Synthesis*

FIFA, as the governing body of global football, exerts a structured and dominant form of power hegemony over its member associations, including PSSI (Kusumawardhana and Badaruddin 2018; Saputra et al. 2018) (see figure 1). Through its legal authority and control over global football, FIFA can effectively neutralize the political power of member states when sanctions are imposed, demonstrating its ability to "control the world" of football (Aruan et al. 2014; Bainus et al. 2018). PSSI, as Indonesia's football governing body, was previously

sanctioned by FIFA for the dualism that plagued Indonesian football from 2011 to 2013 (Wima Putra, Priadarsini, and Resen 2017a). This sanction framed PSSI as powerless, particularly since FIFA considers state intervention in football governance a violation of its Statutes (Alfiyanto 2017; Prastya 2018). Taken together, these findings underscore FIFA's role as the ultimate authority in global football, capable of controlling and influencing the operations of its member organizations, reinforcing its hegemonic power within the sport.

Moreover, FIFA and its accumulated power over world football can dwarf the state intervention in the football association in a particular country. This is also confirmed by (Zulhidayat 2018), (Pandjaitan 2011), (Fajriansyah 2022), (Ariyudha and Suatra Putrawan 2016) and (Sanjaya et al. 2018) That is how dwarfed the sovereignty of the state is against FIFA's sovereignty, where the manifestation of any state or government intervention in the holding of professional football competitions (management of organizations, activities or competitions, and clubs participating in competitions) controlled by FIFA and the associations under it is a form of violation. The item prohibiting this intervention is stated in (FIFA Statutes, 2018) concerning the Independence of member associations, article 19 paragraph 1, "Each member association will manage its affairs independently and without undue influence from third parties".

The latest issue, FIFA canceled Indonesia's hosting of the U-20 World Cup (FIFA, 2023; PSSI, 2023c; Y. C. A. Sanjaya, 2023a). This removal was in the aftermath of a series of football controversies that occurred in Indonesia, starting from "Bloody Kanjuruhan" to the peak of rejection from several regional heads over the participation of the Israeli national football team in the U-20 World Cup which was more inclined to mix sports and political nuances (Afandi, 2022; FIFA, 2022; Prayoga, 2022; Setiawan, 2023; Wardhana, 2023). In the aftermath, FIFA only imposed administrative sanctions (yellow cards), and this sanction became a thanksgiving from PSSI for the fear of being imposed with heavier sanctions (PSSI 2023a). Once again, how strong FIFA's hegemony is over the sanctions imposed on associations that are not in line with its rules, even the interference of third parties (state or government) in the management of organizations, activities, or competitions, and clubs participating in the competition is considered a violation. One proof of FIFA's hegemony that makes Indonesia helpless is the cancellation as the host of the U-20 World Cup in 2023 (Y. C. A. Sanjaya 2023). FIFA unilaterally,



quickly, and uncompromisingly revoked the privilege of Indonesia's host status in the U-20 World Cup (FIFA, 2023). The helplessness of PSSI and the Indonesian government indicates that their bargaining position in FIFA hegemony is “weak”. (Geeraert 2015) and (Tomlinson 2016) also emphasize that FIFA is a highly autonomous organization and cannot be intervened by any entity, where its position can be so powerful in influencing and controlling the associations under it.

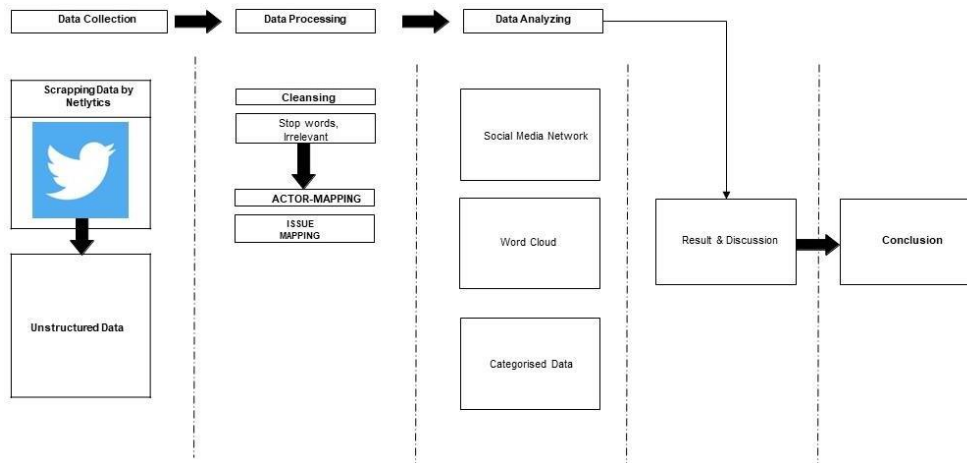
When viewed through the lens of FIFA's political hegemony, its structure resembles a bureaucracy. Bureaucracy is often defined as a system of government management that enforces legal and political execution, reinforcing rules, procedures, and principles such as good governance, authority, propriety, and integrity, all grounded in the public interest (Simangunsong 2020). Adapted to the context of FIFA's hegemony, FIFA operates similarly to a state bureaucracy, yet it is not immune to the pathologies that can afflict such systems, including abuse of authority, procedural inefficiencies, and delays. In some controversial instances, FIFA has been linked to bureaucratic pathologies such as mafia-like corruption, labor exploitation (modern-day slavery), and money laundering (Amnesty International 2024; Gordon 2014; Thür 2017). These issues were notably highlighted in the controversy surrounding Qatar's selection as the 2022 World Cup host (Chadwick 2022; Sullivan 2022). FIFA's position as the global governing body of football is politically charged, and its autonomy is protected to the point where it remains beyond the reach of state intervention, existing in a realm of authority separate from national governments. In essence, FIFA's hegemony mirrors the dynamics of a bureaucratic political system in its interactions with its member associations.

## **METHODS**

This study uses a qualitative approach with a critical paradigm. The object of this research is the reaction of Twitter social media users to the phenomenon of canceling the U-20 World Cup in Indonesia. Figure 2 shows the scheme of data collection, data analysis, and conclusion drawing. The subject of this study is Twitter social media users who flooded comments because of this phenomenon. The number of 5000 tweets that can be retrieved on March 30, 2023- April 10, 2023, using Communalytics (formerly Netlytic) in 2 datasets with the keyword "U-20

World Cup". The research method used is Content Analysis. This research prioritizes the analysis that occurs from the text that appears in each tweet.

**Figure 2.**  
**Research Flow**



*Source: compiled by the researcher*

Based on Figure 2, the data collection as the primary data of this study is a way to deepen the dynamics in the social structure formed from the effects of social media penetration correlated with the meaning of the content of the issues or discourses that arise (Krippendorff, 2019; Lai Linda S.L & To W M, 2015; Shen & Bissell, 2013). Content analysis of Twitter shows the interaction connections and chain effects of each content posted by an account. The source of data collection is based on Twitter, zoomed in on the discourse of Indonesia's removal as host of the U20 World Cup in 2023 (keywords and sentences). The posting data from Twitter becomes the data concerning the theme determined by the researcher through keywords and sentences. The data collected using Communalitics (formerly Netlytic) then became a dataset of the number of tweets reaching 5000. The data filtration was conducted in Excel. This reduction includes a cleaning process to eliminate irrelevant tweet data. Data that has been cleaned and relevant to the theme, researchers classify tweet data by mapping issues and filtering data through Communalitics (formerly Netlytic) processing applications. The data was then re-analyzed with Communalitics (formerly Netlytic) and visualized through social media networks, word cloud, and categorization to determine tweets that could enrich the researcher's analysis

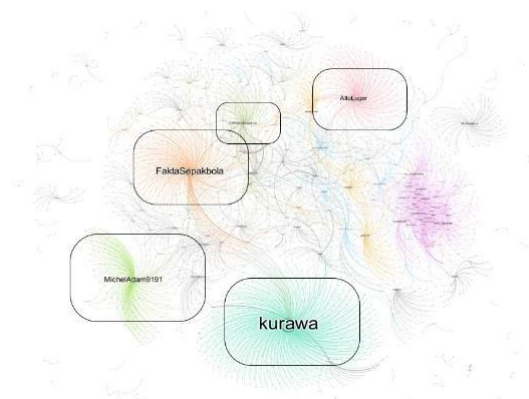
## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The Actors Mapping of the U-20 Tournament Removal Response on Twitter

Since the emergence of social media, research related to it has begun to expand. This study itself uses the content analysis method. The method relies on the form of text that appears and the meaning in it. The keyword used was "U-20 World Cup". This keyword became a trending topic on Twitter for 2 (two) days after the Governor of Bali, IWK, delivered a statement of Bali's rejection of the arrival of the contingent from Israel due to criticism of colonization. This response was publicly shocking. Since the preparations for the U-20 World Cup had been quite long.

Data was crawled from Twitter from March 30, 2023, to April 11, 2023. This period was taken as the peak of attention of netizens. They were very focused on this issue. Within this time frame, several events attracted netizens, such as the statement of the Governor of Bali, the Governor of Central Java, and the meeting of the PSSI chairman and Minister of BUMN ET with FIFA President GI. The peak was the decision to withdraw Indonesia as the host of the U-20 World Cup. Twitter also recorded several influential actors and public figures who were widely mentioned. This data collection uses CommuAnalytics (formerly Netlytic) in 2 datasets. During this period, the Twitter API was still open. The data collection was still freely possible. From the existing data, the following visualization is carried out:

**Figure 3.**  
**Social Media Actor Network (Researcher Data Processed with Netlytics)**



### Top Tweets Related to the U-20 World Cup Host Withdrawal

Based on the data that resulted in the visualization of the social media network above, 5 large clusters were obtained (see Figure 3) based on tweets from @Kurawa, @FaktaSepakbola, @MichalAdam 9191, @CNNIndonesia, and @Altoluger. Each tweet has its message and direction. This then narrows the audience to certain groups according to their interests. Where Twitter is a communication platform that adjusts to the interests of each user (Nguyen 2021).

**Figure 4.**  
**@Kurawa's Tweet**



Tweet from @Kurawa (see figure 4), for example, attempts to explain what happened behind the meeting between PSSI Chairman ET and FIFA President GI. Wrapped as an investigative story, this tweet attracts the public to read and react to how lobbying is done so that FIFA does not sanction and still believes in organizing the U-20 World Cup in Indonesia. Citizens' reactions to this tweet tend to be diverse, with positive and negative sentiments arguing in the thread. According to Gaisbauer (2021), with the current features in Twitter, a direct and mediated effect on the perception of public opinion is possible in existing debates (Gaisbauer et al. 2021).

Tweets (see figure 4) that tended to convey the chronology of the meeting sparked pros and cons. In the context of the time, this meeting was crucial before FIFA announced the removal of Indonesia as the host of the U-20 World Cup.

@Kurawa or Rudi Valinka personally calls himself an Ahoker, as he is the author of the book and movie #AManCalledAhok. One of the tweets in this thread that drew reactions from netizens was when he mentioned the potential for the Bali bombing to happen again if Israel, as one of the World Cup U-20 participants, were to happen. As one of the sympathizers of a certain national political actor, we should be suspicious of how the tweet was deliberately directed to provoke public opinion in favor of a certain image.

**Figure 5.**

**MichelAdam9191's Tweet**



Figure 5 highlights how PSSI has failed in 3 ways. First, PSSI's error in the Kanjuruhan tragedy case. Second, Erick Thohir's dual position is a form of political intervention in Indonesian football. Third, Indonesia failed to meet the infrastructure requirements, where only 2 (two) stadiums meet FIFA standards. This account frequently displays open support for presidential candidate AB. It is no wonder that this tweet was stormed by their supporters. In opposition, the government's failure will always be criticized. Tweet (figure 4) and tweet (figure 5) deserve to be suspected as rected tweets to glorify certain political parties.

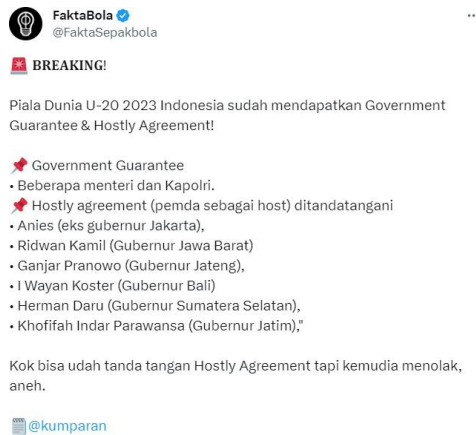
**Figure 6.**  
**CNN Indonesia Tweet**



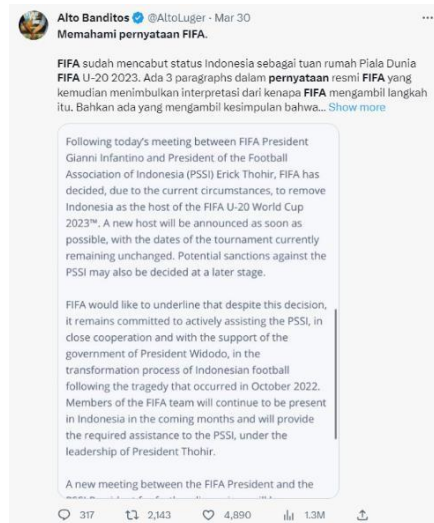
Unlike the 2 (two) tweets above that originated from personal opinions, the tweet (see figure 6) comes from the journalistic product of CNN Indonesia's editorial staff. This tweet presented a statement from Sandiaga Uno regarding the estimated loss from the removal of the U-20 World Cup in Indonesia reached Rp. 3.7 T (see figure 6). Additionally, the hospitality, transportation, and culinary sectors were significantly impacted by this removal. The potential profits expected from promotional activities, sponsorships, and ticket sales also vanished, resulting in substantial financial losses. This loss received mixed responses from netizens. Especially, those who regretted the removal. The impact of the removal is linked to the removal of various tourism events and activations prepared previously by tourism stakeholders in Indonesia. It turns out that this loss from the tourism side is one of the main concerns on Twitter.

Figure 7.

Tweets from @faktabola



Tweet in Figure 7 is a sports citizen journalism product that presents various points related to the U-20 World Cup. The tweets caught the public's attention (see figure 7). It focuses on the Government Guarantee and Hostly Agreement. It is already signed but this seems to fail to be understood by the Governor of Bali and the Governor of Central Java, the two Governors who spoke out against the arrival of Israel as one of the U-20 World Cup participants. The reply to this tweet was more about regretting the statements of the two governors, which were felt to have appeared at an inopportune time. Finally, this cluster is where GP and IWK are criticized. From a political standpoint, this move affected their leadership image both nationally and internationally, sparking debates about policy priorities and their impact on Indonesia's chances of hosting major events in the future.

**Figure 8.****Tweet from @Altoluger**

Tweet (see figure 8) is a tweet from @Altoluger, a social media activist, and political and security observer. He tries to elaborate on what FIFA's statement regarding the removal of Indonesia's host means. He emphasized the FIFA decision was purely political. It is considered not to be based on previous events (Kanjuruhan Tragedy). Thus, the figures who caused the removal deserved to be criticized for their commitment to the organization of the U-20 World Cup. This tweet drew the attention of many audiences who wanted to get a deeper analysis of what was described by FIFA in its official release. Many netizens appreciate this tweet. It was considered better than the existing release. The government did not provide complete information regarding the withdrawal, leading to wild speculation.

Of the 5 (five) tweets that received considerable reactions in this research period, it can be seen how the pro network and the con network meet in the tweets of @kurawa, @FaktaBola, and @CNNIndonesia. Meanwhile, the network of accounts that oppose the government is visible in the tweets of @MichelAdam9191 and @Altoluger. The figure that was highlighted was PSSI Chairman ET's efforts to defend Indonesia's host status. Meanwhile, the Governor of Bali IWK and the Governor of Central Java SP were two actors who initiated the rejection of Israel, widely criticized.



**Figure 9.**  
**Wordcloud Tweets (Processed by Researcher)**



This fact is confirmed in the word cloud generated from data processing. Word cloud analysis helps facilitate a quick understanding of text content without the need for detailed reading. For example, in the context of sentiment analysis, words with positive or negative connotations can be quickly identified (figure 9). It even appears that there is also a hashtag #GueBarengErickThohir as one of the words from the existing data. This shows an effort to construct an image of ET to coincide with this crucial moment. Hashtags are powerful collective action tools on Twitter (Johnson et al. 2019). Where the ET is one of the main actors. The public stage belongs to ET at this moment. 80% of the public believes ET has made maximum efforts to maintain Indonesia's host status (LSI 2023). GP and IWK became the parties cornered by netizens. Previously, the electability of GP, a Presidential Candidate, began to change from rising steadily to slowly falling (LSI 2023). GP electability dropped significantly from 27.1% in February 2023 to 19.8%.

### **Twitter reactions to Comments from national figures who rejected the Israeli national team.**

The removal of Indonesia as the host of the U-20 World Cup led to diverse Twitter reactions. One of the reasons is that FIFA's statement is considered less straightforward in explaining the withdrawal. Twitter user @mallona97 said, "There is no need to find a scapegoat about Indonesia failing to host the U-20 World Cup. What is clear is that @GANJAR\_PRANOWO and @I\_WAYAN\_KOSTER cannot "move alone". They were not being warned by Megawati or Jokowi, their fellow PDIP party's elite. The upload was made at 14:30 p.m. on March 30, 2023.

The tweet is a form of netizens avoiding speculating on FIFA's statement. Public figures often mentioned by name on Twitter after FIFA's release of the U-20 World Cup in Indonesia are as follows:

**Table 1.**

**Actors and Number of Related Tweets**

No	Actor	Categories	Tweets
1	ET	National Politician	3147
2	GP	National Politician	1097
3	JW	National Politician	556
4	PS	National Politician	296
5	IWK	National Politician	240

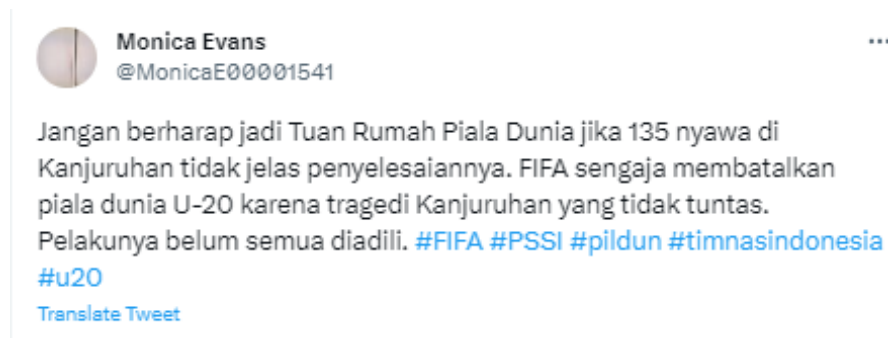
*Source: research primary data*

Public opinion on Twitter over the removal of the U-20 World Cup in Indonesia was dominated by statements by public figures who rejected the presence of the Israeli national team in the U-20 World Cup in Indonesia. As explained earlier, based on Table 1, ET became the most discussed figure, while the governors of Central Java GP and Bali IWK were criticized. PS is also an actor who is discussed, linked to the fact that the existing dynamics benefit his electability. Meanwhile, JW, the President of Indonesia, tried to be in the middle by emphasizing how politics and football are not mixed.

Public reactions sprung up because of the unclear reasons for canceling the U-20 World Cup in Indonesia, such as what Monica Evans wrote in a tweet (see figure 10) which questioned the removal of the World Cup because previously there had been a bloody tragedy at the Kanjuruhan Stadium in Malang Regency which killed hundreds of lives, and according to Monica Evans there has been no real investigation and handling by either the government or PSSI. This tragedy has prompted a comprehensive evaluation of safety standards in football matches in Indonesia, including improvements in crowd management systems and safer stadium management.

Figure 10.

Tweets from Monica Evans



Some of these controversies caused netizens to speculate on comments on the removal of the U-20 World Cup. However, from tweets made by netizens, many commented on GP, as the Governor of Central Java who openly rejected the arrival of the Israeli national team to Indonesia. This triggered the reaction of netizens who considered it as one of the causes of the cancellation of the U-20 World Cup in Indonesia. As what was quoted on the CNN Indonesia account in a tweet (figure 11).

Figure 11.

Tweet from CNN related to GP



This tweet from @CNNIndonesia has been viewed by 48,800 followers, giving rise to an extraordinary reaction. The comments on the rejection of Israel expressed by GP also varied (figure 11). Many have criticized this move as it is considered detrimental to national interests, particularly in terms of the economy and Indonesia's reputation as a host of major sporting events. This rejection is seen as

harming the opportunity to showcase Indonesia's capabilities on the international stage. This momentum was used for electoral political addresses because of GP's identity as a Governor and PDIP politician who nominated for president. Evidently, his electability began to decline after increasing from the beginning of the survey of 2024 presidential candidates.

**Figure 12.**

**Tweet from Panditfootball's related to GP**



The tweet (see figure 12) by panditfootball captured Hokky Caraka's disappointment in the GP account comments seen by 769100 followers and reposted 694 times. It became a narrative portrait of how people, event-related athletes show deep dissatisfaction. Social media gives freedom to express their feelings to the public. They often throw harsh expressions when communicating with others in real life. Sometimes, they think that it is a joke. This kind of expression is known as sarcasm. It potentially hurts the feelings of speech partners. It is considered a violation of the principle of politeness in language.

Figure 13.

Tweet from Kepa Argawinata2



Tweets illustrate the reaction of netizens who criticized the GP (see figure 13). This practice is quite prevalent in Indonesia and reflects a broader trend seen in many parts of the world. It is not uncommon for individuals to utilize social media primarily as a platform for expressing negative sentiments, often resorting to blasphemy or judgmental comments directed at others. This behavior is frequently manifested through the use of sarcasm, which, while it may appear humorous to some, can be deeply hurtful to the individuals at whom these comments are aimed. The immediate gratification that comes from publicly airing grievances can lead to a sense of satisfaction for those expressing their frustrations.

However, this phenomenon raises significant ethical concerns. Many social media users act impulsively, failing to consider the potential consequences of their actions on others. This lack of forethought contributes to a culture where individuals are more focused on venting their own disappointments rather than reflecting on the broader implications of their words. The commonly accepted notion of freedom on social media often becomes a double-edged sword, leading to actions that are devoid of ethical considerations.

Furthermore, there seems to be a surprising disregard for existing laws that are designed to protect individuals from defamation and insults. This can create a damaging environment where unfounded accusations and slanderous remarks reign, thus violating the fundamental principle of politeness in communication. The situation is exacerbated by the nature of social media platforms, which not only

enable rapid information dissemination but also allow for the proliferation of one-sided opinions and unverified news. This creates an echo chamber effect, where controversial opinions are amplified without critical evaluation.

A clear example of this can be seen in the case of a specific tweet from @BosPurwa's, which criticized certain politicians associated with the World Cup event cancellation in Indonesia. In this instance, GP and IWK, two politicians who were known to flout hosting agreements, were mentioned alongside AB, a politician who had previously faced public backlash during his tenure as the Jakarta Governor.

This illustrates how social media can distort public narratives, often framing individuals in a negative light based on selective recollections of past actions.

Overall, while social media serves as a powerful tool for communication, it also carries the potential to foster harmful behavior. The ease with which information—often unverified—can spread poses serious challenges to responsible discourse. As a society, there is a pressing need to promote greater awareness of the ethical implications of online interactions, encouraging users to engage thoughtfully and respectfully, prioritizing dialogue over conflict. Only then can social media evolve into the constructive platform it has the potential to be.

**Figure 14.**

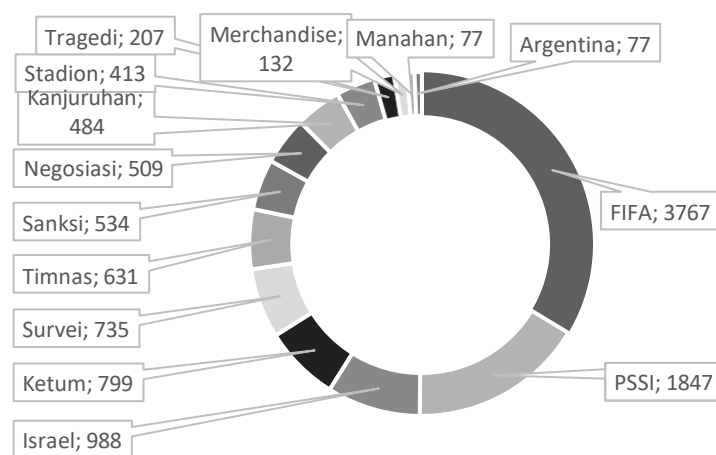
**Tweets related to the political actors behind the moment of withdrawal.**



### From public reaction to FIFA hegemony: a wrap up

The findings of this study highlight FIFA's association with global power in football. In Figure 15, it is seen how the conversation revolves around 2 (two) main actors, namely FIFA and PSSI. FIFA as the main institutional unit of global has structured interactions and relations of hegemonic power in suppressing and binding each FIFA membership, including PSSI (Kusumawardhana & Badaruddin, 2018; Saputra et al., 2018).

**Figure 15:**  
**Frequency of words that appeared during the research period.**



FIFA and its legal authority in the global hegemony of the sport of football can make member countries powerless. Some stated that "FIFA can control the world" (Bainus et al., 2018). Previously, PSSI, the unit of football in Indonesia, was sanctioned by FIFA in the past dualism (2011-2013) (Wima Putra, Priadarsini, and Resen 2017b). This freeze framed PSSI as powerless. The government intervention was labeled as a FIFA statute violation (Prastya 2011). The compilation of the previous findings further emphasizes that FIFA is the world's football sports authority. It can control the movement of its members' affection in FIFA hegemony.

The removal of the host status was also widely associated with the issue of Israeli rejection or the Kanjuruhan Tragedy (see Figure 15). Recently, it is the sequel to a series of football incidents in Indonesia. From the Kanjuruhan incident to the peak of the rejection of several Governor for the participation of the Israeli football team in the U-20 World Cup which is more inclined to mix sports and

politics (Afandi, 2022; FIFA Statues, 2018; Prayoga, 2022) In the aftermath, FIFA only imposed administrative sanctions (yellow cards) and this sanction became a gratitude from PSSI for the fear of being subjected to heavier sanctions (PSSI 2023b). Meanwhile, Argentina and Manahan emerged as alternative ideas to host the U-20 World Cup (see Figure 15).

Once again, how strong FIFA's hegemony is over sanctions imposed on associations that are not in line with its rules, even third-party interference (state or government) in the management of organizations, activities, or competitions, and clubs participating in competitions is considered a violation. One proof of FIFA's hegemony that makes Indonesia helpless is the removal of the status as host of the U-20 World Cup in 2023 (Sanjaya 2023c). The helplessness of PSSI and the Indonesian government indicates that their bargaining position in FIFA hegemony is defenseless. Geeraert (2015) and Tomlinson (2016) also emphasized that FIFA is a very autonomous organization and cannot be intervened by any entity, where its position can be so powerful in influencing and controlling the associations under it (Geeraert 2015b; Tomlinson 2016b).

FIFA has autonomous privileges to regulate its members. PSSI partakes in the derivative structure associated with FIFA. The consequence of the removal of the U-20 World Cup host status by FIFA to Indonesia made PSSI powerless. This decision makes FIFA structurally able to pressure PSSI with regulations derived from the FIFA Statute. Of course, this removal has caused various reactions from netizens who see PSSI as powerless over FIFA's hegemony. The reactions of netizens represented on Twitter construct that all FIFA decisions as an autonomous entity cannot be intervened even by the associations under it. This also illustrates FIFA's representation in every tweet uploaded on Twitter about FIFA influencing and controlling all members under them.

In addition, the removal of Indonesia to host the U-20 World Cup has left many debates that have led to friction, especially on Twitter. A lot of friction contains inappropriate utterances circulate in comments that often become the attention of netizens to participate in the debate. The trigger point is the refusal of the U-20 Israel national team. This was triggered by two main things that were far outside the context of sports. First, aggression and annexation as a political act of Israeli Zionist colonization of Palestinian land for decades has tormented the Palestinian people (Muchsin 2015; Satris 2019; Wirajaya 2020). Second, Israel's



actions to seize the independence of the Palestinian people are contrary to Indonesia's political attitudes and principles based on the preamble of the 1945 Constitution which opposes all forms of colonialism in the world (Mudore 2019; Prasetya and Srifauzi 2018).

The rejection of the Israeli national team by several Indonesians has generated considerable controversy, as it is viewed as contrary to the principles of the spirit of sport upheld by FIFA. FIFA promotes values of inclusivity and equality, firmly opposing any form of discrimination, racism, or inequality. This situation not only raises ethical questions but also poses a significant risk to member organizations, including Israel, which could impact their participation in international sporting events.

Furthermore, there have been official statements from key political figures, notably the Governors of Central Java and Bali, who have publicly expressed their disapproval of the Israeli national team's presence. These two regions are particularly relevant as they are home to the stadiums designated for the U-20 World Cup matches. The governors, affiliated with the PDI-P party, have voiced their concerns amid rising local sentiments against the Israeli team, reflecting a broader political landscape that influences sports.

The culmination of these events ultimately led FIFA to reassess Indonesia's role as the host for the U-20 World Cup, resulting in a decision to withdraw the host status. This move underscores the interconnectedness of sport and politics, as well as the need for adherence to the global standards set forth by governing bodies like FIFA. The implications of such a decision resonate beyond immediate athletic competitions, highlighting the ongoing tensions surrounding international relations and cultural acceptance in the realm of sports. Indonesia's U-20 World Cup host status (FIFA 2023).

## **CONCLUSION**

This paper explores three key findings regarding the impact of Indonesia's disqualification as the host for the U-20 World Cup. First, the decision ignited a wave of reactions on Twitter, which were notably diverse and often polarized. Influencers, public figures, and mainstream media all engaged in a complex rhetorical exchange that frequently distorted the discourse surrounding the event. As a result, social media tweets became a significant catalyst for netizens,

contributing to an environment where meaningful dialogue was obscured and misinformation proliferated. The nature of this online discourse highlights the challenges of communication in the digital age, where rapid responses often come at the expense of factual accuracy.

Second, the ambiguous narratives circulating on Twitter, combined with underlying ideological tensions, reflect the complex and varied reactions of national figures towards the Israeli national team's participation. Many individuals and groups vocally rejected the presence of the Israeli team, perceiving this stance as a matter of national pride and political identity. This rejection has been interpreted by FIFA as a breach of the principle of fair play, as it intertwines sports with political disputes. Consequently, Indonesia found itself in a precarious position internationally, with its image tarnished by this fallout and the resulting implications for its status in the global sports community.

Third, the public reactions in cyberspace showcased a fragmented response from netizens. Many individuals viewed FIFA as a dominant force in the world of football, expressing the belief that organizations such as the Indonesian Football Association (PSSI) should operate independently of governmental interventions. This perspective emphasized FIFA's role as a global governing body that upholds regulations designed to minimize state interference in sports. The removal of Indonesia's U-20 World Cup hosting rights serves as a stark illustration of FIFA's hegemonic power, underscoring its ability to compel compliance from national governments and football associations alike.

The decision to revoke Indonesia's hosting privileges not only triggered a cascade of public sentiment but also categorized reactions into five distinct clusters: personal opinions from supporters of the government, perspectives from detractors aligned with anti-Bali (AB) sentiment, concerns regarding potential losses to tourism, citizen journalism providing a chronological account of events, and political commentary that emerged in the wake of the announcement. Importantly, this moment is regarded as pivotal for the electoral prospects of GP, particularly in relation to his identity as a presidential candidate, reflecting broader themes of national identity and political strategy in times of crisis.. The FIFA's removal in less detail release gives no space for Indonesia to answer. It showed how FIFA's hegemony treats Indonesia, especially PSSI. This circumstance triggered the public to react with various speculations in cyberspace. This study also saw an effort to

improve the image of political actors, ET, including with the campaigned hashtags. The decision to reject this event could place ET in a situation where he must balance the government's aspirations with the international perception of Indonesia's capability to host major events. It is interesting to learn more about the dynamics of football and politics in Indonesia. Especially the allusion between the two in the political contestation. Also, how to mitigate each actor after the removal of the U-20 World Cup host status occurred. This study offers 2 (two) recommendations for future research. First, hegemony is a substantial framework for analyzing the intersection of politics and sports. This expanded approach would explore political dynamics within the government. The approach could examine the exercise of hegemony in sports through the influence of FIFA as the global authority in football. Second, there is potential for advancing research through digital methodology. Digital research could facilitate the study of hegemony by analyzing discourse networks on social media, providing valuable insights into the reactions of diverse netizens and how these digital interactions contribute to the dynamics of the public narrative.

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