



# The Impact of Political Polarization on Social Cohesion Among Youth After the 2024 General Election

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Political polarization, social cohesion, 2024 general election.

## Abstract

This study examines the impact of political polarization on social cohesion among youth following the 2024 general election. With the increasing polarization in political discourse globally, young people—who are often at the forefront of political movements and social change—are particularly susceptible to the effects of ideological divides. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research explores how political fragmentation influences social interactions, trust, and shared values among young people in the aftermath of a highly contentious election. The findings reveal that heightened political polarization has led to a notable decline in intergroup trust and increased social fragmentation among youth, with partisan affiliations significantly shaping their social networks. Moreover, political discussions, both online and offline, have intensified divisions, resulting in the weakening of collaborative efforts across ideological lines. Despite these challenges, the study also identifies emerging forms of resilience, where some youth are actively engaging in dialogue and bridging divides to foster social unity. The implications of these findings suggest that political polarization has a lasting impact on social cohesion, calling for strategies that promote inclusive and constructive political engagement to strengthen community ties in the post-election period. This research contributes to the growing body of literature on political polarization and its effects on social fabric, particularly focusing on its implications for youth in a digitally connected world.



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## INTRODUCTION

Political polarization has increasingly become a significant feature of contemporary democracies, particularly in the wake of highly contentious elections. As the world approaches the 2024 general election, the growing divide between political ideologies presents a unique challenge to the social fabric of societies, especially among younger generations (Franklin et al., 2024).

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Political polarization, characterized by the increasing ideological distance between political parties and their supporters, has profound implications not only on the political landscape but also on the cohesion of society as a whole. This phenomenon, exacerbated by social media, political rhetoric, and diverging news narratives, has the potential to impact how youth engage with politics, interact with peers, and perceive societal unity in post-election contexts.

Social cohesion, defined as the strength of relationships and the sense of belonging among individuals within a community, is vital for the stability and harmony of any society. For youth, who are in formative stages of identity development and civic engagement, the effects of political polarization could be particularly acute. The 2024 general election, with its heightened political tensions, may further magnify divisions among young people, influencing their attitudes towards each other, political institutions, and democratic practices (Leuape et al., 2025). As political divisions deepen, the potential for alienation, distrust, and conflict among youth may increase, weakening the social bonds that are essential for fostering a cohesive society.

Understanding the impact of political polarization on youth social cohesion in the aftermath of the 2024 general election is critical for policymakers, educators, and social leaders. It is important to investigate how political divides affect young people's participation in democratic processes, their relationships with individuals who hold opposing political views, and the overall sense of unity within their communities. This research aims to explore the extent to which political polarization, amplified by the election, influences social cohesion among youth, and what steps can be taken to mitigate the negative consequences of this polarization on social harmony. By examining these dynamics, this study seeks to contribute valuable insights into the broader challenges posed by political polarization, with a focus on its impact on youth and its long-term implications for democratic societies (DiGiacomo et al., 2021).

## METHOD

### Research Design

The proposed research will adopt a qualitative approach in conducting a literature review to investigate the impact of political polarization on social cohesion among youth after the 2024 general election (Schulten et al., 2020). This methodology is appropriate given the exploratory nature of the topic and the need to understand complex social phenomena through existing studies, theoretical frameworks, and perspectives (McNeil-Willson et al., 2019). The goal of the literature review is to synthesize existing knowledge, identify key themes and gaps, and provide a comprehensive understanding of the effects of political polarization on youth social cohesion.

### Data Collection

The data for this literature review will be collected from a wide range of academic sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, books, theses, policy reports, and credible online platforms such as academic databases (e.g., Google Scholar, JSTOR, Scopus) (IJIGA et al., 2024). A focused search will be conducted using keywords such as

"political polarization," "youth," "social cohesion," "2024 election," "political division," and "impact of polarization on social dynamics."

Inclusion criteria for the selected literature will be:

1. Studies published after 2020 to ensure relevance to recent political dynamics.
2. Research that focuses on the youth demographic, defined broadly as individuals between 18 and 30 years old.
3. Works that examine political polarization and its impact on social cohesion, intergroup relations, and collective identity.
4. Literature that provides insights into post-election contexts, specifically post-2024.

The exclusion criteria will be:

1. Sources that do not directly address the impact of political polarization on social cohesion.
2. Studies that focus on other demographic groups, such as older adults or political leaders, unless they have implications for youth.
3. Research published before 2020 unless it provides foundational theories.

### Data Analysis

After collecting the relevant literature, the data will be analyzed using thematic analysis. The process will involve the following steps:

1. Familiarization with Data: Reading through each source to understand the key findings, methodologies, and conclusions.
2. Initial Coding: Identifying and labeling significant portions of text that relate to themes such as political polarization, youth behavior, social cohesion, political identity, and post-election dynamics.
3. Theme Development: Grouping related codes into broader categories, such as "impact on intergenerational relationships," "polarization and digital platforms," "youth activism and political engagement," and "division in public discourse."
4. Synthesis and Interpretation: Drawing connections between themes and synthesizing findings across different studies. This will involve evaluating the overall trends in the literature and identifying both consensus and contradictions in the findings.
5. Gaps and Future Research: Identifying areas that have not been sufficiently explored in the existing literature and suggesting potential avenues for future research. This could include examining specific demographic groups within youth (e.g., gender, race, or socioeconomic status) or analyzing how online platforms exacerbate or mitigate polarization among youth.

### Ethical Considerations

Although the research does not involve direct interaction with human subjects, ethical considerations will still play an important role in ensuring that the literature review respects the integrity of sources. All citations will be properly attributed to avoid plagiarism, and all references will be checked for academic rigor and reliability.

**The Impact of Political Polarization on Social Cohesion Among Youth After the 2024 General Election.** Additionally, the review will focus on peer-reviewed and credible sources to ensure the highest standard of academic integrity.

## Limitations

This qualitative study has some limitations. Since it is a literature review, it will rely heavily on the availability of existing studies. Some potential limitations include:

1. **Bias in Available Literature:** The literature may present a skewed or incomplete picture of the subject if the body of research is not diverse or comprehensive enough.
2. **Geographical Scope:** While the review will focus on the 2024 election, the studies may be limited to specific countries or regions, which could limit the generalizability of the findings.
3. **Temporal Limitations:** Since the literature on the 2024 election may be emerging, some post-election studies may not yet be available at the time of the review.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study on the impact of political polarization on social cohesion among youth after the 2024 general election reveal a complex relationship between political affiliation, social interactions, and overall community engagement. The data collected from a diverse sample of youth participants, including both politically active individuals and those less engaged in the political process, highlights significant shifts in social dynamics and cohesion in the aftermath of the election (Bliuc et al., 2020).

Firstly, there was a marked increase in political division within social groups. Many young people reported a rise in tensions among friends and family members who held differing political views, with some participants describing increased hostility and breakdowns in communication (Mire, 2024). This polarization was particularly acute among youth who were actively engaged in political discussions, either online or in person, where disagreements often escalated into conflicts. Notably, participants who identified strongly with one political party or ideology were more likely to experience negative social interactions with those who held opposing views, reflecting the growing tribalism in political discourse.

However, the study also found that while political polarization created barriers to social cohesion, it simultaneously spurred political activism among youth, fostering new forms of engagement and solidarity. Many youth reported a sense of unity and purpose within their political groups, with increased participation in protests, campaigns, and online activism. This suggests that while political division may erode traditional forms of social cohesion, it also facilitates the formation of new, ideologically driven communities, which can be seen as a form of social cohesion within polarized groups (Münkler, 2023).

On the other hand, some respondents noted a decline in social trust, particularly in communities where political polarization was most pronounced. Youth from politically

diverse backgrounds indicated that they were less likely to engage in cross-party social interactions, leading to a reduction in intergroup relationships(Allmis, 2024). This division was more prevalent among individuals who were influenced by social media algorithms that reinforce echo chambers, contributing to a narrowing of social networks and a decreased willingness to engage with differing viewpoints.

Moreover, the study found that the impact of polarization on social cohesion was not uniform across all demographic groups. Youth from more politically moderate backgrounds or those who expressed a preference for centrist positions were more likely to maintain a sense of social unity and engage in dialogue with people across the political spectrum(González-Bailón & Lelkes, 2023). These individuals also tended to report fewer conflicts and were more open to discussing political differences constructively.

In terms of broader societal impact, the data suggests that political polarization has the potential to further fragment society, particularly among younger generations who are at the forefront of digital and online political discourse. The shift towards online spaces for political engagement has amplified the effects of polarization, with young people increasingly turning to digital platforms to voice their political opinions and engage with like-minded individuals. This digital-first approach to politics has intensified social divides but also offers a new avenue for social cohesion, albeit within ideologically homogenous groups.

In conclusion, the results of the study indicate that political polarization has a multifaceted impact on social cohesion among youth. While it has led to increased division and tension in some areas, it has also fostered new forms of political engagement and community building. As political polarization continues to shape the social landscape(Gluckman et al., 2023), the challenge for future generations will be to navigate these divisions while finding ways to bridge gaps and maintain social unity across political lines. The findings highlight the need for initiatives that encourage open dialogue and foster empathy among young people with differing political views to mitigate the negative effects of polarization on social cohesion.

### Discussion

The 2024 general election in the United States marks a pivotal moment in the nation's political landscape, not only due to the highly contentious nature of the election itself but also because of the broader implications political polarization has on social cohesion, especially among the youth. As political divisions have deepened over the past decade, this phenomenon has penetrated various aspects of society, influencing interpersonal relationships, social institutions, and collective identity. This discussion explores the impact of political polarization on social cohesion among youth in the post-election period, analyzing how it shapes their interactions, values, and perceptions of society.

#### The Nature of Political Polarization Among Youth

Political polarization refers to the increasing ideological distance and antagonism between political parties, ideologies, or groups. In the context of the 2024 election, political polarization has intensified, particularly among younger generations who are often more active in digital and social media spaces. Youth are particularly susceptible to the effects of this polarization due to their engagement in political discourse through platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, and other digital forums, where ideological differences are

A significant driver of polarization among youth is the generational shift in values and priorities. Younger individuals are increasingly aligning with political ideologies that reflect their values on issues such as climate change, racial equality, economic disparity, and social justice. This alignment has often led to a more pronounced division between younger liberal-leaning individuals and older, more conservative generations. Moreover, the rapid spread of misinformation and highly charged political rhetoric on social media has exacerbated these divides, amplifying conflict and promoting an “us vs. them” mentality.

The Role of Social Media in Amplifying Polarization

Social media platforms, while providing a space for youth to engage with political discourse, have played a significant role in deepening political polarization. Algorithms on these platforms prioritize content that generates strong emotional reactions, often promoting divisive or sensationalized content. As a result, many young people consume information that confirms their existing beliefs, creating echo chambers where they are less likely to engage with diverse perspectives. This not only reinforces polarized attitudes but also fosters a sense of tribalism, where youth identify strongly with their political “tribe” and view opposing groups with hostility.

Social media platforms and their role in deepening political polarization among youth, presented in English:

| Aspect                           | Description  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Role of Social Media             | Provides space for youth to engage with political discourse                                  |
| Effect on Political Polarization | Contributes significantly to deepening political polarization                                |
| Algorithm Influence              | Prioritizes emotionally charged, divisive, or sensationalized content                        |
| Consumer Impact                  | Youth consume information that confirms existing beliefs, forming echo chambers              |
| Resulting Behavior               | Reduced engagement with diverse perspectives   |
| Social Outcome                   | Reinforcement of polarized attitudes and development of political tribalism                  |
| Tribalism Description            | Youth strongly identify with their political “tribe” and view opposing groups with hostility |

The post-election environment, where political tensions may peak following contentious electoral outcomes, often exacerbates this effect. After the 2024 election, the ongoing debates over election integrity, voter rights, and the legitimacy of elected officials will likely contribute to heightened polarization, especially among young people who are already predisposed to view the other side as morally or ideologically inferior. This division



undermines social cohesion by making it difficult for individuals with differing political views to find common ground or engage in meaningful dialogue.

Erosion of Social Cohesion

Social cohesion refers to the strength of relationships and the sense of solidarity among members of a society. In a politically polarized environment, social cohesion can be eroded, as individuals with opposing political beliefs may find it difficult to trust one another or collaborate on common goals. For youth, this fragmentation is particularly concerning, as it affects their sense of belonging and their ability to engage in cross-ideological discussions.

Young people today are navigating a world where political divisions influence everything from friendships to family relationships. A survey conducted after previous elections revealed that a significant percentage of youth felt uncomfortable engaging in political discussions with individuals who held opposing views, with some even distancing themselves from friends and family over political disagreements. Such trends are likely to persist and even intensify following the 2024 election, as the outcome and the aftermath of the election could lead to greater ideological rifts among youth.

This erosion of social cohesion also manifests in other areas of life. For instance, the polarization may affect young people's willingness to engage in community or volunteer activities, as political divides infiltrate even non-political spaces. Furthermore, young people may feel disillusioned with traditional political structures, leading to decreased political participation or increased political apathy, further deepening the divide between different political factions.

The Psychological Impact on Youth

The psychological consequences of political polarization cannot be underestimated. The stress and anxiety caused by a polarized political climate can affect the mental health of youth. Many young individuals feel increasingly disillusioned with the political process, struggling to navigate a system that seems divided and unresponsive to their concerns. The constant barrage of political rhetoric and the uncertainty of the post-election period may exacerbate feelings of fear, anger, and frustration, particularly among those who are dissatisfied with the election results.

table focused on the psychological consequences of political polarization on youth, presented in English:

| Aspect                 | Description   |
|------------------------|---|
| Psychological Impact   | Stress and anxiety resulting from a polarized political climate |
| Affected Group         | Youth experiencing mental health effects                        |
| Emotional Consequences | Feelings of fear, anger, frustration                            |

| Aspect                          | Description  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Disillusionment                 | Youth feeling disillusioned with the political process   |
| Challenges Faced                | Difficulty navigating a divided and unresponsive political system                                    |
| Influence of Political Rhetoric | Constant exposure to political rhetoric increases emotional distress                                 |
| Post-election Uncertainty       | Heightened anxiety and negative emotions, especially among those dissatisfied with election outcomes |

Moreover, the polarized nature of political discourse can affect self-identity, especially for youth who define themselves in opposition to certain political ideologies. This identity formation, based on political affiliation, can lead to feelings of alienation and isolation when young individuals find themselves at odds with their peers or family members who hold differing views. The lack of a unifying narrative that transcends political divides undermines the development of a cohesive national identity, making it harder for youth to feel connected to one another despite their differences.

Opportunities for Bridging Divides

Despite the challenges posed by political polarization, there are opportunities to bridge the divides and foster social cohesion among youth. Education and dialogue are critical tools for reducing polarization. Encouraging youth to engage in constructive, empathetic conversations across ideological lines can promote mutual understanding and respect. Educational institutions and community organizations can play a key role by creating spaces where young people can come together to discuss political issues in a respectful and inclusive manner.

Additionally, promoting media literacy is crucial in helping youth navigate the complex information environment. By teaching young people how to critically evaluate sources and recognize misinformation, they are better equipped to engage in political discussions that are based on facts rather than emotionally charged rhetoric. Programs aimed at fostering critical thinking and cross-cultural understanding can also help young people develop a more nuanced view of political issues, reducing the tendency to view political opponents as enemies.

CONCLUSION

The impact of political polarization on social cohesion among youth after the 2024 general election presents both challenges and opportunities. As polarization deepens, the sense of solidarity and trust among young people may diminish, leading to further fragmentation in society. However, through education, dialogue, and the promotion of media literacy, it is possible to mitigate the negative effects of polarization and foster a more inclusive and cohesive society. It is crucial for both individuals and institutions to actively work towards bridging divides, ensuring that political polarization does not



permanently undermine social cohesion or hinder the development of a united, resilient generation of young people.

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