

Political Misinformation during Indonesian Elections: Social Media Networks, Voter Trust, and Democratic Resilience

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Abstract

Political misinformation has become a significant challenge for electoral democracies because false or misleading information can influence voter perceptions and weaken trust in democratic institutions. Indonesia's highly active social media environment provides fertile conditions for the rapid circulation of political claims during election periods. This article examines political misinformation in Indonesian elections and its implications for democratic resilience. Using qualitative digital discourse analysis, the study investigates the circulation of misleading narratives, user engagement, corrective information, and institutional responses. The article argues that misinformation is not simply a technological problem but a social phenomenon shaped by political identity, interpersonal trust, and existing ideological networks. Corrective information may be less effective when audiences interpret factual claims through strong partisan identities. The study proposes a multidimensional response combining platform accountability, media literacy, rapid fact-checking, transparent electoral communication, and community-based information verification. The article concludes that democratic resilience depends not only on removing false information but also on strengthening citizens' capacity to evaluate political claims independently.

[Disinformasi politik telah menjadi tantangan signifikan bagi demokrasi elektoral karena informasi palsu atau menyesatkan dapat memengaruhi persepsi pemilih dan melemahkan kepercayaan terhadap lembaga demokrasi. Lingkungan media sosial Indonesia yang sangat aktif menyediakan kondisi yang subur bagi penyebaran klaim politik yang cepat selama periode pemilihan. Artikel ini mengkaji disinformasi politik dalam pemilihan umum di Indonesia dan implikasinya terhadap ketahanan demokrasi. Dengan menggunakan analisis wacana digital kualitatif, studi ini meneliti peredaran narasi yang menyesatkan, keterlibatan pengguna, informasi korektif, dan respons kelembagaan. Artikel ini berpendapat bahwa

disinformasi bukan hanya masalah teknologi tetapi juga fenomena sosial yang dibentuk oleh identitas politik, kepercayaan antarpribadi, dan jaringan ideologis yang ada. Informasi korektif mungkin kurang efektif ketika audiens menafsirkan klaim faktual melalui identitas partisan yang kuat. Studi ini mengusulkan respons multidimensional yang menggabungkan akuntabilitas platform, literasi media, pengecekan fakta yang cepat, komunikasi elektoral yang transparan, dan verifikasi informasi berbasis komunitas. Artikel ini menyimpulkan bahwa ketahanan demokrasi tidak hanya bergantung pada penghapusan informasi palsu tetapi juga pada penguatan kapasitas warga negara untuk mengevaluasi klaim politik secara independen.]

Keywords: Political misinformation, elections, social media, voter trust, Indonesia

Introduction

The transformation of electoral communication through digital media has fundamentally altered how Indonesian citizens encounter political information. Political parties, candidates, journalists, activists, government institutions, and ordinary users can now produce and distribute electoral narratives without depending exclusively on conventional media organizations. This expansion has increased opportunities for political participation while simultaneously making the information environment more difficult to regulate and interpret. During election periods, misleading political claims can travel rapidly across Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, and other networked platforms, often crossing boundaries between political campaigning and ordinary interpersonal communication. Indonesian scholarship has repeatedly identified hoaxes as a significant feature of contemporary electoral politics. Utami (2018), for example, demonstrates that political hoaxes during the 2017 Jakarta election operated through memetic practices that connected fabricated information to pre-existing social anxieties. The issue is therefore not simply whether citizens receive false information, but why particular claims become credible, shareable, and politically consequential within specific social networks.

The distinction between misinformation and disinformation is analytically important. Misinformation generally refers to false or inaccurate information circulated without necessarily requiring an intention to deceive, whereas disinformation involves the deliberate production or dissemination of misleading information for strategic purposes. In electoral environments, the two can become difficult to separate because strategically produced narratives may be repeatedly forwarded by users who genuinely believe them. This creates a chain in which intentional manipulation at the production stage becomes apparently organic communication at the distribution stage. Rosyidah et al. (2024), examining

misinformation and disinformation surrounding the 2024 election, found recurring patterns involving hoaxes and clickbait content across social media. Juditha (2024) likewise identified political hoaxes as an important form of digital political communication during the 2024 presidential election. These findings suggest that misinformation should be examined as a process involving producers, intermediaries, audiences, platforms, and political contexts rather than as isolated pieces of false content.

The Indonesian experience also demonstrates that misinformation does not emerge independently of political conflict. The 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election provides an important illustration. Parahita (2018) found that political partisanship had the strongest significant relationship with voters' perceptions of digital political information among the factors examined, including socioeconomic status, media exposure, trust, and digital fluency. The case is important because misinformation concerning Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, including narratives associating him with communism, operated within an already polarized political environment. Utami (2018) similarly argues that hoaxes in the Jakarta election were able to mobilize existing racial, religious, and historical sentiments. These findings challenge technologically deterministic interpretations in which misinformation is assumed to persuade audiences simply because it is repeatedly encountered. Instead, political misinformation becomes effective when it resonates with identities and interpretive frameworks that already exist within the audience.

The 2019 presidential election provides further evidence of the relationship between misinformation and political identity. Rumata and Nugraha (2020) examined fake narratives circulating during the election and showed how political communication on social media involved narratives that constructed particular interpretations of candidates and political opponents. Tahir, Kusmanto, and Amin (2020) similarly examined political propaganda and hoaxes during the 2019 presidential contest and demonstrated how misinformation was connected to broader political competition. Meanwhile, Wahyono, Wirasti, and Ratmono (2020), using an audience-reception perspective, identified pragmatic-creative, ideological, and critical-skeptical forms of audience reception toward political hoaxes. Their findings are particularly significant because they demonstrate that audiences do not respond uniformly to misinformation. Some negotiate or tolerate problematic information, others interpret it through ideological commitments, and some actively resist it. The democratic consequences of misinformation must therefore be analyzed through the interaction between content and audience interpretation.

The concept of motivated reasoning provides a useful theoretical explanation for this phenomenon. Kunda (1990) argues that individuals do not always process information through detached evaluation; they may selectively employ reasoning to arrive at conclusions consistent with desired beliefs. In political communication, this mechanism can make citizens more receptive to information supporting their preferred candidate while increasing skepticism toward information threatening

their political identity. Ardi (2019), studying partisan selective exposure in Indonesia, found that politically aligned audiences demonstrated different tendencies in exposure to fake news concerning political opponents. Halida (2020), using survey data from the 2019 Indonesian presidential election, further found that partisan bias significantly predicted belief in a political misinformation narrative, whereas frequency of Facebook use did not produce the same explanatory effect. These findings shift analytical attention from the quantity of social-media exposure toward the interpretive predispositions through which political information is processed.

The significance of network structures further complicates the problem. Social-media users rarely encounter political information in isolation. They participate in networks composed of friends, family members, colleagues, political communities, religious organizations, and interest groups. These networks influence what information becomes visible and which sources are perceived as credible. Ahmad (2022) conceptualizes this problem through the notion of a “disinformation order” and an algorithmic trap in Indonesian social media, arguing that digital environments can contribute to polarization and undermine liberal democratic norms. Although algorithmic personalization is important, network homogeneity may be equally significant. Information repeatedly encountered within politically similar communities can acquire legitimacy through repetition and social confirmation. Misinformation may therefore appear credible not because it has been independently verified but because several trusted members of the same network circulate it.

The implications of misinformation extend beyond individual political attitudes to the institutional foundations of democracy. Elections depend on citizens’ confidence that political information, electoral procedures, candidates, and institutions can be evaluated through reasonably shared standards of evidence. When misinformation systematically undermines these standards, electoral competition may become a struggle over incompatible realities rather than competing policy preferences. Mufrikhah and Jihad (2025) found that hoax narratives surrounding the 2019 election marginalized substantive political ideas, influenced public perceptions, weakened trust in democratic institutions, and intensified social polarization. This finding is particularly important for understanding democratic resilience because it demonstrates that misinformation can damage democracy even when individual false claims do not directly determine voting behavior. The cumulative effect may instead be declining confidence in the informational and institutional conditions necessary for meaningful electoral choice.

Recent evidence from the 2024 election indicates that these problems have not disappeared with increased public awareness of digital misinformation. Juditha (2024) found that election-related hoaxes remained prominent within digital political communication, particularly through video-oriented platforms such as YouTube and TikTok. Wulandari et al. (2024) similarly documented the circulation

of election-related disinformation on TikTok, including misleading narratives, black campaigns, and attempts to influence public opinion. Subekti et al. (2025) further found that all major presidential candidates became targets of disinformation during the 2024 election, with attacks involving character assassination and political issues. These cases demonstrate an important transformation: misinformation is no longer concentrated in text-based political rumors but increasingly operates through audiovisual formats capable of combining emotional cues, edited images, synthetic contexts, and rapid algorithmic distribution.

Against this background, this article examines political misinformation during Indonesian elections by focusing on the relationship between social-media networks, voter trust, and democratic resilience. The study employs qualitative digital discourse analysis to synthesize relevant Indonesian electoral cases and interpret recurring misinformation narratives, audience responses, political identities, corrective communication, and institutional interventions. The analysis integrates motivated reasoning, selective exposure, networked public-sphere theory, and democratic resilience. Rather than assuming that misinformation automatically changes electoral preferences, the article argues that its more consequential effect may be the gradual transformation of the informational conditions under which political judgment occurs. The central research question is therefore how social-media networks and political identities mediate the relationship between misinformation and voter trust, and what forms of institutional and community response can strengthen democratic resilience without unnecessarily restricting legitimate political expression.

Political Misinformation as a Networked Electoral Phenomenon

Political misinformation in Indonesia should first be understood as a networked phenomenon rather than an isolated content problem. A false claim becomes politically significant only when it enters communication networks capable of reproducing, contextualizing, and legitimizing it. The network may include political campaign teams, anonymous accounts, influencers, journalists, community groups, and ordinary citizens. Rumata and Nugraha (2020) demonstrate that political narratives during the 2019 presidential election circulated within a broader digital communication environment in which narratives concerning candidates were repeatedly reconstructed. Similarly, Suryadi, Nugraha, and Misbach (2022) found that political hoaxes during the 2019 campaign commonly relied on manipulated images, misleading contexts, provocative messages, and narratives encouraging audiences to reject particular candidates. The significance of these findings lies in their demonstration that misinformation does not need to remain identical while circulating. It can be modified by users while retaining its central political implication.

The 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election illustrates how misinformation becomes effective when connected to pre-existing social narratives. Utami (2018)

shows that political hoaxes functioned through memetic practices in which existing materials were altered and connected to sentiments already present within Indonesian society. The political significance of these narratives derived from their capacity to activate anxieties concerning ethnicity, religion, and national identity. Parahita (2018) similarly found that political partisanship was the strongest predictor among several factors associated with perceptions of digital political information. This suggests that misinformation does not necessarily create political hostility from nothing. Instead, it can intensify existing divisions by providing simplified narratives through which complex political conflicts are interpreted. Social-media networks become important because they provide the channels through which such narratives are repeated and socially validated.

This mechanism can be interpreted through Castells's concept of the network society, in which power increasingly operates through the capacity to construct and circulate meanings across communication networks. Political actors no longer require complete control over traditional media institutions to influence public discourse. They can attempt to shape networked attention by producing narratives that users find emotionally or politically meaningful. Ahmad (2022) argues that the Indonesian social-media environment can generate an algorithmic trap in which political communication becomes increasingly polarized. The implication is that political misinformation should be analyzed through the interaction between network structure and content. A false claim circulating in a politically diverse environment may encounter immediate resistance, whereas the same claim circulating inside a highly homogeneous network can become progressively normalized.

The 2019 election demonstrated the political consequences of this process through narratives directed at both presidential candidates and electoral institutions. Mufrikhah and Jihad (2025) found that hoax narratives targeted candidates, political parties, and election organizers, while their broader effects included weakened institutional trust and social polarization. One important example was the recurring narrative questioning the integrity of election technology and electoral administration. Such claims were politically consequential not simply because they contained false information but because they questioned the legitimacy of the electoral process itself. Once citizens begin to interpret electoral institutions through suspicion, factual correction becomes more difficult because every institutional denial can itself be interpreted as evidence of concealment.

The same dynamic appeared in the circulation of narratives concerning political identity. Aminulloh et al. (2021) examined propaganda in the post-truth environment of the 2019 presidential election and demonstrated how political communication could rely on emotionally charged narratives rather than substantive policy discussion. Later research by Aminulloh, Artaria, and Setiamandani (2024) similarly showed how narratives concerning communism and the caliphate became part of a broader discourse battle in Indonesian social media. These narratives demonstrate the importance of what McIntyre (2018) describes as

the post-truth condition, in which appeals to emotion and identity may become more influential than the evidentiary status of claims. In this environment, misinformation gains political force because it offers audiences an interpretive framework that appears coherent with their identity, even when the underlying factual claim is demonstrably weak.

The 2024 election introduced another important transformation through the increasing prominence of audiovisual misinformation. Juditha (2024) found that misleading and manipulative political content was particularly visible through video-based platforms, while Wulandari et al. (2024) identified hoaxes on TikTok involving black campaigns and attempts to manipulate public opinion. Subekti et al. (2025) similarly found that Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok were important channels for candidate-targeted disinformation. This shift matters because audiovisual content can combine images, voice, music, editing, and captions to create an impression of authenticity. A short video may communicate a political accusation more effectively than a long textual argument because viewers process not only the claim but also the emotional atmosphere constructed around it.

The growth of audiovisual misinformation also complicates conventional fact-checking. A factual correction can demonstrate that an image was manipulated or that a statement was taken out of context, but the emotional impression produced by the original video may remain. This is consistent with the broader literature on misinformation, which suggests that exposure can sometimes produce continued familiarity even after correction. In Indonesia, Wahyono, Wirasti, and Ratmono (2020) demonstrate that audiences respond to political hoaxes through different reception positions. The finding indicates that corrective communication cannot assume a uniform audience. A politically committed individual may interpret a correction as partisan intervention, whereas a critical-skeptical audience may actively seek additional evidence.

The networked character of misinformation therefore produces a paradox. Digital networks increase citizens' ability to participate in political communication, but the same networks can facilitate the rapid consolidation of misleading narratives. The problem cannot be solved solely by removing individual pieces of content because the underlying social and political networks remain intact. Democratic intervention must instead address the conditions that enable misinformation to gain credibility: political polarization, opaque sources, weak verification norms, strategic manipulation, and distrust of institutions. Political misinformation should consequently be treated as a systemic feature of contemporary electoral communication rather than as an abnormal deviation from otherwise healthy digital politics.

Partisan Identity, Voter Trust, and the Limits of Corrective Information

The relationship between misinformation and voter trust is mediated strongly by political identity. Citizens do not enter electoral communication as neutral

information processors. They possess ideological preferences, emotional attachments, social identities, and prior evaluations of candidates and institutions. Motivated reasoning explains why political information can be assessed according to standards that differ depending on whether the information supports or threatens existing beliefs. Kunda's (1990) theory suggests that individuals can use reasoning selectively to defend preferred conclusions. In the Indonesian context, Halida (2020) provides particularly strong empirical evidence: partisan bias significantly predicted belief in misinformation during the 2019 presidential election, whereas Facebook-use frequency did not show the same explanatory effect. This finding indicates that misinformation vulnerability is not reducible to excessive social-media use. Political identity may matter more than the amount of time citizens spend online.

Ardi's (2019) study reinforces this argument by examining selective exposure among Indonesian partisan audiences. The study found differences between incumbent and opposition supporters in exposure to fake-news content concerning political opponents. The finding is consistent with the idea that individuals may prefer information that confirms negative assumptions about political out-groups. Selective exposure does not necessarily mean that users deliberately seek false information. Rather, they may select information because it fits their existing interpretation of political reality. Once selected, the information can be further strengthened through social interaction with politically similar users. This creates a feedback mechanism in which identity influences exposure, exposure reinforces identity, and reinforced identity makes contradictory information increasingly difficult to accept.

The concept of echo chambers helps explain how this process operates at the network level. A politically homogeneous online community can provide repeated confirmation of a shared interpretation. When users encounter similar claims from several people they trust, the repetition itself can be interpreted as evidence. Ahmad (2022) warns that algorithmic and networked environments can contribute to an "algorithmic trap" that narrows political exposure. However, the problem should not be attributed entirely to algorithms. Users actively choose networks that reflect their identities, and political organizations may intentionally cultivate communities designed to reinforce particular interpretations. The resulting environment is therefore co-produced by platform architecture, user behavior, and political strategy.

Voter trust is particularly vulnerable when misinformation concerns electoral institutions rather than individual candidates. A false claim that attacks a politician may influence perceptions of that politician, but a false claim alleging systematic electoral manipulation can undermine confidence in the democratic process itself. Mufrikhah and Jihad (2025) found that political hoaxes during the 2019 election contributed to declining trust in democratic institutions. This distinction is essential because democratic competition depends on citizens accepting electoral outcomes even when their preferred candidates lose. If misinformation convinces voters that

election results are inherently illegitimate, political disagreement may shift from contestation within democratic institutions toward rejection of those institutions.

The case of the 2019 election demonstrates this danger through narratives questioning the integrity of electoral administration. Wahyono, Wirasti, and Ratmono (2020) discuss the circulation of political hoaxes in the post-truth environment and identify different audience responses, including ideological and critical-skeptical positions. A citizen who already distrusts the election authority may interpret a rumor about electoral fraud as confirmation of an existing suspicion. A subsequent institutional denial may have limited impact because the institution itself has already been classified as untrustworthy. This creates an epistemic dilemma: institutions responsible for correcting misinformation may lack credibility among the very audiences most affected by it.

The problem also appears in the relationship between media trust and political information. Parahita (2018) found that media trust, diversity of media exposure, political partisanship, and digital fluency were relevant to perceptions of digital political information. This suggests that resilience cannot be reduced to teaching citizens to distinguish “true” and “false” content. Citizens must also have access to credible information sources they consider sufficiently independent and trustworthy. When official communication is perceived as partisan, factual information may fail to persuade even when it is accurate. Institutional credibility therefore becomes a prerequisite for effective misinformation correction.

Correction strategies are further complicated by the phenomenon of continued belief after exposure to factual rebuttals. A correction may successfully introduce accurate information without eliminating the emotional or identity-based significance of the original misinformation. This is particularly problematic when the misinformation concerns threats to political or social identity. A claim about a candidate's alleged disloyalty, religious identity, ethnicity, or ideological affiliation can become meaningful independently of its factual accuracy. The corrective message must therefore compete not only with false information but also with the identity narrative embedded within that information. Fact-checking is necessary, but it is not sufficient.

A more effective democratic response should consequently combine factual correction with trust-building communication. Santoso, Setyaningsih, and Supadiyanto (2024) emphasize practical verification procedures involving source checking, factual verification, image examination, and date verification. These practices are valuable because they translate abstract media literacy into observable behaviors. Yet institutional communication should also explain how and why a claim is false rather than merely labeling it as “hoax.” Citizens are more likely to develop independent evaluative capacity when they can understand the evidentiary reasoning behind a correction. Democratic resilience therefore requires an epistemic culture in which questioning information is normalized and institutional claims remain open to verification.

Democratic Resilience and the Institutional Response to Electoral Misinformation

Democratic resilience should not be defined simply as the capacity of governments to remove misinformation. A resilient democracy must preserve citizens' ability to communicate politically while preventing systematic manipulation from destroying the conditions of meaningful electoral choice. This requires a balance between freedom of expression, informational integrity, and institutional accountability. Siregar (2020) demonstrates the difficulty of this balance in the Indonesian context by examining the role of the Elections Supervisory Agency in addressing hoaxes and hate speech during the 2019 election. The study emphasizes that enforcement measures must operate within legal frameworks while also recognizing the importance of freedom of expression. This tension remains central because aggressive content regulation can itself undermine democratic legitimacy if citizens perceive enforcement as politically selective.

Institutional responsibility should therefore begin with transparent electoral communication. Electoral bodies need to provide accessible, timely, and comprehensible information concerning voting procedures, counting mechanisms, candidate regulations, and official results. When accurate information is difficult to obtain, citizens may rely on informal networks to fill informational gaps. Such gaps create opportunities for misinformation entrepreneurs. The role of electoral institutions is consequently not limited to responding to false claims after they spread. They must proactively establish authoritative information environments in which citizens can verify politically consequential claims. The institutional response to misinformation should thus be anticipatory rather than exclusively reactive.

The Indonesian experience suggests that fact-checking organizations can play an important intermediary role. Santoso, Setyaningsih, and Supadiyanto (2024) demonstrate the relevance of systematic verification techniques for identifying manipulated and misleading election content. Rosyidah et al. (2024) similarly analyzed misinformation and disinformation using material verified through TurnBackHoax.id and identified recurring patterns that can inform policy responses. These initiatives illustrate the importance of independent verification infrastructures. However, fact-checking organizations face a credibility challenge when political audiences interpret them through partisan assumptions. Their effectiveness depends not only on methodological rigor but also on transparency concerning sources, evidence, and verification procedures.

Platform accountability represents a second institutional dimension. Social-media platforms shape political visibility through recommendation systems, content-ranking mechanisms, moderation policies, and advertising infrastructures. The 2024 election demonstrated the increasing importance of video-oriented platforms, with Juditha (2024) and Wulandari et al. (2024) identifying significant political misinformation in video-based environments. Platforms therefore cannot

be treated merely as neutral technological intermediaries. Their design influences which political messages become visible and how rapidly they circulate. Democratic accountability requires greater transparency concerning political advertising, coordinated inauthentic behavior, content moderation, and algorithmic amplification, particularly during election periods.

The need for platform accountability does not imply that platforms should become arbiters of political truth. That approach would concentrate excessive power in private corporations and create risks for legitimate political dissent. The more appropriate objective is procedural transparency. Platforms should provide mechanisms through which users can understand why political content is recommended, identify paid political communication, report misleading material, and access reliable contextual information. This approach recognizes that misinformation is not solved by censorship alone. Instead, citizens require a communication environment in which the provenance and context of political claims are easier to evaluate.

Media and political literacy should form the third component of democratic resilience. Priambodo (2019), studying adolescents in Malang, demonstrates the importance of social-media literacy in addressing exposure to hoax information. More broadly, Indonesian research indicates that citizens vary considerably in their capacity and willingness to evaluate political information. Wahyono, Wirasti, and Ratmono (2020) show that audiences adopt different interpretive positions toward political hoaxes, while Halida (2020) and Ardi (2019) demonstrate that political identity influences misinformation belief and selective exposure. Literacy programs must therefore go beyond technical skills such as reverse-image searching. They should also teach citizens how political identity influences interpretation, how emotionally charged claims operate, and how to distinguish evidence from repetition.

Community-based verification is especially important in environments where interpersonal trust shapes information circulation. Political misinformation frequently travels through family groups, neighborhood networks, religious communities, and professional associations. Information received from a trusted acquaintance can be more persuasive than information from an unfamiliar official source. This makes community leaders potential agents of both misinformation and democratic resilience. Local educators, journalists, religious figures, civil-society organizations, and community administrators can develop norms encouraging members to verify politically sensitive claims before forwarding them. Such interventions are potentially more effective when verification is framed as a shared responsibility rather than as an accusation against individuals who unknowingly share misinformation.

The final dimension is the preservation of pluralistic political communication. Democratic resilience cannot be achieved by creating a politically homogeneous information environment in which citizens encounter only officially approved narratives. Such a model would solve one problem by creating another: excessive

institutional control over political discourse. The objective should instead be to strengthen citizens' ability to encounter disagreement without interpreting disagreement as evidence of conspiracy or hostility. Sunstein's (2001) concerns about group polarization remain relevant because democratic communication requires exposure to cross-cutting perspectives. Resilience therefore depends on citizens being able to evaluate competing political claims without abandoning their capacity for independent judgment.

Taken together, these dimensions suggest that democratic resilience is best understood as a distributed capacity involving citizens, communities, electoral institutions, fact-checkers, journalists, civil society, and technology platforms. No single actor can control the contemporary misinformation environment. Government agencies may provide authoritative information but cannot monitor every interpersonal network. Platforms can moderate content but cannot determine the political meaning of every claim. Citizens can verify information but require accessible evidence and trustworthy sources. The challenge is therefore institutional coordination without political capture. Indonesia's experience demonstrates that misinformation is not simply an information disorder but a democratic governance problem. Resilience requires an ecosystem in which political disagreement remains legitimate while deliberate manipulation, unsupported claims, and systematic attacks on electoral legitimacy are subject to scrutiny.

Conclusion

Political misinformation has become a structural component of Indonesian electoral communication rather than a temporary side effect of digital campaigning. The cases of the 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election, the 2018 West Java gubernatorial election, the 2019 presidential election, and the 2024 general election demonstrate a consistent pattern in which misleading political narratives interact with partisan identities, emotional appeals, social networks, and institutional distrust. The evidence indicates that exposure alone does not adequately explain why citizens believe political misinformation. Partisan orientation, selective exposure, source credibility, network homogeneity, and pre-existing perceptions of political institutions play critical roles in determining whether a misleading claim is accepted, rejected, negotiated, or redistributed. Misinformation therefore operates through social interpretation rather than technological transmission alone.

The central democratic danger lies not only in changing individual voting preferences but in weakening the informational foundations of electoral legitimacy. When citizens lose confidence in election organizers, factual verification, mainstream journalism, or opposing political groups, democratic disagreement can become increasingly difficult to resolve through shared evidence. Corrective information may fail when audiences interpret it through partisan identities or

distrust the institutions providing the correction. The Indonesian experience consequently demonstrates the limits of a purely reactive approach based on removing false content after it becomes viral. Democratic resilience requires strengthening the broader information ecosystem in which political claims are produced, circulated, interpreted, and contested. Independent fact-checking, transparent electoral communication, platform accountability, and socially embedded digital literacy must operate together rather than as isolated interventions.

The long-term objective should not be to construct an information environment without political conflict. Democratic politics necessarily involves disagreement, persuasion, criticism, and competing interpretations. The more realistic objective is to ensure that political disagreement remains compatible with evidence, institutional accountability, and citizens' capacity for independent judgment. Indonesia's democratic resilience will depend on whether citizens can maintain political pluralism without allowing misinformation to transform political identity into epistemic isolation. Future research should therefore examine how misinformation moves across different platform architectures and how corrective practices differ between urban and rural communities, age groups, political identities, and levels of institutional trust. Such research would contribute to a more precise understanding of how digital communication can remain politically participatory without becoming an infrastructure for systematic electoral manipulation.

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