

Disinformation As A Contemporary Security Threat: A Literature Review

Prasojo*, Muhamad Lukman Arifianto, Azhar Irfansyah

Bhayangkara Jakarta Raya University

Email: prasojo@dsn.ubharajaya.ac.id

**Corresponding author*

Article info

Received: Jan 22, 2024

Revised: Feb 27, 2024

Accepted: Apr 20, 2024

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31599/krtha.v18i1.1637>

Abstract : *Disinformation has become a threat to public security and order. Disinformation is a strategy to obscure information by spreading information that is deliberately false and false. Whatever the purpose of disinformation, the public will be the victims. Given its status as a threat, it requires appropriate policing measures to prevent the spread of disinformation. To counter disinformation, it is necessary to develop strategies by empowering communities to counteract disinformation when it occurs. By using the literature review method, this research will show some community empowerment policies that can be done to prevent the spread of disinformation.*

Keywords : *security, threat, disinformation, democracy.*

Abstrak : Disinformasi telah menjadi ancaman bagi keamanan dan ketertiban masyarakat. Disinformasi adalah strategi untuk mengaburkan informasi dengan menyebarkan informasi yang disengaja untuk salah dan palsu. Apapun tujuan bagi dilakukannya disinformasi, masyarakat yang akan menjadi korbannya. Dengan statusnya sebagai ancaman, maka dibutuhkan tindakan strategis yang tepat untuk mencegah meluasnya disinformasi. Untuk melawan disinformasi, perlu dikembangkan strategi dengan memberdayakan masyarakat agar dapat menangkal disinformasi ketika terjadi. Dengan menggunakan metode tinjauan literatur, penelitian ini akan menunjukkan beberapa kebijakan penguatan masyarakat yang bisa dilakukan untuk mencegah penyebaran disinformasi.

Kata kunci : keamanan, ancaman, disinformasi, demokrasi.



I. INTRODUCTION

The current security situation is also influenced by the rise of disinformation using deliberately misleading content to influence public opinion. Security disruptions that occur due to the micro-targeted and targeted spread of disinformation present problems for democratic countries¹. Democratic countries experience a dilemma regarding this situation because the legitimacy of Disinformation is content that is deliberately misleading and spread for political purposes. This practice describes an authoritative production of information.

Disinformation is not a new phenomenon. In the 2016 United States presidential election, we witnessed when the government was willing to use the internet as a foreign policy tool to carry out espionage and spread disinformation to influence public opinion and government actions. In the US case, the Russian government, through a combination of data theft and manipulation of public opinion, was able to engage in a strategic disinformation campaign with the aim of eroding "trust in the legitimacy and integrity of the democratic process"². The existence of the internet has also revolutionized political campaigns by allowing candidates to have direct access to supporters and allowing voters to be better informed about the issues at hand is strange.

Of course, with the existence of the internet, the level of community interaction is getting higher. Citizens have greater access to information than ever before, candidates can send fundraisers directly to their supporters, and public debate can develop around issues with direct individual participation. Citizens can be directly fed disinformation for the purpose of (de)mobilizing supporters and undermining democratic debate³. While Internet connectivity can benefit democracy, the ability to leverage data mining to create misleading messages for certain individuals poses a threat.

In the contemporary security landscape, disinformation commonly refers to communication tactics that are intentionally false and deceptive. These tactics are used by political actors to advance political or economic goals. Wardle and Derakhshan (2017), in their report differentiate "disinformation" from "misinformation". Disinformation refers to communications that are intentionally false and deceptive, while "misinformation," refers to communications that may contain false claims but are not intended to cause harm or loss to certain parties (such as satirical insinuations or unintentional mistakes)⁴. Political actors use cognate terms for disinformation, such as "information operations" and "information manipulation", so that the term "disinformation" is often closely associated with the diction "fake news".

¹ Chris Tenove et al., Digital Threats to Democratic Elections: How Foreign Actors Use Digital Techniques to Undermine Democracy, SSRN Electronic Journal, 2018, hal 9-11.

² Petros Iosifidis and Nicholas Nicoli, Digital Democracy, Social Media and Disinformation (New York: Routledge, 2021), hal 3-7.

³ W. Lance Bennett and Steven Livingston, "The Disinformation Order: Disruptive Communication and the Decline of Democratic Institutions," European Journal of Communication 33, no. 2 (2018): hal 122–139.

⁴ C Wardle and Hossein Derakhshan, "Thinking About Information Disorder: Formats of Misinformation, Disinformation, and Mal-Information," Journal Fake News Disinformation (2018): hal 43–54.

Some experts believe that disinformation is not the same as fake news. Fake news does not accurately describe various forms of misleading, false and deceptive communication. Disinformation goes beyond just fake news, as it combines manipulated images and videos, making facts and lies mutually exclusive intertwined. Additionally, disinformation often uses automated or fake social media accounts that are set up to spread deceptive information.

It has long been believed that democracy cannot thrive without freely available and reliable information. For example, during the Covid pandemic, many lives are at stake and every decision is very important, so democracy depends on quality information to function very well.

Although we have convenient access to knowledge nowadays, individuals occasionally exhibit a greater inclination to accept and trust deception that is extensively disseminated. Reliable and correct information, which should inform the public, is being replaced by disinformation content. This trend has altered the assurance of the veracity of information dissemination. The current circumstances have escalated the issue of incorrect and deceptive information from being merely a difficulty to becoming a significant menace to society. Disinformation leads to the dissemination of false or misleading information, manipulation of facts, character assassination, and undermines democracy. Tackling disinformation in a methodical and strategic way is crucial since it presents a substantial peril to the foundation of society.

The prevalence of disinformation content poses a substantial risk to society, thereby necessitating the recognition of disinformation as a matter of national security. During critical political events, disinformation will be extensively disseminated with the intention of manipulating public sentiment. Instances like as a catastrophe, like the recent Covid-19 pandemic, or the momentum generated by general elections in a country can significantly amplify the proliferation of disinformation content and activities. The primary objective of disinformation content is to manipulate public opinion. At a more advanced level, disinformation content impairs cognitive clarity, hence impacting the decision-making process.

Disinformation is a serious threat to democracy⁵. The government views this threat as worrying, so it can create policies to regulate the internet, because if it is not regulated it will shake the foundations of democracy. As an operational measure, the government will carry out securitization with an offensive cyber operations policy to target disinformation perpetrators. In situations marked by excessive amounts of information, when new layers of propaganda and false news emerge daily, acquiring reliable information becomes exceedingly challenging. Due to this condition, voters may rely on distorted views formed by deliberate and ongoing disinformation processes instead of real information. This poses a huge threat to democratic participation.

⁵ Spencer McKay and Chris Tenove, "Disinformation as a Threat to Deliberative Democracy," *Political Research Quarterly* 74, no. 3 (2021): hal 703–717.

II. RESEARCH METHOD

The umbrella of this research is qualitative. The process of data collection to data analysis follows standard qualitative method procedures. The data analysis technique uses a thick description approach (in-depth explanation) of data obtained through literature curation, primary and secondary data, document study, reporting and interviews with selected sources ⁶, which are related theoretically and in cases of handling disinformation in Indonesia which are in accordance with this research.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Social media platforms are now the primary way people get news, but it is often the most sensational or emotional content that engages people the most ⁷. Misinformation is often simply new, emotional content created specifically for virality, and research has shown that misinformation can spread faster than truthful content ⁸. Although platforms are making significant progress in moderating content driven by billions of social media users, even with very high accuracy in automated content evaluation, misinformation will continue to circulate ⁹.

Misinformation is not the only reason why infodemics are a problem; too much information is also a problem. People may face difficulty in sorting and distinguishing good and bad information. The fact that COVID-19 is a new virus compounds this problem. Researchers and medical practitioners are still learning new things about the novel COVID-19 virus and public health recommendations continue to evolve. While this is an unavoidable characteristic of the scientific process, exposure to conflicting health messages can not only create confusion, but also lead people to distrust health recommendations. Researchers can clearly define misinformation when there is a clear expert consensus and a large amount of concrete evidence. COVID-19, especially in its early days, lacked both features, making misinformation harder to identify and thus harder to address. Everyone has a responsibility to stop the spread and effects of misinformation. Public health authorities must promote clear and trustworthy information to prevent misinformation about COVID-19.

In addition to having the ability to moderate and label content, social media platforms also could take action to encourage people to avoid inaccurate information and move towards more accurate information. While all of this is important, ordinary people can also play a role. Even when anonymous social media users correct misinformation, they can reduce the misperceptions of the sometimes very large audience viewing the interaction. Why do things like this happen? First and foremost, weak social relationships

⁶ Ivanovich Agusta, "Teknik Pengumpulan Dan Analisis Data Kualitatif," Pusat Penelitian Sosial Ekonomi. Litbang Pertanian, Bogor 27, No. 10 (2003).

⁷ Alice E Marwick, "Why Do People Share Fake News? A Sociotechnical Model of Media Effects," Georgetown Law Technology Review (2018): hal 474–512.

⁸ Soroush Vosoughi, Deb Roy, and Sinan Aral, "The Spread of True and False News Online," Social Science Research 359, no. March (2018): hal 1146–1151.

⁹ Bruce Bode et al., "Glycemic Characteristics and Clinical Outcomes of COVID-19 Patients Hospitalized in the United States," Journal of Diabetes Science and Technology 14, no. 4 (2020): hal 813–821.

are shaped by social media. In the context of misinformation, this may mean that diverse social media contacts are better able to recognize misinformation and have the information needed to correct it, whereas closer ties may not be exposed to correct information or believe it.

Second, the threaded nature of social media means that audiences see corrections essentially alongside misinformation. Research shows that the shorter the distance between misinformation and correction, the more effective the correction is ¹⁰, in essence, misinformation has less chance of persisting in a person's mind if it is corrected immediately.

Third, even simply observing corrections on social media can alert people to the potential social or reputational harm resulting from the spread of misinformation ¹¹. Nobody likes being wrong – which is one reason why many people resist attempts at correction. Being corrected can cause people to engage in motivated reasoning to explain away threatening information; in the context of misinformation, this sometimes means that people will not accept correction of misinformation that is consistent with their views. However, people who witness another person's correction are less emotionally involved than the person being corrected and may be more receptive to the correction. They see reputational costs incurred by someone spreading misinformation, which can reinforce existing societal norms that value accuracy. Research consistently shows the positive effects of these types of interventions. Therefore, everyday social media users have a clear role to play in reducing the negative impact of misinformation.

First, making corrections requires skill and confidence. This expertise can come from organizations or individuals. Well-known health organizations will be more effective at addressing health misinformation because of the expertise they have, but that expertise can also be gained from others, such as by providing links to credible sources. Because trust may be more important than correction skills, close friends and family members on social media may be better able to correct misinformation. Second, repetition is important because misinformation often sticks because it is familiar, and familiar information will feel more accurate. This is known as the “illusory truth effect”. Corrections should be as memorable as new information; repetition can make corrections easier to remember in the same way that it does for incorrect information. When social media users provide corrections, this is very important. To emphasize that public support stands behind facts, not lies, some users have had to correct misinformation when they see it. In this iteration, one should emphasize correction, not misinformation; they only need to point to the misinformation to explain why and where the misinformation is. Lastly, correction does not need to be confrontational or cruel to be effective. Offering empathy and

¹⁰ Nathan Walter and Riva Tukachinsky, “A Meta-Analytic Examination of the Continued Influence of Misinformation in the Face of Correction: How Powerful Is It, Why Does It Happen, and How to Stop It?” *Communication Research* 47, no. 2 (2020): hal 155–177.

¹¹ Sacha Altay, Anne Sophie Hacquin, and Hugo Mercier, “Why Do so Few People Share Fake News? It Hurts Their Reputation,” *New Media and Society* 24, no. 6 (2022): hal 1303–1324.

understanding as part of a response to misinformation is equally effective in reducing misperceptions and can make interactions better for everyone involved ¹².

Although many people express concerns about correcting others on social media, overall people tend to appreciate and even like the idea of correcting misinformation on social media. A recent survey we conducted showed that most Americans have favorable attitudes toward user correction on social media, including the belief that it is part of society's responsibility to respond. This doesn't mean that people aren't aware of the potential downsides of corrections, including possible trolling or confusion. However, knowing that a large majority of people say they have corrected misinformation on social media and that the correction was valuable should reassure everyone that correction is not a social taboo. Indeed, the greater harm to reputation is likely to come from spreading misinformation, rather than correcting it.

Trust but verify, is a Russian proverb that became famous when it was used by the President of the United States, Ronald Reagan during the Cold War. The need to verify information has gained new importance against the backdrop of fake news and the spread of misinformation, especially on social media. The emergence of the Internet and widespread use of social media has given rise to new realities, including a shift in power from large media producers to individuals; online social sharing is occurring on an unprecedented scale and increasing concerns about the credibility of information ¹³. The widespread use of social media translates into active and passive engagement by users. Apart from consuming information on social media, users also play a role in sharing and producing content and have the means and ability to disseminate information on social networks.

Audiences are increasingly relying on Internet sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube for news and information compared to traditional media institutions. Although social media has become a source of information, entertainment, and social interaction on a global scale, it has also been criticized for being a conduit for misinformation. Gallup and Knight Foundation research in 2018 revealed that there is widespread distrust among the United States public towards the media, especially news on social media which is considered misinformation. The problem is exacerbated when social platforms 'facilitate rapid information sharing and large-scale information flows'. Information can go viral in minutes when shared and redistributed on various social media platforms. In fact, a study by Gabielkov et al. revealed that around 59% of links on Twitter were shared by users without reading them ¹⁴.

In a sea of data, it is often difficult to distinguish what is accurate. Misinformation is information that is inaccurate or incorrect. Fake news can also be defined as "cases in

¹² Wood Hyland et al., "Toward Effective Government Communication Strategies in the Era of COVID-19," *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 8, no. 1 (2021), hal 3-5.

¹³ David Westerman, Patric R. Spence, and Brandon Van Der Heide, "A Social Network as Information: The Effect of System Generated Reports of Connectedness on Credibility on Twitter," *Computers in Human Behavior* 28, no. 1 (2012): hal 199–206.

¹⁴ Maksym Gabielkov et al., "Social Clicks : What and Who Gets Read on Twitter ? To Cite This Version : Social Clicks : What and Who Gets Read on Twitter ?," *SIGMETRICS Perform. Eval. Rev.* 44, no. 1 (2016): hal 179–192.

which people's beliefs about factual matters are not supported by clear evidence and expert opinion". Misinformation can also be defined as "inaccurate errors" or "misinformation"¹⁵.

There were some issues with the program's algorithm in terms of accuracy in identifying satire and fake news. Additionally, Facebook launched a button that allows people to flag posts containing fake data. In other situations, Facebook attempts to work with third-party fact checkers such as Snopes, Factcheck.org, Associated Press, and PolitiFact to stop the spread of fake news. Despite these efforts, social media platforms still have several weaknesses that must be addressed to combat online misinformation. Before 2018, a Poynter article revealed that Google discontinued its fact-checking feature due to quality issues. Therefore, this article focuses on methods individuals can use to avoid misinformation if they do not rely solely on fact-checking systems and social platforms.

IV. CONCLUSION

This research achieved two objectives. First, we wanted to know the factors that can predict the recognition or recognition of online misinformation. Second, we want to know the factors that can predict sharing behavior on social media without verification. On a micro level, people who share information are responsible for spreading false or inaccurate information on social media, whether intentionally or not. Internal and external factors can help someone spread misinformation. Internal factors, for example, can interact with external factors, such as audience bias and subjectivity that determine information preferences. External factors, on the other hand, can include social media algorithms that determine the type of information users find in their social feeds, trapping users in filter bubbles. To consume and disseminate information, people must rely on their social networks and themselves due to the absence of journalistic gatekeeping and the reality of social media algorithms in the new media environment. As a result, audience bias and subjectivity will determine how they understand and share information on social media. According to this research, the likelihood of people being misled decreases when they try to distinguish false or inaccurate information from accurate. In other words, people are a critical part of any effort to stop the spread of misinformation. This is because people who do not have real information are sharing, retweeting, and spreading it on social media.

SUGGESTIONS

Scandals such as Cambridge Analytica and Facebook have prompted researchers to investigate how and why site-based algorithms and internet user actions can cause misinformation to spread. The focus of our research is factors that may influence a person's perceived self-efficacy in recognizing misinformation and acting without

¹⁵ KP Krishna Kumar and G. Geethakumari, "Detecting Misinformation in Online Social Networks Using Cognitive Psychology," *Human-centric Computing and Information Sciences* 4, no. 1 (2014): hal 1–22.

verification. We found that our findings helped us develop an information literacy framework that places people at the center of efforts to prevent the spread of misinformation. It is hoped that future research can dig deeper into this theme so that many new results can be found.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books

- Agusta, Ivanovich. "Teknik Pengumpulan Dan Analisis Data Kualitatif." *Pusat Penelitian Sosial Ekonomi. Litbang Pertanian, Bogor* 27, no. 10 (2003).
- Galbreath, David J. *The Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE)*. New York: Routledge, 2007.
- Iosifidis, Petros, and Nicholas Nicoli. *Digital Democracy, SocialMedia and Disinformation*. New York: Routledge, 2021.

Journal

- Altay, Sacha, Anne Sophie Hacquin, and Hugo Mercier. "Why Do so Few People Share Fake News? It Hurts Their Reputation." *New Media and Society* 24, no. 6 (2022): 1303–1324.
- Bennett, W. Lance, and Steven Livingston. "The Disinformation Order: Disruptive Communication and the Decline of Democratic Institutions." *European Journal of Communication* 33, no. 2 (2018): 122–139.
- Bode, Bruce, Valerie Garrett, Jordan Messler, Raymie McFarland, Jennifer Crowe, Robby Booth, and David C. Klonoff. "Glycemic Characteristics and Clinical Outcomes of COVID-19 Patients Hospitalized in the United States." *Journal of Diabetes Science and Technology* 14, no. 4 (2020): 813–821.
- Gabiolkov, Maksym, Arthi Ramachandran, Augustin Chaintreau, Maksym Gabiolkov, Arthi Ramachandran, Augustin Chaintreau, Arnaud Legout, Social Clicks, Maksym Gabiolkov, and Augustin Chaintreau. "Social Clicks : What and Who Gets Read on Twitter? To Cite This Version : Social Clicks : What and Who Gets Read on Twitter?" *SIGMETRICS Perform. Eval. Rev.* 44, no. 1 (2016): 179–192. <https://hal.inria.fr/hal-01281190%5Cnhttp://doi.acm.org/10.1145/2964791.2901462>.
- Hyland, Wood, J Gardner, J Leask, and U K Ecker. "Toward Effective Government Communication Strategies in the Era of COVID-19." *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 8, no. 1 (2021).
- Kumar, KP Krishna, and G. Geethakumari. "Detecting Misinformation in Online Social Networks Using Cognitive Psychology." *Human-centric Computing and Information Sciences* 4, no. 1 (2014): 1–22.
- Marwick, Alice E. "Why Do People Share Fake News? A Sociotechnical Model of Media Effects." *Georgetown Law Technology Review* (2018): 474–512.
- McKay, Spencer, and Chris Tenove. "Disinformation as a Threat to Deliberative Democracy." *Political Research Quarterly* 74, no. 3 (2021): 703–717.
- Tenove, Chris. "Protecting Democracy from Disinformation: Normative Threats and Policy Responses." *International Journal of Press/Politics* 25, no. 3 (2020): 517–537.
- Tenove, Chris, Jordan Buffie, Spencer McKay, and David Moscrop. *Digital Threats to Democratic Elections: How Foreign Actors Use Digital Techniques to Undermine Democracy*. SSRN Electronic Journal, 2018.

- Vosoughi, Soroush, Deb Roy, and Sinan Aral. "The Spread of True and False News Online." *Social Science Research* 359, no. March (2018): 1146–1151. <https://news.1242.com/article/148290>.
- Walter, Nathan, and Riva Tukachinsky. "A Meta-Analytic Examination of the Continued Influence of Misinformation in the Face of Correction: How Powerful Is It, Why Does It Happen, and How to Stop It?" *Communication Research* 47, no. 2 (2020): 155–177.
- Wardle, C, and Hossein Derakhshan. "Thinking About Information Disorder: Formats of Misinformation, Disinformation, and Mal-Information." *Journal Fake News Disinformation* (2018): 43–54.
- Westerman, David, Patric R. Spence, and Brandon Van Der Heide. "A Social Network as Information: The Effect of System Generated Reports of Connectedness on Credibility on Twitter." *Computers in Human Behavior* 28, no. 1 (2012): 199–206.