How Good Are LLM Agents? Benchmarking Opinion Dynamics Against Indonesian Electoral Discourse on Social Media

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Abstract

Political polarization on social media intensifies during elections, when echo chambers harden partisan divisions and amplify online harms at the moment collective decisions are being made. Classical opinion dynamics models such as Friedkin-Johnsen provide a framework for studying belief change but abstract away the textual content that drives opinion shifts on social platforms. LLM-powered agent-based models reintroduce language to simulation, yet their fidelity to real political discourse—as opposed to synthetic personas or factual-consensus domains—remains untested against classical baselines. We construct a benchmark from the 2024 Indonesian Presidential Election: 1,000 agents, 70,336 interactions, and five topics spanning four weeks of Indonesian-language discourse—to our knowledge the first opinion-dynamics benchmark grounded in non-English political data. We propose a two-axis evaluation framework pairing 1-Wasserstein distance with 3-class buffered-sign F1, reported on aggregate and per-topic tracks. Under this framework, we evaluate three open-weight LLMs alongside Friedkin-Johnsen and per-agent Ridge regression, analyzing how model family, interaction topology, and sentiment polarity shape simulation fidelity.[1]

1 Introduction

Rising political polarization over the past two decades has weakened public trust in democratic institutions and gridlocked policymaking across major democracies (Iyengar et al., 2019; Törnberg et al., 2021). A growing body of empirical and computational work attributes much of this acceleration to social media: by lowering the cost of selective exposure and rewarding emotionally charged content, online platforms facilitate the formation of echo chambers in which opinions are reinforced rather than challenged (Sasahara et al., 2021). The consequences are most acute during electoral periods, when echo chambers amplify misinformation about candidates and voting procedures and harden partisan divisions just as collective decisions are being made (Wang et al., 2025). Forecasting opinion trajectories on real platforms during real elections is therefore not merely a methodological exercise: accurate simulators are a prerequisite for evaluating platform interventions and counter-polarization strategies before deployment (Chuang et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2025), and for identifying the structural conditions under which polarized discourse tips into a self-reinforcing regime (Törnberg et al., 2021).

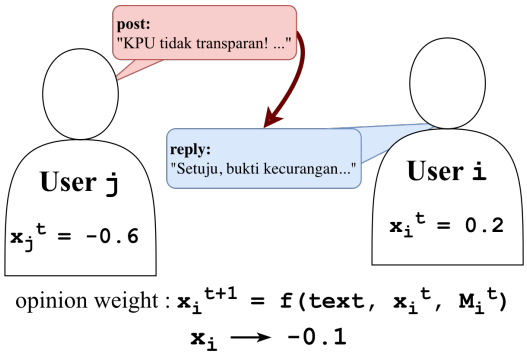

Figure 1: Illustrative example of text-conditioned opinion update. User j posts content; User i react to it, and an opinion classifier f updates x_i based on the textual content and the agent's current state.

Classical opinion dynamics models—DeGroot's averaging update (DeGroot, 1974), the Friedkin-Johnsen extension with stubborn agents (Friedkin and Johnsen, 1990), and bounded-confidence variants (Deffuant et al., 2000; Hegselmann and Krause, 2002)—gave the field a tractable mathematical language for belief change. Their interaction effects, however, are encoded entirely as scalar weights and deterministic update rules, with the textual content actually being exchanged on social

[1]The code will be publicly released upon publication.

media abstracted away (Flache et al., 2017). The emergence of LLM-powered agents (Park et al., 2023) has reintroduced language and reasoning to agent-based modeling, and an active line of work now applies this paradigm to opinion dynamics: simulating attitude shifts under confirmation bias (Chuang et al., 2024), modeling partisan political discourse (Argyle et al., 2023), scaling to large social-network simulations (Gao et al., 2025), and reproducing echo-chamber formation (Wang et al., 2025; Gu et al., 2025). Yet across this body of work, simulations are run on synthetic personas or hand-constructed scenarios, with outputs scored through indirect behavioral metrics such as emergent polarization or consensus patterns. Where existing studies do engage real-world issues, they have largely focused on topics with clear factual ground truth (ex: climate change or scientific consensus) rather than the contested, identity-charged discourse that drives electoral polarization. As a result, no study has benchmarked LLM-driven opinion dynamics against real-world political opinion trajectories, nor placed it head-to-head against classical baselines such as DeGroot or Friedkin-Johnsen. This paper aims to address that gap.

A second limitation runs through the existing LLM-ABM literature: opinion is represented as a single scalar per agent, and the multi-topic structure of real political discourse—how a user's stance on one issue conditions their stance on another—is absent from the modeling frame. Real political users, however, hold topic-bundled positions: an agent may endorse one candidate, oppose another, and remain neutral on a procedural matter like a quick-count audit, with the correlation pattern across topics itself a signature of underlying partisan identity (Iyengar et al., 2019). Zuo et al. (2025) make this critique formally and propose a multi-topic LLM simulator, but evaluate only on synthetic networks; whether the cross-topic opinion structure of real users can be recovered by an LLM-based simulator remains untested. We address this directly by structuring our benchmark along five LDA-derived topics (§4.1) and evaluating every model under two complementary tracks: an *aggregate* track scored on the pooled multi-topic opinion distribution, and a *per-topic* track scored on each topic's subgraph independently. Reporting both guards against models that produce a plausible mean stance while collapsing within-agent topic heterogeneity (aggregate only) or that miss cross-topic conditioning (per-topic only).

Concretely, this paper makes four contributions:

- **A real-world benchmark** for LLM-driven opinion dynamics on the 2024 Indonesian Presidential Election: 1,000 active Twitter users, 70,336 retweet and reply edges, tagged across five topics. We construct the network from interaction signals rather than follow relationships, since interaction networks carry partisan structure comparable to follow networks (Conover et al., 2011; Barberá, 2015) and remain accessible under contemporary platform restrictions that have largely shut down academic access to follow data (Murtfeldt et al., 2025; Blakey, 2024). To our knowledge this is the first opinion-dynamics benchmark grounded in non-English political discourse.

- **A two-axis evaluation framework** pairing a macroscopic distributional metric (1-Wasserstein) with a microscopic per-agent metric (3-class F1), each reported under aggregated data and per-topic tracks.

- **A comparative evaluation** of three open-weight LLMs against Friedkin-Johnsen and per-agent Ridge baselines under a shared protocol. We find that no single model dominates both axes: Ridge classifies individual agents more accurately, while LLMs better recover the overall shape of opinion distributions on smaller topics.

2 Recent Works

Classical opinion dynamics models—DeGroot (DeGroot, 1974), Friedkin-Johnsen (Friedkin and Johnsen, 1990), and bounded-confidence variants (Deffuant et al., 2000; Hegselmann and Krause, 2002)—are analytically tractable but rely on deterministic scalar update rules that abstract away linguistic and contextual dimensions of real discourse (Flache et al., 2017; Chuang et al., 2024). The advent of LLM-powered agents (Park et al., 2023) has introduced language and reasoning to social simulation, and this capability has been directly applied to opinion dynamics in a growing body of work.

Chuang et al. (2024) demonstrate that LLM agents qualitatively replicate attitude shifts and opinion fragmentation under confirmation bias; Gao et al. (2025) scale LLM-agent simulation

to large social networks with emergent information diffusion; and Wang et al. (2025) and Gu et al. (2025) study echo-chamber formation. Further work explores LLM agents for political discourse (Argyle et al., 2023) and ideological alignment (Hwang et al., 2023).

These efforts share a common evaluation shape: simulations run under synthetic conditions, scored through emergent phenomena rather than observed opinion data. Where real issues are engaged, the focus is on factual-consensus domains such as climate change (Chuang et al., 2024) or structural clustering rather than per-agent trajectories (Gu et al., 2025), and none adopt classical baselines as reference points. Whether LLM agents actually produce more faithful simulations of real political opinion dynamics than analytically simple classical models remains unanswered.

3 Method

3.1 Problem Definition

We formalize opinion dynamics as a forecasting task over social media users. Each user is treated as an agent whose stance on a topic, which expressed through posting, replying, and retweeting, that evolves through interaction with other agents. Given a user's observed activity history up to a cutoff time, the objective is to predict their future opinion. Let $A = \{1, 2, \ldots, N\}$ be a set of N number of agents. Each agent $i \in A$ has an opinion weight $x_i^t \in [-1, 1] \subseteq \mathbb{R}$ at timestep t. These opinion weights evolve through expressed activity; we defined this space as $\tau = \{\text{retweet}, \text{reply}, \text{original post}\}$, and the values -1 and 1 represent the strongest negative and strongest positive opinions, respectively.

If we have a sequence of user activity up to time T defined by

$$\mathcal{H}_i = \{(a_i^{(k)},\ x_i^{(k)},\ t^{(k)})\}_{k=0}^{I}, t(I) \leq T$$

where user i performs an activity $a_i \in \tau$ with opinion x_i at time t. We aim to predict user's opinion x_i^θ at a random time step $\theta > T$.

3.2 Classical Models

The DeGroot averaging model (DeGroot, 1974) is one of the foundational opinion dynamics models, in which each agent updates its opinion as a weighted average of its neighbours' opinions via a row-stochastic interaction matrix $\mathbf{W} = (w_{ij})_{N \times N}$.

Friedkin-Johnsen (Friedkin and Johnsen, 1990) extends the DeGroot model by introducing a susceptibility value. It assumes that agents preserve their initial opinion by a certain degree, that is,

$$x_i^{t+1} = s_i \sum_{j \in A} w_{ij} x_j^t + (1 - s_i) x_i^0$$

where w_{ij} is the weight of interaction of i and j, $s_i \in [0, 1]$ is the agent i susceptibility to external influence, meaning $1 - s_i$ represents stubbornness, the extent to which it holds to its own initial opinion x_i at $t = 0$. Fully susceptible agent ($s_i = 1$) reduces to the DeGroot update, while a fully stubborn agent ($s_i = 0$) retains its initial opinion indefinitely.

3.3 Regression Model

As an additional baseline, we fit a per-agent Ridge regression that learns how each agent's next opinion depends on its current stance, interaction partners, and partner opinions, and is applied autoregressively at inference.

At each timestep t, let $b_{ij}^t \in \{0, 1\}$ denote whether agent i interacted with agent j at timestep t through any activity $a \in \tau$, and let $\mathbf{b}_i^t = (b_{i1}^t, \ldots, b_{iN}^t)^T$. For each agent i, we construct a feature vector:

$$\mathbf{z}_i^t = \left[\ x_i^t,\ (x_i^t)^2,\ \bar{x}_{\mathcal{N}_i}^t,\ d_i^t,\ \mathbf{b}_i^t,\ \mathbf{b}_i^t \odot \mathbf{x}^t\ \right]$$

where $d_i^t = \sum_j b_{ij}^t$ is the number of interactions, $\bar{x}_{\mathcal{N}_i}^t$ is the mean opinion of interacted neighbors, and $\odot$ is the Hadamard product.

Each agent i is assigned a Ridge regression model with parameters $\boldsymbol{\theta}_i$ trained on designated period as training set:

$$\boldsymbol{\theta}_i^* = \text{argmin}_{\boldsymbol{\theta}_i} \sum_{t=1}^{T_{\text{train}}} \left(x_i^t - \boldsymbol{\theta}_i^T \tilde{\mathbf{z}}_i^{t-1}\right)^2 + \lambda \|\boldsymbol{\theta}_i\|_2^2$$

where $\tilde{\mathbf{z}}_i^t$ is the standardized feature vector. At inference, predictions are rolled forward autoregressively:

$$\hat{x}_i^{t+1} = \text{clip}\Big(\boldsymbol{\theta}_i^{*T} \tilde{\mathbf{z}}_i^t,\ -1,\ 1\Big)$$

where each step's output $\hat{\mathbf{x}}^t$ is fed back as input for the next. Construction details and hyperparameters will be described in Section 4.

3.4 LLM-Enhanced Agent-Based Model

We propose an agent-based framework (Figure 2) in which each opinion update is mediated by an LLM

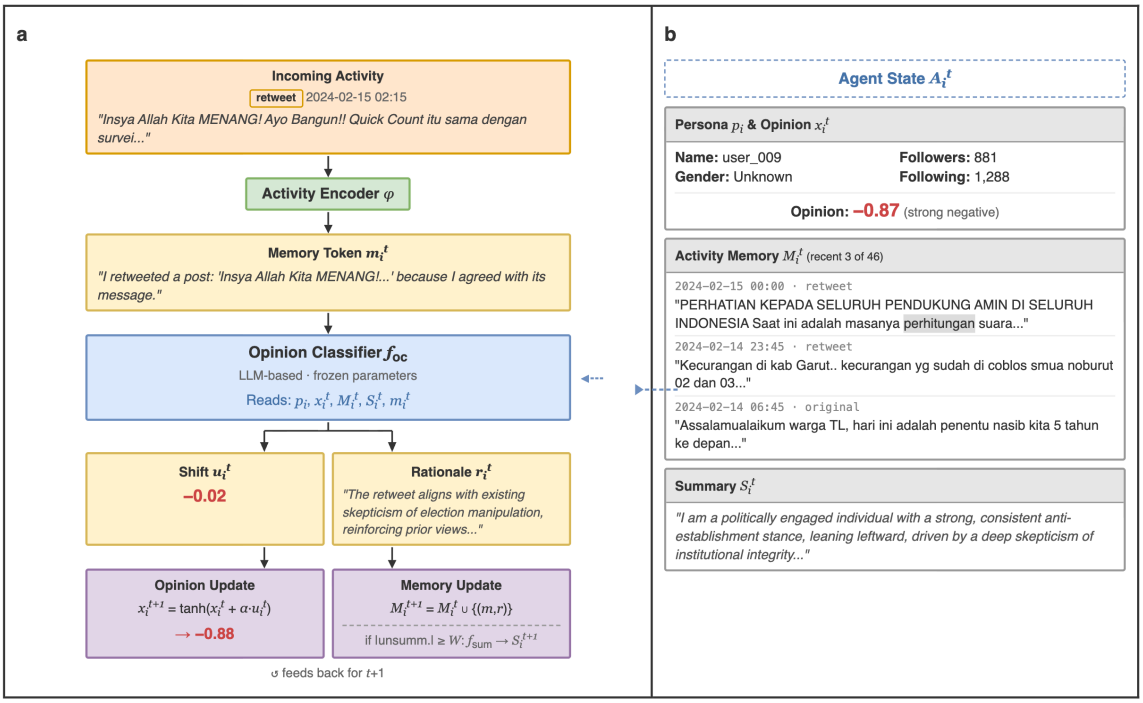

Figure 2: Overview of the LLM-enhanced agent-based model. **(a)** Single-timestep pipeline: an activity is encoded into a memory token and passed with the full agent state to the opinion classifier f_{oc}, which returns a shift u_i^t and rationale r_i^t. The shift updates the opinion via a bounded $\tanh$ rule; the rationale is appended to memory. When unsummarized entries exceed window W, the summarizer f_{sum} refreshes the compressed summary. **(b)** Agent state $\mathcal{A}_i^t$: persona p_i, opinion x_i^t, activity memory $\mathcal{M}_i^t$, and summary $\mathcal{S}_i^t$.

that reasons over the agent's persona, accumulated memory, and the most recent activity. The per-step opinion shift is thus a learned, context-dependent function over natural-language records rather than fixed weights or hand-crafted features.

Each agent $i \in A$ is represented at timestep t by the tuple

$$\mathcal{A}_i^t = \left(p_i,\ x_i^t,\ \mathcal{M}_i^t,\ \mathcal{S}_i^t\right)$$

where p_i is a static persona profile encoding the agent's account-level attributes (e.g. gender, follower and following counts), $x_i^t \in [-1, 1]$ is the opinion weight defined in Section 3.1, $\mathcal{M}_i^t = \left(m_i^{(1)}, \ldots, m_i^{(L_i^t)}\right)$ is the agent's chronologically ordered activity memory of length L_i^t, and $\mathcal{S}_i^t$ is a natural-language summary of older memory entries that compresses long-range context.

Activity Encoding. At every timestep t, the data stream yields activities $\mathcal{E}^t = \{(i_k, a_k, c_k)\}_k$, where $i_k \in A$ is the acting agent, $a_k \in \tau$ is the activity type, and c_k is the associated textual content (for replies and retweets, c_k includes the parent tweet). A deterministic encoder $\phi : \tau \times \mathcal{T} \rightarrow \mathcal{T}$ maps each activity into a structured natural-language memory token $m_{i_k}^t = \phi(a_k, c_k)$.

Opinion Classifier. Let f_{oc} denote an LLM-based opinion classifier with frozen parameters. Given the most recent activity token m_i^t, the agent's persona p_i, current opinion x_i^t, the classifier predicts a scalar opinion shift jointly with a natural-language rationale:

$$(r_i^t,\ u_i^t) \ = \ f_{\text{oc}}\left(p_i,\ x_i^t,\ \mathcal{M}_i^t,\ \mathcal{S}_i^t,\ m_i^t\right)$$

where $u_i^t \in [-1, 1]$ is the relative shift induced by the activity (-1 for a strong negative shift, 0 for no change, $+1$ for a strong positive shift), and $r_i^t \in \mathcal{T}$ is the rationale, which is appended to memory and made available to subsequent classifier calls. The classifier thus conditions on the full agent state to produce both a directed opinion shift and an accompanying rationale. The rationale is retained in the agent's memory, allowing the next classification steps to access the model's prior reasoning.

Opinion Update. The opinion weight is updated by a bounded, learning-rate-controlled rule that aggregates the LLM-predicted shift,

$$x_i^{t+1} \ = \ \tanh\left(x_i^t \ + \ \alpha\, u_i^t\right)$$

with $\alpha > 0$ a global learning rate, and the hyperbolic tangent enforces $x_i^{t+1} \in (-1, 1)$. Agents not

involved in any activity at t retain their previous opinion, $x_i^{t+1} = x_i^t$.

Memory Update and Summarization. After classification, the activity token and rationale are appended to memory, $\mathcal{M}_i^{t+1} = \mathcal{M}_i^t \cup \{(m_i^t, r_i^t)\}$. To bound prompt length, a separate summarizer f_{sum} refreshes the compressed summary whenever unsummarized entries reach a fixed window W:

$$\mathcal{S}_i^{t+1} \;=\; f_{\text{sum}}\big(\mathcal{M}_i^{t+1}[L_i^{t+1} - W + 1 : L_i^{t+1}]\big)$$

Initialization. Prior to simulation, each agent is seeded with a warm-up window of historical activity $\mathcal{H}_i^{(0)} \subseteq \mathcal{H}_i$ observed before the simulation start time T_0. The initial opinion x_i^0 is set to the empirical mean of opinions in $\mathcal{H}_i^{(0)}$, and the initial summary $\mathcal{S}_i^0 = f_{\text{sum}}(\mathcal{H}_i^{(0)})$ bootstraps the agent's persona-grounded memory.

Simulation. The complete procedure is summarized in Appendix A. Iterating the loop over $t = 1, \ldots, T$ yields a per-agent opinion trajectory $\{x_i^t\}_{t=0}^T$ that constitutes the model's prediction for the inference task defined in Section 3.1. Unlike the classical and regression baselines, inter-agent influence enters implicitly through textual content and the LLM's language priors rather than through fixed weights or hand-crafted features.

4 Experiments Setup

4.1 Benchmark Dataset Preparation

We curated a dataset of Twitter (now X) discourse from the 2024 Indonesian Presidential Election in Indonesian, designed to capture the interaction patterns and sentiment trajectories required for agent-based simulation.

Data Collection. First, we acquired a 5% random sample of election-related discourse via the Brandwatch platform, covering the full month of February 2024 in order to bracket the 14 February general-election date with approximately two weeks of pre- and post-election discourse. We further restricted the sample to posts with ≥ 100 impressions, retaining only content with non-trivial audience exposure and suppressing spam and effectively unseen documents. The resulting dataset comprised $N = 497{,}364$ documents.

Agent Population and Interaction Topology. We filtered for active, opinionated users in two steps. First, using a fine-tuned Indonesian polarization classifier (Susanto et al., 2025), we kept authors whose polarizing output exceeded 50% of at least 30 activities, dropping quiet or politically lukewarm accounts. From this pool we took the top 1,000 by normalized Shannon entropy across the four activity types (Post, Reply, Quote, Retweet). A 100%-sample crawl on these accounts yielded $n = 98{,}365$ raw interactions; after removing orphans (deleted or private parent tweets), the final dataset has 70,336 edges over 948 nodes (graph density 0.08).

Opinion Space and Sentiment Attribution. We applied LDA (Blei et al., 2003) to identify five thematic axes (K=5, C_v=0.34): (1) *General Election*, (2) *Anies Baswedan*, (3) *Prabowo Subianto*, (4) *Ganjar Pranowo*, and (5) *Quick Count Analysis*. Each interaction was then labelled by a fine-tuned Indonesian RoBERTa sentiment classifier (Wilson Wongso, 2023) (F1_M=92.42%). The resulting sentiment–topic pairings define the *opinion weights* in which agent states evolve.

Topic	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Total
General Election	31,346	14,974	10,363	56,683
Anies Baswedan	211	367	271	849
Prabowo Subianto	6,246	1,828	3,117	11,191
Ganjar Pranowo	78	461	732	1,271
Quick Count	169	133	40	342
Total	**38,050**	**17,763**	**14,523**	**70,336**

Table 1: Per-topic sentiment distribution across the 70,336 curated interactions.

4.2 Data Description

The data spans from 1-28 February 2024, anchored around voting day of 14th February. Our dataset consists of 35,374 retweets, 6,188 replies, and 28,774 original posts.

The five topics are highly imbalanced in both volume and sentiment (Table 1). Aggregate stances shift across the window and cross-agent dispersion widens around 14 February; at the agent level, a small fraction of users account for most activity while the majority contribute sparingly.

These properties directly inform our benchmark design. We adopt 14 February as a natural temporal pivot, treating the pre-election period (1-14 February) as a warm-up window for agent initialization and 15-28 February as the prediction window. The differing start dates of the per-topic ground-truth signals and the strong topic imbalance jointly

motivate two evaluation tracks: a per-topic track operating on each topic subgraph, and an aggregate track operating on all topics combined.

4.3 Model Setup and Implementation Details

We instantiate three models under a shared evaluation protocol (Section 4.4): Friedkin-Johnsen as a classical reference, a per-agent Ridge regression as a learned but linear baseline, and our proposed LLM-driven ABM. Full hyperparameter values are listed in Appendix D.

4.3.1 Friedkin-Johnsen

We follow the notation in Section 3.2, where $s_i \in [0, 1]$ is agent i's susceptibility and $\mathbf{\Lambda} = \mathrm{diag}(\mathbf{s})$. Both the interaction matrix $\mathbf{W}$ and the susceptibility vector $\mathbf{s}$ are derived from the warm-up window $\mathcal{H}_i^{\text{init}} = \{k \in \mathcal{H}_i \mid t^{(k)} \leq \text{Feb } 1 + t_{\text{init}}\}$: edge weights aggregate sentiment-conditioned reply counts and retweet counts under a small set of scalar hyperparameters, and s_i is derived from the share of agent i's activity directed at itself. The initial opinion x_i^0 is taken as the mean over agent i's warm-up tweets and retweet-inherited sentiments under the mapping $\{\text{positive}: +1, \text{neutral}: 0, \text{negative}: -1\}$. The simulation rolls forward on a 2.4-hour grid from Feb $1 + t_{\text{init}}$ to Feb 28, matching the LLM-ABM time grid for downstream comparability. All scalar hyperparameters are jointly grid-searched on the training fold; full construction details are given in Appendix B, with hyperparameter values in Appendix D.

4.3.2 Regression Baseline

The feature vector $\mathbf{z}_i^t$, Ridge objective, and auto-regressive update rule were defined in Section 3.3. The Ridge target is the agent's *daily mean expressed sentiment* under the mapping $\{\text{positive}: +1, \text{neutral}: 0, \text{negative}: -1\}$, so the regression's task is closer to next-day expression prediction than to opinion-trajectory tracking. Features are standardized per agent via a `StandardScaler` fitted on the training fold (Feb 1–14) and reused at inference. During roll-forward over Feb 15–28, interaction indicators $\mathbf{b}_i^t$ are taken from observed data while opinions $\hat{\mathbf{x}}^t$ are fed back from the model's own predictions. Output is forward-held to the 2.4-hour grid for comparability. Hyperparameters are listed in Appendix D.

4.3.3 LLM-Powered Agent Based Model

Model Choices and Serving. We evaluate three open-weight models under identical prompts and protocol: `google/gemma-3-12b-it` (Gemma Team et al., 2025), `Qwen/Qwen3-8B-FP8` (Yang et al., 2025), and `nvidia/Llama-3.1-Nemotron-Nano-8B-v1` (Bercovich et al., 2025). All three sit in the ∼8–12B parameter class, are instruction-tuned with explicit reasoning behaviour, and have multilingual capability including Indonesian. Inference is served via vLLM (Kwon et al., 2023) and accessed through LangChain's[2] `ChatOpenAI` client. All experiments were run on a single NVIDIA A40 (48 GB).

Decoding and Structured Output. Sampling uses temperature, top-p, and top-k. Both f_{oc} and f_{sum} enforce Pydantic-validated structured output so malformed generations are rejected at the schema layer. Prompt templates are listed in Appendix C.

Simulation Grid and Agent State. The simulation runs on a 15-minute grid (the dataset's native timestamp granularity) from Feb $1 + t_{\text{init}}$ to Feb 28. At each step the simulator gathers all active agents, encodes their activities via φ (Section 3.4), and dispatches them to f_{oc} in batches.[3] The persona p_i and seed summary S_i^0 are produced once during warm-up by a single summarizer call on each agent's warm-up history $\mathcal{H}_i$. The memory window W and opinion step α follow Section 3.4.

4.4 Evaluation Metrics

Model predictions and ground-truth signal $\bar{x}_i^t$ are aggregated to the daily level before scoring. We evaluate along two complementary axes that can diverge sharply within the same system (Lanzetti et al., 2023). **Macroscopic:** the 1-Wasserstein distance W_1 between predicted and ground-truth opinion distributions on each day, capturing both location and dispersion (Panaretos and Zemel, 2019; Lanzetti et al., 2023). **Microscopic:** per-agent 3-class F1, where opinion weights are binned into *negative* $[-1, -0.25)$, *neutral* $[-0.25, 0.25]$, and *positive* $(0.25, 1]$. Given heavy class imbalance, we treat macro F1 as the primary score, with weighted F1 reported for completeness. Both metrics are

[2] https://github.com/langchain-ai/langchain

[3] Batch size 50, max concurrency 30. On batch failure, affected agents receive $u_i^t = 0$ so no spurious update is recorded. Per-agent state is persisted to JSON between steps.

averaged (MAE) over the prediction window; all scores are reported per topic and on the full dataset.

5 Results

Table 2 reports macro F1, weighted F1, and Wasserstein MAE across the five per-topic tracks and the aggregate track. Ridge obtains the highest macro F1 on four of six tracks (General, Prabowo, Ganjar, Aggregate) and ties with Friedkin-Johnsen on Quick Count. Qwen3-8B achieves the highest aggregate weighted F1 (0.71); Nemotron-Nano-8B leads on Anies ($\text{F1}_\text{M} = 0.84$). On Wasserstein distance, the ranking reverses: LLM-based models achieve the lowest W_1 on four of five per-topic tracks—Gemma-3-12B and Qwen3-8B tie on Prabowo (0.05), Qwen3-8B leads on Ganjar (0.06) and Quick Count (0.16), and Gemma-3-12B ties with Ridge on Anies (0.07). Ridge retains the lowest W_1 on General (0.07) and the aggregate track (0.12).

The two evaluation axes tell different stories. LLMs produce opinion distributions closer to the ground truth on minority topics but misclassify individual agents more often than Ridge. The gap is largest on General Election, which accounts for over 80% of interactions and skews heavily negative (55% negative sentiment; Table 1). On positive-leaning topics such as Ganjar (58% positive), LLMs nearly match Ridge on F1 (0.86 vs. 0.87) while matching or beating it on W_1. Whether this asymmetry reflects sentiment bias in instruction-tuned models or simply data volume is examined in Section 6.

Figure 3 plots both metrics per day on the aggregate track. All models degrade over the prediction window: macro F1 drops from 0.50–0.63 on Feb 15 to 0.30–0.42 by Feb 27, and Wasserstein distance rises monotonically for every model. Ridge degrades the most gracefully—it starts with the highest F1 and the gap over other models widens as the horizon extends. On Wasserstein, all models start at comparable levels ($W_1 \approx 0.03$–0.10 on Feb 15), but their trajectories diverge: Ridge and Gemma-3-12B remain below 0.20 throughout, Qwen3-8B drifts to roughly 0.30, while Nemotron-Nano-8B and Friedkin-Johnsen exceed 0.45 by the end of the window.

The temporal pattern adds nuance to the averaged scores. Nemotron-Nano-8B diverges sharply on the aggregate track as the simulation progresses—its autoregressive errors compound faster than those of the other LLMs. Friedkin-Johnsen exhibits similar drift, consistent with a deterministic model that cannot self-correct. Ridge's per-agent parameterization anchors predictions to individual behavioural patterns, slowing error accumulation. Gemma-3-12B and Qwen3-8B occupy a middle ground—their language-conditioned memory provides partial error correction but does not fully prevent compounding.

We compute Frobenius distance between each model's predicted cross-topic correlation matrix and the ground truth is lowest for Ridge and Nemotron-Nano-8B (0.40 each) and highest for Gemma-3-12B (0.74), indicating that per-agent learned parameters recover cross-topic opinion structure more reliably than language-conditioned updates alone (full analysis in Appendix E).

6 Discussion

Per-agent precision vs. distributional fidelity. The consistent split between the two evaluation metrics—Ridge leading on per-agent F1, LLMs leading on Wasserstein for minority topics—reflects a structural difference in how the model types represent agents. Ridge fits a separate coefficient vector $\boldsymbol{\theta}_i$ for each agent, directly encoding individual behavioural patterns from the training window. This per-agent parameterization makes it effective at classifying *who* holds *which* stance, but it cannot generalize beyond the feature combinations observed during training. LLMs, by contrast, share a single set of frozen parameters across all agents and condition opinion updates on natural-language memory rather than per-agent features. The result is a model that captures population-level distributional patterns—the relative proportions of negative, neutral, and positive agents—without reliably pinning the correct class to the correct individual. This trade-off is sharpest on the General Election topic, where Ridge has abundant per-agent training signal, and narrowest on minority topics like Ganjar and Anies, where sparse data limits what per-agent fitting can learn and the LLM's language priors compensate.

Sentiment polarity and instruction tuning. The F1 gap between LLMs and Ridge covaries with topic sentiment composition: it is narrowest on positive-leaning Ganjar and widest on negative-dominant General Election (Table 1). Data volume confounds—General Election has $67\times$ more interactions than Ganjar—but the direction of the

Model	General			Anies			Prabowo			Ganjar			Quick Ct.			Agg.		
	$F1_M$	$F1_W$	W_1	$F1_M$	$F1_W$	W_1	$F1_M$	$F1_W$	W_1	$F1_M$	$F1_W$	W_1	$F1_M$	$F1_W$	W_1	$F1_M$	$F1_W$	W_1
Friedkin-Johnsen	0.51	0.66	0.14	0.80	0.80	0.10	0.62	0.69	0.13	0.82	0.83	0.12	**0.74**	**0.74**	0.19	0.39	0.57	0.21
Ridge	**0.59**	**0.72**	**0.07**	0.83	0.83	0.07	**0.66**	**0.73**	0.06	**0.87**	**0.88**	0.07	**0.74**	**0.74**	0.20	**0.49**	0.66	**0.12**
Gemma-3-12B	0.44	0.63	0.17	0.82	0.82	0.07	0.62	0.69	**0.05**	0.86	**0.88**	0.07	0.68	0.71	0.19	0.43	0.64	0.17
Qwen3-8B	0.47	0.68	0.24	0.83	0.83	**0.06**	0.61	0.69	**0.05**	0.86	**0.88**	**0.06**	0.69	0.73	**0.16**	0.47	**0.71**	0.19
Nemotron-Nano-8B	0.34	0.47	0.38	**0.84**	**0.84**	0.07	0.58	0.65	0.12	0.86	0.87	0.08	0.69	0.71	0.24	0.37	0.52	0.35

Table 2: Main results across per-topic and aggregate evaluation tracks. $F1_M$: macro F1 (↑); $F1_W$: weighted F1 (↑); W_1: Wasserstein Distance (↓). Best value per column in **bold**.

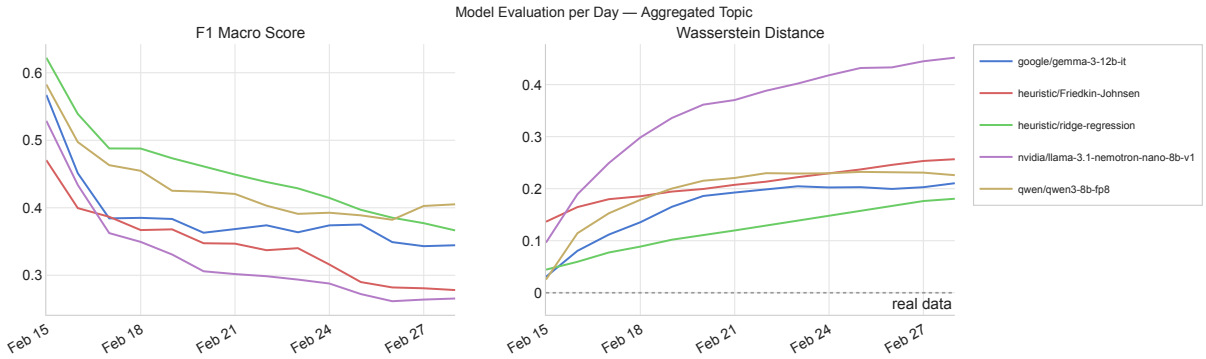

Figure 3: Daily macro F1 (left, ↑) and Wasserstein distance (right, ↓) on the aggregate track over the 14-day prediction window (Feb 15–28). Dashed line marks the ground-truth reference ($W_1 = 0$).

asymmetry is consistent with a known property of instruction-tuned models: RLHF training rewards agreeable, constructive outputs, producing a positivity bias that works against faithful simulation of sustained hostile discourse. All three LLMs are instruction-tuned, and the pattern holds across all three despite differing base architectures. Disentangling sentiment bias from data volume would require controlled downsampling experiments, which we leave to future work, but the correlation warrants caution when deploying LLM-based simulators on negative-dominant political discourse.

Qualitative error analysis. Two agents from the General Election topic illustrate where language-conditioned updates help and where they misfire. Agent A is a high-activity user (365 interactions) whose summarized memory describes a "consistent critic of the KPU… anti-establishment stance." Ground-truth opinion is persistently negative ($\bar{x} = -0.45$); Qwen3-8B tracks this correctly ($\bar{x} = -0.79$, 100% class accuracy), while Ridge drifts toward neutral ($\bar{x} = -0.19$, 0% accuracy)—its linear features average out the mixed-sentiment interactions this agent is exposed to, losing the ideological consistency that the LLM's memory preserves. Agent B shows the opposite failure. The summarised memory identifies a "staunch pro-Prabowo supporter… dismissing fraud claims," and the LLM shifts this agent's opinion toward positive ($\bar{x} = +0.50$), apparently conflating partisan *support* for a candidate with *positive* sentiment toward the General Election topic. The ground truth is negative ($\bar{x} = -0.64$); Ridge recovers this faithfully ($\bar{x} = -0.62$). The failure exposes a reasoning shortcut in the LLM: political identity cues in the persona override the actual opinion signal, a form of sentiment–identity conflation that scalar baselines are immune to by construction.

7 Conclusion

We constructed a benchmark from the 2024 Indonesian Presidential Election—1,000 agents, 70,336 interactions, five topics—and evaluated LLM-driven opinion dynamics against this real political discourse. Under a two-axis framework pairing 1-Wasserstein distance with 3-class buffered-sign F1, no single model family dominates both axes: Ridge classifies individual stances most accurately, while LLMs better recover population-level distributions on minority topics. The gap covaries with sentiment polarity—LLMs struggle on negative-dominant discourse, consistent with positivity bias in instruction-tuned models—and Friedkin-Johnsen underperforms all other models, confirming that fixed scalar weights are insufficient for this task.

Limitations

Several limitations bound these findings. The benchmark covers a single election in a single language; generalizability to other political contexts remains open. All three LLMs fall in the 8–12B parameter range, and larger or proprietary models (e.g., GPT-4o, Claude) may narrow the gap with Ridge, but were excluded due to the cost of running 70,000+ autoregressive inference calls per experiment. The per-topic tracks run independently, providing no mechanism for cross-topic conditioning within a single simulation. Additionally, the ground-truth opinion weights are derived from a fine-tuned sentiment classifier ($F1_M$=92.42%) rather than from direct human annotation, so all models are ultimately evaluated against machine-generated labels; classifier errors propagate into both the training signal and the evaluation target. Future work should explore joint multi-topic simulation, systematic ablation studies isolating the effects of sentiment bias from those of data volume, human-annotated opinion labels, and fine-tuning on political discourse to mitigate the positivity bias observed here.

Ethical Considerations

To adhere to the ACL Ethics Guidelines, we de-identified all account handles and applied semantic-preserving text perturbations to the raw tweets. This ensures that while the linguistic and social signals remain intact for simulation benchmarking, individual user privacy is protected against reverse-search Deanonymization. The anonymized dataset will be publicly available for research purposes upon publication.

Acknowledgments

Generative AI tools were used solely for writing assistance, generating low-novelty text, and helping identify relevant literatures, with all outputs carefully verified by the authors.

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A Proposed LLM-Based ODM Algorithm

Algorithm 1 details the full simulation loop, corresponding to the components defined in Section 3.4.

B Construction of the Friedkin-Johnsen Matrices

This appendix gives the explicit construction of $\mathbf{W}$ and $\mathbf{s}$ used in Section 4.3.1.

Interaction Matrix. $\mathbf{W}$ is constructed from the warm-up window $\mathcal{H}_i^{\text{init}} = \{k \in \mathcal{H}_i \mid t^{(k)} < \text{Feb } 1 + t_{\text{init}}\}$. For each ordered pair (i, j) with $i \neq j$, let $\mathcal{H}_{ij,\,s}^{\text{rep}} \subseteq \mathcal{H}_i^{\text{init}}$ denote the subset of replies from i to j with sentiment $s \in \{+, 0, -\}$, and let $\mathcal{H}_{ij}^{\text{rt}} \subseteq \mathcal{H}_i^{\text{init}}$ denote the retweets by i of j's posts. The unnormalized edge weight aggregates the two interaction channels:

$$\tilde{w}_{ij} = \left(\sum_{s \in \{+,0,-\}} \beta_s^{\text{rep}} \left| \mathcal{H}_{ij,\,s}^{\text{rep}} \right| \right) + \beta^{\text{rt}} \left| \mathcal{H}_{ij}^{\text{rt}} \right|$$

with the four scalars $\beta_+^{\text{rep}}, \beta_0^{\text{rep}}, \beta_-^{\text{rep}}$, and β^{rt} as hyperparameters. Observed self-interactions are discarded so the diagonal is not contaminated by reply or retweet counts; instead we set $\tilde{w}_{ii} = 1$ as a self-trust prior. $\mathbf{W}$ is then row-normalized,

$$w_{ij} \;=\; \tilde{w}_{ij} \Big/ \textstyle\sum_{k \in A} \tilde{w}_{ik},$$

so that $\sum_{j \in A} w_{ij} = 1$, satisfying the stochasticity requirement of the DeGroot or FJ update.

Algorithm 1: LLM-Driven Agent-Based Simulation of Opinion Dynamics

Input: N agent personas $\{p_i\}_{i=1}^{N}$; warm-up histories $\{\mathcal{H}_i^{(0)}\}_{i=1}^{N}$; activity stream $\{\mathcal{E}^t\}_{t=1}^{T}$; opinion classifier f_{oc}; summarizer f_{sum}; learning rate α; summary window W.

Output: Opinion trajectories $\{x_i^t\}_{t=0}^{T}$ for each agent $i \in A$.

```
// Agent initialization
for i = 1 to N do
    x_i^0 ← (1/|H_i^(0)|) Σ_{(a,x,t)∈H_i^(0)} x
    M_i^0 ← {φ(a, c) : (a, c) ∈ H_i^(0)}
    S_i^0 ← f_sum(M_i^0)
end
// Simulation
for t = 1 to T do
    foreach (i, a_i^t, c_i^t) ∈ E^t do
        // encode activity
        m_i^t ← φ(a_i^t, c_i^t)
        (r_i^t, u_i^t) ← f_oc(p_i, x_i^t, C_i^t, m_i^t)
        // classify shift
        x_i^{t+1} ← tanh(x_i^t + α u_i^t)
        // update opinion
        M_i^{t+1} ← M_i^t ∪ {(m_i^t, r_i^t)}
        // append to memory
        if L_i^{t+1} mod W = 0 then
            ℓ ← L_i^{t+1}
            S_i^{t+1} ←
              f_sum(M_i^{t+1}[ℓ − W + 1 : ℓ])
        end
    end
    foreach i ∈ A not acting at t do
        x_i^{t+1} ← x_i^t,

        M_i^{t+1} ← M_i^t,

        S_i^{t+1} ← S_i^t
    end
end
return {x_i^t}_{t=0}^T for each i ∈ A
```

Susceptibility Vector s. Susceptibility is computed over the same warm-up window. Aggregating replies regardless of sentiment as $|\mathcal{H}_{ij}^{\text{rep}}| = \sum_{s\in\{+,0,-\}} |\mathcal{H}_{ij,s}^{\text{rep}}|$, we define the self-directed and total weighted activity of agent i as

$$\sigma_i^{\text{self}} = \beta_{\text{rep}}^{\text{self}} \left|\mathcal{H}_{ii}^{\text{rep}}\right| + \beta_{\text{rt}}^{\text{self}} \left|\mathcal{H}_{ii}^{\text{rt}}\right|,$$
$$\sigma_i^{\text{total}} = \beta_{\text{rep}}^{\text{self}} \sum_{j\in A} \left|\mathcal{H}_{ij}^{\text{rep}}\right| + \beta_{\text{rt}}^{\text{self}} \sum_{j\in A} \left|\mathcal{H}_{ij}^{\text{rt}}\right|,$$

where the sums in σ_i^{total} run over all $j \in A$ including $j = i$, so $\sigma_i^{\text{self}} \le \sigma_i^{\text{total}}$ by construction. The susceptibility is then

$$\rho_i = \frac{\sigma_i^{\text{self}}}{\sigma_i^{\text{total}}}, \qquad s_i = 1 - \text{clip}\big(\rho_i,\, 0.1,\, 0.9\big).$$

The clip prevents degenerate fully-rigid ($s_i \to 0$) or fully-malleable ($s_i \to 1$) agents. Agents with no recorded activity in the warm-up window are assigned a baseline $s_i = 0.6$, i.e. a stubbornness floor of 0.4.

C LLM Prompts

This appendix lists the two prompt templates used by the LLM-powered ABM (Section 4.3.3). Both are rendered verbatim; `{...}` placeholders are filled in at runtime with per-agent state. The memory summarizer is called once per agent during warm-up to produce the persona p_i and seed summary S_i^0 from the warm-up history $\mathcal{H}_i$. The opinion classifier f_{oc} is called at every simulation step for every active agent and returns the (r_i^t, u_i^t) pair defined in Section 3.4.

C.1 Memory Summarization Prompt

```
You are an analyst who summarizes a person's
    ↪ recent activities in order to infer their
    ↪  traits.
You are given a list of the agent's few most
    ↪ recent memories.
Each memory contains a timestamp and a short
    ↪ description of an activity.

Your task:
- Read all the memories carefully.
- Identify patterns in personality, political
    ↪ views, and behavioural tendencies.
- Then produce a single coherent paragraph
    ↪ describing how this agent's personality,
    ↪ political leaning, and behaviour are
    ↪ constructed based on these activities.

Do NOT restate each memory individually.
Instead, infer trends, tendencies, and
    ↪ motivations behind the activities.
```

```
Input memories:
{memories}

Output format (one paragraph only):
A summary written from a first-person
    ↪ perspective ("I ..."), expressing:
- core personality traits
- political leaning (if detectable)
- behavioural patterns
- what these traits seem to be based on in the
    ↪ memories
- Strictly output the summary paragraph only.
```

C.2 Opinion Classifier Prompt

```
You are simulating a Twitter user's opinion
    ↪ about the following topic: {topic}.

## User Profile
- Gender: {gender}
- Followers: {followers_count} | Following: {
    ↪ following_count}
- Opinion before this activity: {
    ↪ current_opinion_weight} (continuous, -1.0
    ↪  to 1.0)

## Personality (long-term)
{summarized_memory}

## Recent Memory (short-term, chronological)
{memories}

## Activity
- Type: {activity_type} (original_post | retweet
    ↪  | reply)
- Content: "{activity_content}"

---

## Your Task
Based on the user's personality, memory, social
    ↪ context, and the nature of this activity,
determine:

1. **expressed_opinion** -- What sentiment does
    ↪ this activity express toward the topic?
   Scale: -2 (strongly against), -1 (against), 0
    ↪  (neutral), 1 (for), 2 (strongly for)

2. **opinion_delta** -- How much does this
    ↪ activity shift the user's internal
    ↪ opinion?
   Scale: -1.0 to 1.0

   Consider:
   - A retweet signals weaker conviction than an
    ↪  original post
   - A reply's shift depends on whether it's
    ↪ defensive or exploratory
   - A user whose memory shows consistent views
    ↪ shifts less than one with conflicted
    ↪ history
   - Prior opinion distance from the activity's
    ↪ sentiment amplifies or dampens the delta

Output ONLY valid JSON, no markdown, no extra
    ↪ fields:

{
  "reasoning": "<one sentence, first-person,
    ↪ less than 80 words>",
  "expressed_opinion": <integer -2 to 2>,
  "opinion_delta": <float -1.0 to 1.0>
}
```

D Hyperparameter Values

This appendix lists the hyperparameter values used to produce the results in Section 5. Tables 3–5 report one set per model. Values prefixed with β in Table 3 are jointly grid-searched on the training fold; the remaining values are fixed (defaults or configuration constants).

Symbol	Description	Value
β_{+}^{rep}	Edge weight, positive reply	0.1
β_{0}^{rep}	Edge weight, neutral reply	0.0
β_{-}^{rep}	Edge weight, negative reply	0.0
β^{rt}	Edge weight, retweet	0.1
$\beta_{\text{rep}}^{\text{self}}$	Self-share weight, reply	$0.1^{\dagger}$
$\beta_{\text{rt}}^{\text{self}}$	Self-share weight, retweet	0.1
$\tilde{w}_{ii}$	Diagonal self-trust prior	1.0
$[\rho^{\min}, \rho^{\max}]$	Clip range for ρ_i	[0.1, 0.9]
s_i^{base}	Susceptibility baseline (no activity)	0.6
t_{init}	Warm-up window (days)	14
Δt	Simulation step	2.4 h

Table 3: Hyperparameters for the Friedkin-Johnsen baseline. Values are shared across all experiments except $^{\dagger}\beta_{\text{rep}}^{\text{self}} = 0.9$ on the aggregate track.

Symbol	Description	Value
λ	Ridge regularization strength	1.0
—	Standardization	`StandardScaler`
t_{init}	Warm-up window (days)	14
T_{train}	Training buckets (Feb 1–14)	14
—	Test horizon (Feb 15–28)	14 days
Δt_{model}	Training/inference grid	1 day
Δt_{out}	Output grid (forward-held)	2.4 h

Table 4: Hyperparameters for the Ridge regression baseline.

E Cross-Topic Correlation Analysis

To assess whether models recover the multi-topic opinion structure of real users, we compute per-agent mean opinion across the prediction window for each topic, build a 5×5 Pearson correlation matrix over agents active in at least two topics, and compare each model's matrix against the ground truth via Frobenius norm $\|\mathbf{C}_{\text{model}} - \mathbf{C}_{\text{GT}}\|_F$. Figure 4 reports the ground-truth correlation structure (left) and each model's Frobenius distance (right).

Symbol	Description	Value
—	Decoding temperature	0.3
p	Nucleus sampling threshold (top-p)	0.8
k	Top-k cutoff	20
α	Opinion-update step (tanh)	0.5
$\lvert W \rvert$	Memory window (recent entries)	5
—	Classifier batch size	50
—	Warm-up summarizer batch	50
T_{init}	Warm-up window (days)	14
Δt	Simulation step	15 min

Table 5: Hyperparameters for the LLM-powered ABM. We evaluate three open-weight models under identical settings.

Ridge and Nemotron-Nano-8B recover cross-topic structure most faithfully (0.40), while Gemma-3-12B diverges most (0.74).

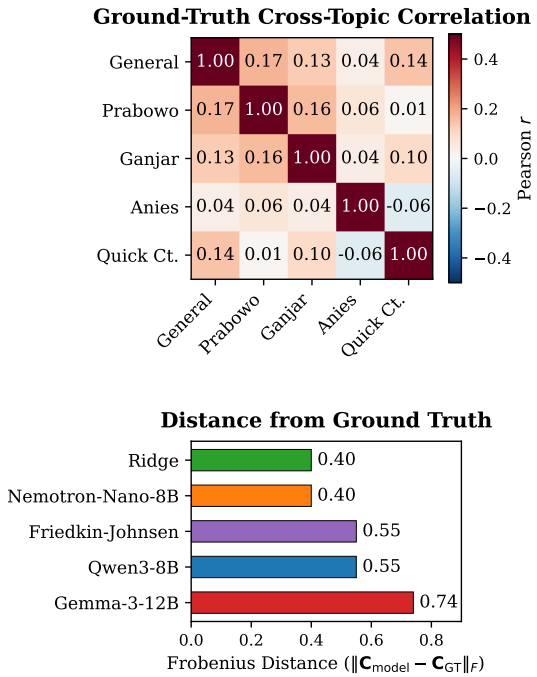

Figure 4: Top: ground-truth cross-topic Pearson correlation matrix over 914 agents. Bottom: Frobenius distance between each model's predicted correlation matrix and the ground truth (↓).