

Digital Democracy in Post-2024 Indonesia: Between Expanded Participation and Normalized Polarization

SETYO HARI PRIYONO

ABSTRACT

This article examines the ambivalent trajectory of Indonesia's digital democracy after the 2024 national elections, focusing on how digitalization reshapes participation, public discourse, and electoral governance. Using a qualitative descriptive, literature-based design, the study synthesizes international meta-analyses on digital media and participation, research on digital inclusion and critical digital literacy, and Indonesian evidence from academic studies, official reports, and civil society monitoring. The findings show that social media and online platforms have expanded information access and expressive political engagement, especially among younger citizens, yet participation remains socially stratified and often shallow, mirroring global patterns of participation bias. Furthermore, industrialized disinformation, buzzer networks, and emerging uses of AI-generated content erode epistemic quality and trust, while regulatory and supervisory responses by electoral bodies remain fragmented and formalistic. Therefore, the article argues for structural reforms that combine digital inclusion, critical digital literacy, and platform governance. Future research needs to focus on buzzer ecosystems, AI-mediated campaigning, and digital intraparty democracy.

Keywords: *Digital democracy; online political participation; social media disinformation; political polarization; critical digital literacy*

Setyo Hari Priyono is a Ph.D. candidate at the Graduate School of Policy Science, Ritsumeikan University, Osaka, Japan. Alongside his doctoral studies, he serves as a Planner at the Ministry of National Development Planning (Bappenas), Republic of Indonesia. Email: setyohpriyono@gmail.com

@2026 Departement Sociology, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Nasional. Website: <http://sosiologi.fisip.unas.ac.id/>

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of 2025, Indonesia had firmly established itself as a hyper-connected society, with internet penetration reaching 74.6 percent of its 285 million citizens (We Are Social & Meltwater, 2025). Notably, the fact that mobile connectivity stands at 125 percent of the population—reflecting a pervasive multi-SIM culture—underscores a landscape where networked communication is not merely available but ubiquitous. This structural shift has fundamentally redefined the "public square," as traditional broadcast and print media increasingly lose their gatekeeping authority to social media platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram. Interestingly, recent longitudinal research spanning 2004 to 2024 suggests that these digital arenas have become the primary sites for political agenda-setting, especially for a younger generation that views online engagement as their default mode of political participation (Widodo & Kristiyanto, 2025; Nugroho, 2024).

Consequently, the 2024 general elections functioned as a high-stakes stress test for Indonesia's digital democracy. However, the results of this test were profoundly ambivalent. On one hand, digital tools arguably democratized electoral oversight, enabling citizens to monitor vote counts and mobilize dissent with unprecedented speed (Rahman et al., 2023; Sanchez Medero, 2025). On the other hand, this period saw a sophisticated "industrialization" of disinformation. Orchestrated "buzzer" networks and AI-driven hate speech were deployed systematically to distort public discourse and normalize polarizing narratives (BSSN & Mafindo, 2025; ICW et al., 2024a).

Crucially, the 2024 election demonstrated that digital sophistication does not necessarily displace "analog" clientelism; rather, the two have become intertwined. According to civil society monitoring across ten provinces verified that digital mobilization often ran parallel to traditional malpractice, such as vote-buying and the strategic abuse of state resources by local officials (ICW et al., 2024a; 2024b). Furthermore, the introduction of generative AI—specifically deepfakes and AI-generated avatars of political figures—has added a qualitatively new layer of deception to the campaign trail. This evolution suggests that Indonesia is now confronting an "epistemic crisis" similar to those observed globally, where the very foundations of shared truth and institutional trust are increasingly under siege (Farid, 2025; Gehringer et al., 2024).

Global scholarship on digital democracy consistently highlights a recurring paradox: while digital media use is associated with modest gains in civic participation—particularly among younger cohorts and previously marginalized groups—these benefits are far from equitable (Boulianne, 2018; Asimakopoulos, 2025). Notably, meta-analyses reveal that digital engagement remains highly conditional, often skewed toward those already possessing significant socio-economic resources and political interest. This stratification suggests that, rather than leveling the playing field, digital platforms may inadvertently consolidate existing inequalities of influence (Boulianne & Theocharis, 2020; Wolswinkel et al., 2020). Consequently, scholars of digital inclusion argue that meaningful participation requires more than just technical access; it necessitates deliberate institutional frameworks to ensure that marginalized voices are not eclipsed by resource-rich actors (Wolswinkel et al., 2020; Sadat, 2025).

In the Indonesian context, recent literature reflects this same tension between expanded opportunity and entrenched systemic challenges. Interestingly, a systematic review of the 2019–2024 period identifies a significant proliferation of digital public spaces, yet warns that these are increasingly plagued by misinformation, privacy risks, and a lack of substantive engagement (Rasyidah et al., 2025). Prakoso (2025) further characterizes the evolution of digital campaigning as "flimsy and overly formalistic," suggesting that technological shifts have yet to translate into deeper systemic accountability. Furthermore, the deployment of state-led systems like SIREKAP alongside civil society platforms such as Kawal Pemilu illustrates a recurring friction: while these tools enhance administrative efficiency, they also trigger intense controversies over data governance and institutional trust (Sustikarini, 2020; Albahori et al., 2023). This is compounded by the systematic use of hoaxes, buzzer networks, and identity-driven narratives during the 2024 election, all designed to delegitimize both opponents and democratic institutions (Indonesia Corruption Watch et al., 2024a; Subekti et al., 2025).

However, despite these critical advances in the literature, there remains a surprising lack of integrative analysis regarding Indonesia's post-2024 trajectory. Existing studies often treat patterns of mobilization, the mechanics of disinformation—including AI-enabled manipulation—and institutional responses as isolated phenomena. Crucially, many current evaluations tend to be either narrowly technical or overly normative, frequently overlooking the underlying political economy of digital campaigning and the specificities of the most recent electoral cycle (Assaefi et al., 2024; Prakoso, 2025).

This article pursues a threefold inquiry into the post-2024 Indonesian political landscape. Primarily, it investigates the evolving stratification of digital participation, paying close attention to how generational shifts and hashtag-led mobilization have effectively blurred the boundaries between online activism and offline engagement (Prakoso, 2025; Nugroho, 2024; Assaefi et al., 2024). Beyond mere participation levels, however, the study interrogates how the convergence of platform logics, AI-driven manipulation, and pervasive buzzer networks has fragmented the digital public sphere. This transformation has increasingly rendered the online environment a hostile arena, posing significant risks to both deliberative quality and electoral integrity (Indonesia Corruption Watch et al., 2024a; Garton Ash, 2025; Hoffman & Klein, 2025; Gehringer et al., 2024). Finally, the article scrutinizes the institutional efficacy of the General Election Commission (KPU) and the Election Supervisory Board (Bawaslu). By contrasting the KPU's formal self-evaluations with independent civil society reports, it uncovers a critical tension between procedural compliance and the substantive distortions that continue to plague the broader digital information ecosystem (Komisi Pemilihan Umum, 2024; Indonesia Corruption Watch et al., 2024a; 2024b).

By situating Indonesia's post-2024 experience within global discourses on digital inclusion and critical literacy, this article conceptualizes digital democracy as a fundamentally ambivalent configuration. Notably, while access and expressive opportunities have arguably expanded, this inclusivity is increasingly overshadowed by fragility in epistemic quality and institutional legitimacy (Rottinghaus & Escher, 2020; Wolswinkel et al., 2020; Polizzi, 2020; Sadat, 2025).

Furthermore, the study bridges the gap between public-facing digital activism

and the internal digitalization of political parties. Interestingly, current evidence suggests that although online platforms can successfully broaden member involvement, such technological shifts do not automatically translate into a deeper or more substantive intraparty democracy (Priyono, 2023; Deseriis & Vittori, 2019; Gerbaudo, 2019; Sandri, 2020). Ultimately, this research provides an empirically grounded synthesis, illustrating how digital tools function as a double-edged sword—simultaneously empowering and constraining democratic practices within a hybrid and contested electoral regime.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Digital democracy research has produced a large empirical corpus on the relationship between digital media use and civic or political engagement. A meta-analysis of more than 300 studies across 50 countries shows that average effect sizes of digital media on participation, initially small and positive in the late 1990s and early 2000s, have become substantially positive over time, largely due to the diffusion of social networking sites and online participation tools (Boulianne, 2018). A separate meta-analysis on youth, digital media and engagement confirms that explicitly political uses of digital media—such as reading online news, discussing politics on social media and sharing political views—are consistently associated with higher levels of offline civic and political participation among young people (Boulianne & Theocharis, 2020). At the same time, these studies show that non-political uses (entertainment, social browsing) exhibit weak or negligible relationships with engagement, underscoring that digitally mediated participation depends on how citizens appropriate these tools rather than on access alone (Boulianne, 2018; Boulianne & Theocharis, 2020).

Building on this evidence, recent work has shifted from asking whether digital media increase participation to examining which citizens participate, how they participate, and with what implications for democratic equality (Deseriis & Vittori, 2019; Asimakopoulos, 2025). Comparative studies of online consultations in German cities demonstrate that participants tend to be better educated, more affluent and more politically interested than the general population, suggesting that digital participation can reproduce offline inequalities in voice and influence (Wolswinkel et al., 2020). Research on digital inclusion similarly stresses the importance of second-level digital divides—differences in media and content-related skills—that shape who can use online opportunities for engagement in meaningful and consequential ways (Wolswinkel et al., 2020; Sadat, 2025). These findings imply that evaluations of digital democracy must consider inclusiveness and representativeness, not just increased volumes of participation.

Normative theories of deliberative democracy conceptualise the public sphere as a communicative space in which citizens exchange reasons, scrutinise power and potentially reach more reflective preferences. Early accounts of the internet and online forums suggested that digital media could expand this public sphere by

lowering barriers to participation and enabling translocal deliberation (Jurrens & Tapsell, 2017; Poliizi, 2020; Sadat, 2025). Subsequent research has highlighted how platform algorithms and advertising-driven business models prioritise engagement and attention, often by amplifying emotionally charged, sensational and polarising content, which fosters echo chambers and filter bubbles (Sunstein, 2017; Tucker et al., 2018). Users are more likely to encounter like-minded content and misinformation that aligns with prior beliefs, while counter-attitudinal information is filtered out or framed antagonistically, weakening conditions for reasoned deliberation (Tucker et al., 2018; Guess & Lyons, 2020).

Critical approaches thus conceptualize platforms not as neutral conduits but as socio-technical systems structured by “platform capitalism” and data extraction imperatives that systematically privilege controversy and virality over accuracy and civility (Couldry & Mejias, 2019; Zuboff, 2019). A growing strand of this literature focuses on misinformation, disinformation and deepfakes as threats to the epistemic foundations of the public sphere. Analyses by policy institutes and scholars warn that AI-generated deepfakes and synthetic media can be used to fabricate endorsements, speeches or compromising material, undermining citizens’ ability to trust audio-visual evidence and enabling political actors to dismiss authentic evidence as fake—the so-called “liar’s dividend” (Gehringer et al., 2024; Farid, 2025; Schiff et al., 2025). This shifts democratic concern from simple access to information towards questions of epistemic security, resilience and critical literacy in digital environments, particularly during election campaigns.

Within this broader field, research on digital democracy in Indonesia has expanded rapidly over the last decade. A systematic review of 2019–2024 publications identifies three main themes: the growth of online political participation, the role of social media in electoral campaigns and civic activism, and concerns over misinformation, privacy and inequality (Ginanjar, 2024; Rosyidah et al., 2025). The review concludes that while digital media have opened new spaces for engagement, many initiatives remain ad hoc, elite-driven and weakly institutionalised, limiting their capacity to deepen democratic accountability. Widodo & Kristiyanto (2025) review of political communication from 2004 to 2024 similarly shows how social media have become central tools for campaign communication, branding and mobilization, particularly in national elections, but characterises many practices as “flimsy and overly formalistic” in terms of deepening systemic participation and accountability. Empirical studies of the 2019 and 2024 elections document extensive use of Facebook, Instagram, X and TikTok by candidates and parties to shape narratives, target specific constituencies and mobilise volunteers, often through influencers and coordinated online teams (Nugroho, 2024; Assaefi et al., 2024).

Another strand focuses on the digitalization of electoral administration and monitoring. Analyses of platforms such as SIPOL (Party Registration Information System), SIREKAP (Election Results Recapitulation Information System), Kawal

Pemilu and AyoJagaTPS suggest that these tools have improved transparency and efficiency in key stages of the electoral process, but have also raised concerns about data governance, system reliability and possible manipulation (Sustikarini, 2020; Huda et al., 2024; Albahori et al., 2026). Civil society reports on the 2024 elections document how online spaces were used to mobilise observers, crowdsource reports of irregularities and coordinate monitoring efforts, while also serving as vectors for disinformation and harassment (Indonesia Corruption Watch et al., 2024a; 2024b). Complementary work on disinformation and buzzer operations shows how organised networks disseminate hoaxes and identity-laden narratives to shape perceptions of candidates and institutions, particularly in the 2024 presidential election (Subekti et al., 2025; Media Kernells, 2024).

Finally, studies of the internal digitalization of political parties explore how parties use websites and online features to communicate with members and solicit input. Priyono (2023) finds that Indonesian parties' digital tools often prioritise outward-facing image management over meaningful internal deliberation and power-sharing. Comparative research on parties such as Podemos and the Five Star Movement shows that online participation platforms can increase member involvement in internal votes and consultations, yet leadership retains significant agenda-setting and gatekeeping power, limiting the depth of internal democratisation (Deseriis & Vittori, 2019; Gerbaudo, 2019; Sandri, 2020). These insights suggest that digitalization affects both external and internal dimensions of democracy but does not automatically lead to more egalitarian organisational practices.

To synthesise and extend these strands of literature, the article adopts a three-dimensional analytical framework comprising participation, content and interaction, and governance. The participation dimension focuses on who participates in digital politics, through which platforms and practices, and how these patterns intersect with socio-economic inequalities, territorial cleavages and generational differences, distinguishing between mere access and meaningful, consequential participation (Lewandowsky, et al., 2024; Wolswinkel et al., 2020; Rahman et al., 2025). The content and interaction dimension examines the discursive quality of digital political communication, paying particular attention to disinformation, hate speech and AI-generated content, and drawing on research on echo chambers, deepfakes and critical digital literacy (Tucker et al., 2018; Farid, 2025; Gehringer et al., 2024; Polizzi, 2020). The governance dimension considers how state institutions, electoral management bodies, civil society organizations and platforms regulate, facilitate or constrain digital political communication, including rules on online campaigning, content moderation and data use, as well as the design and implementation of e-participation and election-related digital systems (Rahman et al., 2023; Komisi Pemilihan Umum, 2024; Indonesia Corruption Watch et al., 2024a; 2024b; Sadat, 2025). Together, these dimensions provide a structured lens for

analysing the ambivalent trajectory of Indonesia's digital democracy after the 2024 elections.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design combined with a literature-based approach. In Creswell's (2014) typology, qualitative descriptive designs are appropriate when the goal is to provide a comprehensive, contextualised account of a phenomenon based on existing documentation and interpretive analysis rather than on new large-scale data collection. Such designs are suitable for capturing complex socio-political processes—such as the interaction between digital media, electoral practices and institutional responses—where multiple actors and data types are involved and where causal estimation is not the primary objective.

Rather than generating new primary data, the article synthesises and critically interprets existing scholarly work, official documents and monitoring reports on digital democracy, digital participation and electoral politics in Indonesia and comparable contexts. The corpus includes global meta-analyses on digital media and participation (Boulianne, 2018, 2020), studies of digital inclusion and online consultations (Wolswinkel et al., 2020; Sadat, 2025), and normative contributions on critical digital literacy and platform governance (Polizzi, 2020; Coudry & Mejias, 2019). Indonesia-specific works cover social media and electoral campaigns, online civic activism, digitalization of electoral management and broader digital democracy (Rahman & Aulia, 2025; Prakoso, 2025; Kristiyanto et al., 2023; Huda et al., 2024; Syahputra, 2025). The analysis also incorporates official reports from electoral management bodies—notably KPU's Laporan Hasil Evaluasi Pemilu 2024—and civil society monitoring documents by coalitions such as Indonesia Corruption Watch (ICW), Aliansi Jurnalis Independen (AJI) and Themis Indonesia, alongside selected policy briefs on AI, deepfakes and electoral integrity (Komisi Pemilihan Umum, 2024; ICW et al., 2024a; 2024b; Gehringer et al., 2024; Mafindo, 2024a; Media Kernels, 2024).

Data were analysed using qualitative content analysis and thematic coding inspired by Miles' et al., (2014) framework. Relevant findings, arguments and empirical examples were coded under themes corresponding to expanded participation, participation bias and exclusion, disinformation and hate speech, buzzer operations and AI-enabled manipulation, regulatory responses and institutional self-evaluation. These themes were then mapped onto the three analytical dimensions outlined in the previous section—participation, content and interaction, and governance—to identify reinforcing dynamics, tensions and contradictions in Indonesia's digital democracy trajectory after 2024. Particular attention was paid to convergences and divergences between official narratives (e.g., KPU's evaluation report) and civil society monitoring regarding the extent and nature of digital-related problems in the 2024 elections. Given the reliance on secondary data, the study does not claim to provide causal estimates of digital media effects on electoral outcomes; instead, the analytical strategy is explicitly critical and normative, seeking to synthesize dispersed evidence, surface underlying structures, and generate theoretically informed, policy-relevant insights into the ambivalent trajectory of Indonesia's digital democracy.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Expanding Channels of Digital Political Participation after the 2024 Elections

As explained, Indonesia's rapid digitalization has significantly broadened the channels through which citizens can access political information, express preferences, and connect with public actors. Within this environment, digital participation has taken multiple forms, ranging from basic information-seeking and consumption of campaign content to interactive engagement and user-generated activism. Consistent with global findings that explicitly political uses of digital media are positively associated with offline civic and political participation (Boulianne, 2018; Boulianne & Theocharis, 2020), observers of the 2024 elections note that social media became a primary gateway for younger citizens to learn about candidates and issues, follow debates and rallies via livestreams and publicly signal their preferences. Hashtag campaigns illustrate how expressive and affective forms of engagement can be mobilised at scale: tags such as #AMINAJaDulu (Anies–Muhaimin) combined religious connotations with personalised acronyms, #AllInPrabowo and “gemoy” memes on TikTok sought to rebrand a previously rigid, militaristic figure into a more approachable persona for Gen Z and millennials, while #GanjarMahfud2024 and issue-specific slogans like #1desa1faskes1nakes attempted to anchor support in programmatic appeals. These hashtag ecologies turned political alignment into an easily shareable cultural resource, enabling users to integrate politics into everyday digital practices of humour, identity performance and peer interaction (Belinda et al., 2024; Nugroho, 2024; Subekti et al., 2025).

At the aggregate level, these developments coincided with high levels of formal participation: KPU's evaluation reports that voter turnout in the 2024 elections surpassed 81 percent, exceeding national development targets and indicating that the combination of offline and online mobilization was effective in bringing citizens to the polls (Komisi Pemilihan Umum, 2024). However, consistent with international research on digital participation and inclusion, the expansion of digital channels does not automatically translate into more egalitarian or deliberative participation. Studies of online consultations and e-participation platforms in other contexts show that participants are disproportionately well-educated, affluent and politically interested, suggesting that digital engagement often reinforces rather than mitigates socio-economic inequalities in voice (Jurriens & Tapsell, 2017; Wolswinkel et al., 2020). In Indonesia, systematic survey evidence on such participation bias remains limited, but persistent disparities in connectivity, digital skills and political efficacy between urban and rural areas, Java and non-Java regions and socio-economic groups suggest that segments of the population remain effectively excluded from new channels, even as dominant narratives celebrate a “more participatory” digital democracy (Lim, 2017; Nugroho, 2026; Sadat, 2025; Wahidin et al., 2025). The expansion of digital participation thus appears structurally ambivalent: it lowers expressive and informational barriers for many citizens, particularly the young and connected, yet leaves unresolved deeper questions of representativeness, inclusion and deliberative quality.

Disinformation, Hate Speech, and the Political Economy of Political Buzzers

The same infrastructures that enable expanded digital participation also to facilitate the rapid circulation of disinformation, hate speech, and polarizing frames. A 2025 study in *Frontiers in Political Science* on disinformation in the 2024 presidential election shows that social media—especially Facebook, YouTube and TikTok—played a central role in disseminating deliberately misleading content targeting all three candidate pairs through character assassination and issue-based attacks (Subekti et al., 2025). Drawing on data from the Ministry of Communication and Information (Kominfo), the authors report that by 2 January 2024 the ministry had identified 203 distinct election-related disinformation “issues” with 2,882 pieces of content across major platforms, including 1,325 items on Facebook, 947 on X, 198 on Instagram and 342 on TikTok (Kementerian Komunikasi dan Informatika, 2024, cited in Subekti et al., 2025). In parallel, Mafindo documented 2,330 hoaxes circulating in 2023, of which 1,292—roughly 55 percent—were classified as political, underscoring the extent to which electoral politics saturated the country’s disinformation ecology (Mafindo, 2024a).

Qualitative and mixed-methods studies of TikTok content during the 2024 election provide a more granular view of how disinformation campaigns operate in practice. A study of videos tagged with #Pemilu2024 finds a high prevalence of political hoaxes, black campaigns and manipulative narratives, with short-form videos and emotionally charged audio tracks used to frame candidates in highly positive or negative terms (Nugroho, 2024, Mafindo, 2024a). Sentiment analysis of hundreds of TikTok comments suggests that such content can influence viewers’ perceptions without prompting verification against official sources, as the platform’s design and recommendation algorithms contribute to rapid, affect-laden opinion shifts. Another study using TurnBackHoax.id data identifies the dominance of clickbait and sensational content, the recycling of images and narratives across platforms, and the blurring of boundaries between misinformation, disinformation, and propaganda, raising concerns about cumulative effects on democratic discourse (Mafindo, 2024b; Subekti et al., 2025).

Conversely, civil society monitoring reports complement these academic findings by documenting the political economy and institutional handling of disinformation and buzzer operations. Reports by ICW, AJI and Themis Indonesia describe how organized buzzer networks promote or attack candidates, manufacture trending topics and blur the lines between official campaigns, volunteer initiatives and paid influence operations (Indonesia Corruption Watch et al., 2024a; 2024b). While systematic mapping of financing structures and network topologies remains limited, these accounts portray disinformation not as a series of isolated pathologies but as part of an emerging market for political influence in which consultants, agencies and informal cyber-troops sell their services to campaigns and other powerful actors (Indonesia Corruption Watch et al., 2024b; Couldry & Mejias, 2019). From a democratic perspective, this industrialization of disinformation undermines the epistemic foundations of public debate and erodes trust in both electoral institutions and fellow citizens. It also shifts the costs and risks of contestation onto individuals and marginalized groups who become targets of orchestrated harassment, while existing regulatory frameworks and platform self-regulation respond primarily to downstream content rather than to the structural incentives and financial flows that sustain the buzzer ecosystem (Wijayanto et al., 2025; Wahidin, et al., 2025; Subekti

et al., 2025). Emerging uses of generative artificial intelligence in the 2024 election, including deepfake videos and AI-generated avatars that appeared to show well-known or deceased figures endorsing particular candidates, point to a qualitatively new layer of manipulation which current regulatory arrangements are ill-equipped to address (Gehring et al., 2024; Farid, 2025; Schiff et al., 2025).

State and Electoral Management Bodies in Governing Digital Democracy

Electoral management bodies and government agencies have taken steps to adapt to the digitalization of politics, including issuing rules on online campaigning, operating information systems for electoral administration and collaborating with fact-checking initiatives. KPU's Laporan Hasil Evaluasi Pemilu 2024 presents the elections as meeting core procedural standards and highlights successful deployment of information technology for voter registration, logistics and vote tabulation, while acknowledging problems with data accuracy, system reliability and public communication (Komisi Pemilihan Umum, 2024). Analyses of SIPOL, SIREKAP and citizen-driven platforms such as Kawal Pemilu and AyoJagaTPS similarly suggest that digital tools can enhance transparency and administrative efficiency, but also generate new controversies about data governance, partisan mobilization and trust in official results (Sustikarini, 2020; Albahori et al., 2026).

In contrast, civil society monitoring provides a more critical reading of institutional responses. According to ICW, AJI and Themis Indonesia document at least 53 verified allegations of electoral malpractice by mid-February 2024—including vote-buying violations of neutrality by state officials and village heads and suspected abuse of state facilities—were documented, and they argue that enforcement of neutrality rules and sanctions remains weak, including in cases involving digital campaigning (Indonesia Corruption Watch et al., 2024a; 2024b). From the perspective of the three-dimensional framework, these findings suggest that the governance dimension lags behind participation and content dynamics: while digital participation and digital campaigning have become ubiquitous, regulatory and supervisory responses are fragmented, reactive and often formalistic. Unfortunately, rules focus heavily on formal campaign periods, specific content categories and administrative procedures, leaving less regulated the structural aspects of platform governance, data use in political advertising and the political economy of disinformation.

In this context, key aspects of democratic governance are effectively delegated to private platforms whose algorithms and business models are driven by engagement metrics rather than public interest (Couldry & Mejias, 2019; Zuboff, 2019). This institutional asymmetry helps explain the ambivalent trajectory of Indonesia's digital democracy after 2024: digital tools have made electoral processes more transparent and accessible in some respects, but without robust, independent and technically informed governance arrangements, they also enable new forms of manipulation, inequality and contestation that existing institutions have only partially addressed (Rosyidah, et al., 2024; Komisi Pemilihan Umum, 2024; Indonesia Corruption Watch et al., 2024a; 2024b).

CONCLUSION

This article has argued that Indonesia's post-2024 digital democracy is

marked by a structural ambivalence between expanded participation and normalised polarisation. Digital infrastructures and platforms have broadened channels for accessing information, expressing preferences and mobilising support—especially among younger citizens—yet participation remains socially stratified in ways that echo comparative findings on participation bias and second-level digital divides (Boulianne, 2018; Boulianne & Theocharis, 2020; Lim, 2017; Sadat, 2025; Wolswinkel et al., 2020).

At the same time, disinformation, hate speech, buzzer operations and emergent AI-generated content have degraded the epistemic quality of the digital public sphere. Evidence from Kominfo, Mafindo and academic studies shows that electoral politics saturated the disinformation ecology surrounding the 2024 elections, while organised buzzer networks and informal cyber-troops formed part of an emerging market for political influence rather than isolated pathologies (Subekti et al., 2025; Aminah et al., 2025; Indonesia Corruption Watch et al., 2024a; 2024b; Couldry & Mejias, 2019). This industrialisation of disinformation erodes trust in institutions and fellow citizens and exposes individuals and marginalised groups to orchestrated harassment.

From a governance perspective, the analysis highlights a gap between the scale of digital transformation and the capacity of electoral management bodies and regulators to respond. KPU's self-evaluation emphasises procedural compliance and technological achievements, whereas civil society reports underscore weak enforcement of neutrality rules and limited attention to structural aspects of platform governance and data use (Komisi Pemilihan Umum, 2024; Indonesia Corruption Watch et al., 2024a; 2024b; Albahori et al., 2023). In terms of the three-dimensional framework, participation and content dynamics have been transformed far more rapidly than governance arrangements, leaving key aspects of democratic regulation effectively outsourced to commercial platforms whose algorithms are driven by engagement metrics rather than public interest (Zuboff, 2019; Couldry & Mejias, 2019).

Theoretically, the findings underscore the need to integrate digital participation, digital inclusion and critical digital literacy into broader accounts of digital democracy and to treat digitalization as a process that simultaneously opens and constrains democratic practices inside and outside political organizations (Polizzi, 2020; Sadat, 2025; Priyono, 2023; Deseriis & Vittori, 2019; Gerbaudo, 2019). For policymakers and practitioners, they point to the importance of moving beyond narrow “anti-hoax” campaigns towards structural interventions that expand meaningful digital inclusion, embed critical digital literacy in education and civic programmes, strengthen independent oversight of political advertising and data use and invest in public-interest civic digital infrastructures. Without such measures, Indonesia's digital democracy is likely to remain more inclusive in terms of access and expressive opportunities yet increasingly fragile in terms of epistemic quality, equality of voice and institutional legitimacy. Future research should provide fine-grained analyses of buzzer ecosystems, AI-mediated campaigning and digital intraparty democracy in Indonesia, using network analysis, ethnography and comparative designs to assess how these developments reshape power, accountability and representation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to the editorial team of the Indonesian Journal of Digital Society (IJDS) for giving us the opportunity to be able to publish our research papers during the Covid-19 pandemic. It is hoped that the publication of this paper can provide benefits to the community and can be used as a reference for further researchers and a reference for the government as a policy maker.

REFERENCES

- Albahori, A., Sunarto, S., Djatmika, G. H., & Rachmatsyah, T. H. (2023). The paradox of digital electoral governance: The role of SILON-SIREKAP in Indonesia's electoral accountability. *Danadyaksa: Journal of Public Administration*, 3(2), 111–125. <https://doi.org/10.69965/danadyaksa.v3i2.255>

- Assaefi, A., Laskarwati, B., & Zainurrohmah, Z. (2024). The role of social media in Indonesia's political campaigns: A new era of electioneering. *Indonesian Journal of Digital Indonesia*, 1(2). <https://doi.org/10.15294/indi.v1i2.23031>
- Asimakopoulos G. (2025) The Participation of the Digital Citizen in Modern Democracy, *European Journal of Computer Science and Information Technology*, 13 (51), 15-26. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37745/ejcsit.2013>
- Badan Siber dan Sandi Negara & Masyarakat Antifitnah Indonesia. (2025). *Hoaks Pemilu tahun 2024: Teropong fenomena hoaks dalam Pilpres dan Pilkada* (L. H. Christin, Ed.). Rumah Penalaran Indonesia.
- Belinda, F., Somantri, G. R., Runturambi, A. J. S., & Puspitasari, M. (2024). Manipulation of information in the 2024 election in Indonesia: Political dynamics in the post-truth era. *Migration Letters*, 21(3), 443–456. <https://doi.org/10.59670/ml.v21i3.6517>
- Boulianne, S. (2018). Twenty years of digital media effects on civic and political participation. *Communication Research*, 47(7), 947–966. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650218808186>
- Boulianne, S., & Theocharis, Y. (2020). Young people, digital media, and engagement: A meta-analysis of research. *Social Science Computer Review*, 38(2), 111–127. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0894439318814190>
- Couldry, N., & Mejias, U. A. (2019). *The costs of connection: How data is colonizing human life and appropriating it for capitalism*. Stanford University Press. <https://www.sup.org/books/title/?id=30605>
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Deseriis, M., & Vittori, D. (2019). The impact of online participation platforms on the internal democracy of two Southern European parties: Podemos and the Five Star Movement. *International Journal of Communication*, 13, 5696–5714. <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/10041>
- Farid, H. (2025). Mitigating the harms of manipulated media: Confronting deepfakes and digital deception. *PNAS Nexus*, 4(7), pgaf194. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pnasnexus/pgaf194>
- Gehring, F. A., Nehring, C., & Łabuz, M. (2024, May 10). The influence of deep fakes on elections: Legitimate concern or mere alarmism? *Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung*. <https://www.kas.de/en/monitor/detail/-/content/the-influence-of-deep-fakes-on-elections>
- Gerbaudo, P. (2019). *The digital party: Political organisation and online democracy*.

Pluto Press.

- Ginanjjar, M. (2024, September 17). Lessons from Indonesia's 2024 election: Social media, censorship and youth vote. *Global Voices*. <https://advox.globalvoices.org/2024/09/17/lessons-from-indonesias-2024-election-social-media-censorship-and-youth-vote/>
- Huda, D., Winarto, A. E., & Lestariningsih, L. (2023). Analysis of 2024 general election digitalization system as an effort to improve the quality of democracy in Indonesia. *Journal of Development Research*, 7(2), 139–146. <https://doi.org/10.28926/jdr.v7i2.313>
- Indonesia Corruption Watch, Aliansi Jurnalis Independen, & Themis Indonesia. (2024a). Catatan awal pemantauan Pemilu 2024. Jakarta: Koalisi Tolak Pemilu Curang. <https://kecuranganpemilu.com> (ringkasan)
- Indonesia Corruption Watch, Aliansi Jurnalis Independen, & Themis Indonesia. (2024b). Laporan pemantauan kecurangan Pemilu 2024. Jakarta: Koalisi Tolak Pemilu Curang.
- Jurriëns, E., & Tapsell, R. (2017). Challenges and opportunities of the digital 'revolution' in Indonesia. In E. Jurriëns & R. Tapsell (Eds.), *Digital Indonesia: Connectivity and divergence* (pp. 1–18). ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute.
- Kementerian Komunikasi dan Informatika. (2024). Laporan penanganan disinformasi Pemilu 2024. Jakarta: Kominfo.
- Komisi Pemilihan Umum. (2024). Laporan hasil evaluasi Pemilu 2024. Jakarta: KPU RI.
- Lewandowsky, S., Ecker, U. K. H., Cook, J., van der Linden, S., Roozenbeek, J., & Oreskes, N. (2024). Misinformation and the epistemic integrity of democracy. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 57, 101811. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2024.101811>
- Lim, M. (2017). Freedom to hate: social media, algorithmic enclaves, and the rise of tribal nationalism in Indonesia. *Critical Asian Studies*, 49(3), 411–427. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14672715.2017.1341188>
- Mafindo. (2024a). Hoaks Pemilu Tahun 2024: Teropong Fenomena Hoaks dalam Pilpres dan Pilkada (Buku Digital). <https://institute.mafindo.or.id/hoaks-pemilu-tahun-2024/>
- Mafindo. (2024b). Laporan tahunan TurnBackHoax.id 2023–2024. Jakarta: Masyarakat Anti Fitnah Indonesia.
- Media Kernels. (2024, Februari 24). Drone Emprit: Pemilu masih ramai dibahas, mayoritas sentimen negatif. <https://mediakernels.com/2024/02/24/drone->

emprit-pemilu-masih-ramai-dibahas-mayoritas-sentimen-negatif/

- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Nugroho, A. (2024). TikTok and the personalization of politics in Indonesia's 2024 elections. *Journal of Social Media Studies*, 9(1), 77–99.
- Nugroho C (2026) Digital cognitive democracy and the public sphere in Indonesia's electoral politics. *Front. Commun.* 11:1697979. doi: 10.3389/fcomm.2026.1697979
- Polizzi, G. (2020). Information literacy in the digital age: Why critical digital literacy matters for democracy. In S. P. Kurbanoglu et al. (Eds.), *Information literacy in the workplace* (pp. 1–18). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-43687-2_1
- Priyono, S. H. (2023). Enhancing intraparty democracy in Indonesia through digital party websites. *Policy Science Review*, 32(2), 45–66. <https://ritsumei.repo.nii.ac.jp/record/2002513>
- Rahman, M. A., Afifah, Z. N., Ma'rifah, I., Nuha, A., Muslikah, S., & Hermansah, T. (2023). Ruang publik baru dan perubahan sosial: Pemanfaatan internet untuk advokasi dan diseminasi isu penundaan pemilu studi kasus Mafindo dan Drone Emrit. *Ekspresi dan Persepsi: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi*, 6(3), 554–565. <https://doi.org/10.33822/jep.v6i3.6109>
- Rosyidah, A. A., Fajriyah, F., Galuh, E. A., & Ulfa, D. S. (2024). Exploring misinformation and disinformation towards 2024 election: Patterns and policy recommendations. *Profetik: Jurnal Komunikasi*, 17(2), 269–290. <https://doi.org/10.14421/pjk.v17i2.2973>
- Sadat, A. (2025). Digital governance and civic inclusion to enhance public participation in political decision-making. *Frontiers in Political Science*, 7:1671373, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2025.1671373>
- Sánchez Medero G (2025). Diagnosis of the digitalization of intraparty democracy in Southern European political parties. *Front. Polit. Sci.* 7:1580687. doi: 10.3389/fpos.2025.1580687
- Sandri, G. (2020). Intra-party democracy in the digital age. In W. Cross & R. Katz (Eds.), *The challenges of intra-party democracy* (pp. 201–223). Oxford University Press.
- Schiff KJ, Schiff DS, Buenos NS. The Liar's Dividend: Can Politicians Claim Misinformation to Evade Accountability? *American Political Science Review*. 2025;119(1):71-90. doi:10.1017/S0003055423001454

- Subekti, R., Putri, A., & Santoso, B. (2025). Social media and disinformation for candidates: The evidence in the 2024 Indonesian presidential election. *Frontiers in Political Science*, 7, 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2025.1625535>
- Sustikarini, A. (2020). Digital democracy in Indonesia's 2019 election: Between citizen participation and political polarization. In *Proceedings of the International Conference on Agriculture, Social Sciences, Education, Technology and Health (ICASSETH 2019)* (pp. 238–242). Atlantis Press. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.200402.055>
- Sunstein, C. R. (2017). *#Republic: Divided democracy in the age of social media*. Princeton University Press.
- Tucker, J. A., Guess, A., Barberá, P., Vaccari, C., Siegel, A., Sanovich, S., Nyhan, B. (2018). Social media, political polarization, and political disinformation: A review of the scientific literature. Hewlett Foundation Report. <https://hewlett.org/library/social-media-political-polarization-and-political-disinformation-a-review-of-the-scientific-literature/>
- Wahidin, D., Utami, I. S., Amalia, A. R., Syamsuar, & Aidah, S. (2025). Opportunities and challenges of digital democracy in Indonesia. *Pancasila: Jurnal Keindonesiaan*, 5(1), 20–34. <https://doi.org/10.52738/pjk.v5i1.723>
- We Are Social, & Meltwater. (2025, July 5). Digital 2025: The essential guide to the global state of digital [Report]. DataReportal. <https://wearesocial.com/id/blog/2025/02/digital-2025/>
- Widodo, S., & Kristiyanto, J. (2025). Digital democracy: Transforming political communication in Indonesia. *Jurnal Studi Komunikasi*, 9(1), 153–168. <https://doi.org/10.25139/jsk.v9i1.9524>
- Wijayanto, Berenschot, W., Sastramidjaja, Y., & Ruijgrok, K. (2024). The infrastructure of domestic influence operations: Cyber troops and public opinion manipulation through social media in Indonesia. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 29(4), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1177/19401612241253017>
- Wolswinkel, J., Rottinghaus, B., & Escher, T. (2020). Mechanisms for inclusion and exclusion through digital political participation: Evidence from a comparative study of online consultations in three German cities. *Politische Vierteljahresschrift*, 61(2), 261–298. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11615-020-00222-7>
- Zuboff, S. (2019). *The age of surveillance capitalism: the fight for a human future at the new frontier of power*. New York: Public Affairs, 2019, 704 pp.