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# Framing of Disinformation Against Political Actors on Social Media in Indonesia

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### Abstract

The development of social media has significantly transformed political communication in Indonesia, particularly in the spread of political disinformation within digital public spaces. This study aims to analyze the framing of disinformation targeting political actors on social media in Indonesia. The research employs a qualitative approach using a systematic literature review method by examining various academic publications related to political communication, framing theory, digital propaganda, and social media disinformation. The findings show that political disinformation is strategically framed through emotional, symbolic, and identity based narratives involving religion, nationalism, and political ideology. Social media algorithms and political buzzers also contribute to amplifying manipulative political narratives and strengthening political polarization within society. From the perspective of framing theory, political actors are frequently portrayed as threats to religion, democracy, or national identity through selective and repetitive narratives. This study concludes that political disinformation has become an important challenge for democratic communication in Indonesia's digital political environment.

**Keywords:** digital politics, framing, political communication, political disinformation, social media

### Introduction

The rapid development of digital technology has significantly transformed political communication in contemporary society. Social media platforms such as X (Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube are increasingly used not only as spaces for information exchange and political participation, but also as arenas for propaganda, political contestation, and disinformation (Castells, 2013). The speed and openness of digital communication enable political narratives to circulate rapidly across online public spaces, allowing manipulative information and emotionally driven political content to spread widely within society.

In recent years, political disinformation has become one of the major challenges for democratic communication in many countries, including Indonesia. Political disinformation frequently appears through manipulated information, edited visual content, provocative hashtags, and misleading narratives targeting political actors or institutions (Benkler et al., 2018). Within the Indonesian context, the spread of political disinformation became increasingly visible during the 2019 presidential election,

where online political discourse was strongly influenced by issues related to religion, nationalism, and identity politics (Sebastian, 2019). As a result, social media communication increasingly reflected political polarization and emotional mobilization rather than substantive democratic discussion.

The Indonesian digital political environment has distinctive characteristics compared to several Western democratic contexts. Political communication in Indonesia is strongly influenced by symbolic narratives, religious identity, and ideological contestation within online public spaces. Political actors are frequently framed not only through policy related issues, but also through narratives portraying them as threats to religion, democracy, morality, or national identity (Roosinda & Suryandaru, 2020). These framing practices are widely reproduced through digital communication networks involving political supporters, online communities, and political buzzers (Samad et al., 2023).

Previous studies have widely discussed misinformation, propaganda, and political communication on social media. However, many studies primarily focus on misinformation in general contexts, digital participation, or the technological dimensions of social media communication. Limited studies specifically examine how framing practices are strategically used to construct disinformation narratives targeting political actors within the Indonesian digital political environment. In addition, discussions regarding the relationship between emotional mobilization, political buzzers, algorithmic amplification, and identity based political framing in Indonesia remain relatively limited. Therefore, this study attempts to provide a more contextual and analytical understanding of how political disinformation framing operates within Indonesian social media communication.

This research aims to analyze the framing of political disinformation targeting political actors on social media in Indonesia. Using a systematic literature review approach and Robert N. Entman's framing theory, this study examines how political narratives are constructed, reproduced, and amplified within digital communication environments.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### *Framing Theory*

This study primarily uses Robert N. Entman's framing theory to analyze how political disinformation targeting political actors is constructed and disseminated through social media communication. According to Entman (1993), framing refers to the process of selecting certain aspects of reality and making them more salient within communication texts in order to promote particular interpretations, evaluations, and solutions regarding an issue. Entman explains that framing generally involves four main elements: defining problems, diagnosing causes, making moral judgments, and treatment recommendation.

Within digital political communication, framing plays an important role in shaping public perception toward political actors, political events, and democratic institutions. Through framing practices, political narratives can be strategically constructed to influence emotional responses and ideological interpretations among audiences. In the Indonesian context, political disinformation frequently frames political actors through narratives related to religion, nationalism, morality, and ideological identity. These narratives are often reproduced through hashtags, edited videos, manipulated visual content, and provocative political messages circulating across social media platforms.

Framing theory is considered relevant to this research because political disinformation does not merely involve the spread of false information, but also the strategic construction of meaning intended to shape political perception and public opinion. Through framing practices, political actors may be portrayed as threats to democracy, religion, or national identity in order to strengthen emotional mobilization and political polarization within digital public spaces.

### *Political Disinformation and Digital Political Communication*

Political disinformation refers to the deliberate dissemination of misleading or manipulated information intended to influence political perception, public opinion, or political behavior (Benkler et al., 2018). In contemporary digital society, political disinformation has become increasingly widespread due to the rapid expansion of social media communication networks. Digital platforms enable information to circulate quickly across online public spaces without strict verification processes, allowing manipulative political narratives to spread more easily within society.

According to Castells (2013), digital communication networks have transformed contemporary political communication by shifting communication power from traditional media institutions toward decentralized online networks. This transformation enables political actors, online communities, and digital campaign networks to participate directly in shaping political narratives and influencing public perception. However, this condition also creates opportunities for propaganda, political manipulation, and symbolic political conflict within digital communication environments.

In the Indonesian context, digital political communication is strongly influenced by emotional narratives, identity politics, and online political polarization. Political disinformation frequently spreads through issues related to religion, ethnicity, nationalism, and ideological identity in order to strengthen audience engagement and political loyalty. As a result, political communication within Indonesian social media environments increasingly reflects emotional mobilization and symbolic political contestation rather than substantive democratic deliberation.

### *Echo Chambers and Algorithmic Amplification*

The spread of political disinformation on social media is also closely related to the development of algorithm based communication systems. Social media algorithms prioritize content capable of generating high audience engagement, such as likes, comments, reposts, and shares. Consequently, emotionally provocative political content often gains greater visibility than balanced political discussion.

Sunstein (2018) explains that algorithm driven communication environments contribute to the formation of echo chambers, where individuals continuously consume information aligned with their existing political beliefs and ideological preferences. This condition strengthens political polarization because users become increasingly exposed to homogeneous political narratives while opposing viewpoints are marginalized within digital communication spaces.

In addition, Tufekci (2017) argues that social media algorithms accelerate the circulation of emotionally driven political narratives because digital platforms prioritize visibility and engagement over information accuracy. Within highly polarized political environments, this communication pattern enables political disinformation to spread rapidly and repeatedly across online public spaces. Therefore, algorithms and participatory communication systems play important roles in amplifying political framing and disinformation within contemporary digital politics.

### **Methodology**

This research employed a qualitative approach using a systematic literature review (SLR) method to analyze the framing of disinformation against political actors on social media in Indonesia. A qualitative approach was chosen because this study focuses on understanding communication patterns, narrative construction, and framing practices within digital political communication environments.

The systematic literature review method was applied to ensure that the process of collecting and analyzing literature was conducted systematically and comprehensively. According to Kitchenham (2010), a systematic literature review aims to identify, evaluate, and synthesize previous studies in order to produce more objective and in depth analysis. This research also refers to Snyder (2019), who emphasizes the importance of transparency in literature searching and selection procedures.

The literature collection process was conducted through several academic databases, including Google Scholar, Scopus, ScienceDirect, Taylor & Francis Online, Sage Journals, and SpringerLink. These databases were selected because they provide relevant publications related to political communication, digital media, framing, and disinformation studies.

In the literature searching stage, the researcher used several keywords such as “political disinformation”, “framing theory”, “digital political communication”, “social media disinformation”, “political buzzers”, “echo chambers”, “algorithmic amplification”, and “Indonesia digital politics”. These keywords were used in both English and Indonesian to obtain broader and more relevant sources.

This research applied inclusion and exclusion criteria during the literature selection process. The inclusion criteria included journal articles, academic books, and research reports discussing political communication, framing, digital propaganda, social media, and political disinformation. In addition, the selected sources were publications published between 2015 and 2025 in order to maintain relevance

with contemporary digital political developments. Meanwhile, sources that did not have direct relevance to the research topic, non academic opinion articles, and publications that were difficult to verify were excluded from this study.

At the initial stage, the researcher identified approximately 95 literature sources. After conducting a selection process based on thematic relevance, publication quality, and research focus, 42 sources were selected for further analysis. These sources consisted of international journals, national journals, academic books, and institutional reports related to digital political communication and disinformation.

This research employed Robert N. Entman's framing model as the primary analytical framework. Entman's framing model consists of four main elements, namely defining problems, diagnosing causes, making moral judgments, and treatment recommendation. These elements were used to examine how disinformation narratives are constructed against political actors on Indonesian social media platforms.

The data analysis process used qualitative content analysis by identifying major themes, communication patterns, and framing forms appearing within the selected literature. The researcher then interpreted the findings using framing and political communication perspectives in order to understand how social media functions as a space for the dissemination of political disinformation.

To maintain research validity, this study applied source triangulation by comparing findings from various academic studies, institutional reports, and scientific publications discussing political disinformation and digital communication in Indonesia.

## Result and Discussion

### *The Development of Political Disinformation on Social Media in Indonesia*

The rapid expansion of social media usage in Indonesia has significantly transformed patterns of political communication within digital public spaces. Platforms such as X (Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube are increasingly used not only as spaces for political participation and public discussion, but also as arenas for propaganda and disinformation targeting political actors. In Indonesia, the dissemination of political disinformation becomes particularly intense during moments of political contestation, especially presidential elections.

The 2019 Indonesian presidential election marked a significant escalation in the circulation of political disinformation. Various studies and media reports documented how religious, ethnic, and ideological narratives were strategically used to frame political actors in negative ways. These narratives were spread massively through social media in the form of hoaxes, manipulated images, selective claims, and provocative hashtags. The framing of political actors as "anti-Islam," "pro-foreign," or "anti-people" became dominant narratives that shaped public perception and increased societal polarization (Doly, 2020; Sebastian, 2019).

One empirical example of political disinformation during the 2019 presidential election was the circulation of fabricated survey results falsely claiming to originate from Kompas Research and Development (Litbang Kompas). The manipulated survey was spread widely through social media in order to influence public opinion and create misleading political perceptions.



Source: Kompas.com (2019). "[HOAKS] Hasil Survei Balitbang Kompas untuk Pilpres 2019."

**Figure 1.** Fabricated Political Survey Circulating During the 2019 Presidential Election

Another important example can be seen from media reports documenting the sharp increase in political hoaxes approaching the presidential election period. The rise of digital political competition intensified the circulation of provocative narratives, manipulated information, and identity based political propaganda within online public spaces.



Source: Kompas.id (2019). "Jelang Pilpres, Peredaran Hoaks Politik Naik Tajam"

**Figure 2.** Increasing Circulation of Political Hoaxes Ahead of the 2019 Presidential Election

The spread of political disinformation in Indonesia is closely related to the participatory nature of social media communication. Social media users are not merely passive audiences but actively reproduce political narratives through reposts, comments, hashtags, memes, and edited visual content. This participatory communication pattern accelerates the circulation of emotionally provocative content because audiences are generally more responsive to sensational narratives than factual political information.

Another important factor contributing to the intensification of political disinformation is the growing influence of algorithm based communication systems. Social media algorithms prioritize content with high engagement levels, causing controversial political narratives to gain wider visibility than balanced political discussions. This condition strengthens ideological polarization and encourages the formation of digital echo chambers where users continuously consume information aligned with their political preferences (Sunstein, 2018).

From the perspective of framing theory, political disinformation in Indonesia frequently constructs political actors as threats to religion, democracy, morality, or national identity. These narratives are strategically reproduced through repetitive communication patterns involving hashtags, edited videos, provocative slogans, and coordinated digital campaigns. Consequently, political communication within Indonesian digital spaces increasingly emphasizes emotional mobilization rather than substantive democratic deliberation.

The development of political disinformation in Indonesia therefore reflects broader transformations in contemporary digital politics, where social media simultaneously functions as a space for democratic participation and as an arena for propaganda, symbolic contestation, and political polarization.

#### *Framing Patterns of Political Disinformation on Social Media*

Political disinformation on social media is not merely distributed as false information, but is strategically framed to influence emotional perception, political attitudes, and public judgment toward political actors. In the Indonesian context, framing practices frequently utilize identity based narratives

involving religion, nationalism, ethnicity, and morality in order to strengthen audience engagement and political polarization.

According to Entman (1993), framing refers to the process of selecting certain aspects of reality and making them more prominent within communication texts. In digital political communication, framing becomes an important instrument for shaping how audiences interpret political issues, actors, and events. Social media platforms accelerate this process because political messages can be reproduced rapidly through hashtags, reposts, short videos, memes, and visual manipulation.

One dominant framing pattern within Indonesian political disinformation is the construction of political actors as threats to religious values and national identity. During political contestation periods, political opponents are often framed using emotionally provocative labels such as “anti-Islam,” “radical,” “anti-nationalist,” or “foreign controlled.” These narratives are intentionally designed to simplify complex political issues into symbolic moral conflicts that are easier to mobilize emotionally within digital audiences.

This communication pattern demonstrates that political disinformation in Indonesia frequently operates through emotional framing rather than factual argumentation. Emotional narratives generally spread faster on social media because users are more likely to engage with provocative content that confirms their political beliefs and ideological preferences. In this context, disinformation becomes closely connected with what Sunstein (2018) describes as echo chambers, where audiences continuously consume information aligned with their existing political views.

The role of algorithm based communication systems also strengthens the visibility of emotionally charged political content. Social media algorithms prioritize engagement driven content, causing sensational political narratives to circulate more widely than balanced political discussion. This condition reflects what Benkler et al. (2018) describe as network propaganda, where digital communication networks are strategically utilized to manipulate political perception and intensify polarization within society.

Another important characteristic of political disinformation framing in Indonesia is the growing involvement of political buzzers and coordinated digital campaigns. Political buzzers function not only as opinion amplifiers but also as actors involved in reproducing repetitive narratives targeting political opponents. Through coordinated hashtags, edited videos, selective information, and repetitive messaging, political narratives can be framed continuously until they appear normal and credible within digital public discourse.

The increasing dominance of emotional and symbolic framing within Indonesian digital politics demonstrates how social media has transformed political communication practices. Consequently, political communication in Indonesian digital spaces increasingly emphasizes emotional mobilization and symbolic conflict rather than substantive democratic deliberation. Social media therefore functions not only as a democratic communication space, but also as an arena of symbolic political warfare within contemporary Indonesian politics.

#### *The Role of Social Media Algorithms and Political Buzzers in Amplifying Disinformation*

The rapid spread of political disinformation on social media is closely associated with the development of algorithm based communication systems and the growing involvement of political buzzers within digital political communication. In contemporary digital politics, the circulation of political narratives is no longer determined solely by political actors or mainstream media institutions, but also by platform algorithms that regulate visibility, engagement, and information distribution within online public spaces.

Social media algorithms are designed to prioritize content capable of generating high interaction rates such as likes, comments, shares, and reposts. As a consequence, emotionally provocative political content often receives greater visibility than balanced political discussion. This communication pattern encourages the rapid circulation of sensational narratives because controversial information tends to attract stronger emotional reactions from audiences. In the Indonesian context, political disinformation frequently spreads through emotionally charged narratives involving religion, nationalism, identity politics, and political hostility (Samad et al., 2023).

This condition demonstrates how algorithmic communication systems indirectly contribute to the amplification of political polarization. Users continuously encounter information aligned with their political preferences, while opposing perspectives become increasingly marginalized within digital communication environments. Sunstein (2018) explains that this phenomenon contributes to the formation of echo chambers in which audiences are repeatedly exposed to similar narratives and ideological viewpoints. Consequently, social media users become more vulnerable to manipulative political framing and disinformation.

The Indonesian political context further intensifies this condition through the widespread involvement of political buzzers and coordinated digital campaigns. Political buzzers play an important role in reproducing and amplifying political narratives through repetitive communication strategies across multiple social media platforms. Their activities include hashtag mobilization, selective information dissemination, edited visual content, meme distribution, and coordinated attacks targeting political opponents. Pradana et al. (2023) found that online media coverage regarding political buzzers frequently reflects patterns of propaganda and opinion manipulation within Indonesian digital politics.

In many cases, political buzzers operate strategically by creating the impression that certain political opinions represent dominant public sentiment. This practice contributes to the normalization of manipulative narratives within digital political discourse. Through continuous repetition, political disinformation can gradually appear credible and socially accepted despite lacking factual accuracy. Benkler et al. (2018) describe this communication pattern as network propaganda, where digital networks are systematically utilized to manipulate political perception and shape public opinion.

The growing influence of political buzzers in Indonesia also reflects broader transformations in contemporary political communication. Political competition increasingly depends on digital visibility, audience engagement, and viral communication rather than substantive political debate. Roosinda and Suryandaru (2020) explain that propaganda and negative political content in Indonesian digital media often prioritize emotional mobilization in order to strengthen audience engagement and political loyalty.

Another important issue is the difficulty of distinguishing between authentic public opinion and coordinated political communication within digital spaces. The combination of algorithmic amplification, buzzer networks, and participatory communication patterns creates an information environment where disinformation can circulate rapidly and repeatedly. This condition ultimately weakens the quality of democratic discourse because public discussion becomes increasingly shaped by emotional polarization, propaganda, and manipulative framing practices rather than evidence based political communication.

The role of algorithms and political buzzers therefore demonstrates that political disinformation in Indonesia is not simply an individual communication problem, but part of a broader digital political ecosystem involving technology platforms, coordinated communication actors, and highly polarized online audiences. Tufekci (2017) argues that digital communication networks increasingly enable rapid emotional mobilization and large scale narrative amplification within online political environments.

### *The Impact of Political Disinformation on Public Perception and Democratic Communication*

One of the most visible impacts of political disinformation is the intensification of political polarization within society. Social media users are frequently divided into competing political groups that consume different sources of information and develop contrasting political interpretations regarding the same political events. This condition became particularly visible during the 2019 presidential election, where online political discourse was dominated by antagonistic identity based narratives that strengthened divisions between political supporters (Sebastian, 2019).

The spread of political disinformation also contributes to the decline of public trust toward democratic institutions, mainstream media, and electoral processes. Manipulative narratives targeting government institutions, election organizers, political actors, and journalists frequently construct the perception that democratic institutions are biased, dishonest, or controlled by certain political interests. According to Castells (2013), communication power within digital society increasingly depends on the ability to shape meaning and influence public perception through communication networks.

Another important consequence is the normalization of hostility and hate based political communication within online public spaces. Political disagreement is increasingly framed as a moral

conflict between “good” and “bad” groups rather than as part of democratic contestation. This communication pattern encourages intolerance and reduces opportunities for constructive democratic dialogue. Sunstein (2018) explains that digital communication environments tend to reinforce ideological isolation through echo chambers, where individuals are repeatedly exposed to information consistent with their existing political beliefs.

The influence of political disinformation is also reinforced by the speed and accessibility of social media communication. Information can spread rapidly across multiple digital platforms before verification and fact checking processes can be conducted effectively. In many cases, emotionally provocative narratives attract greater audience attention than factual clarification. Benkler et al. (2018) describe this condition as network propaganda, where digital communication systems are strategically utilized to manipulate political perception and intensify polarization within society.

The growing dominance of disinformation within Indonesian digital politics reflects broader challenges faced by contemporary democracy in the digital era. While social media provides opportunities for political participation and public expression, it also creates communication environments vulnerable to manipulation, propaganda, and symbolic political conflict. Tufekci (2017) argues that algorithm driven communication systems often amplify emotionally charged narratives because engagement based visibility encourages the rapid circulation of sensational political content.

## Conclusion

The development of social media has significantly transformed political communication in Indonesia, particularly in the spread of political disinformation within digital public spaces. This study shows that political disinformation is strategically framed through emotional, symbolic, and identity based narratives to influence public perception and political attitudes. Social media algorithms and political buzzers also play important roles in amplifying manipulative political narratives, contributing to polarization and hostile political communication within society.

From the perspective of framing theory, political actors are often portrayed as threats to religion, democracy, or national identity through selective and repetitive narratives. This study contributes to understanding how disinformation framing operates within Indonesian digital politics. However, since this research mainly relies on literature analysis, future studies are encouraged to conduct more empirical research on social media disinformation and digital political communication.

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