Safer Internet Lab

Snapshot

Generating Governance

Indonesia's Response to GenAI in Elections

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Indonesia's Response to GenAI in Elections

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia concludes its super-election year of 2024 by having a series of elected leaders and representatives at the national and regional levels. Followed by hundreds of millions of voters, the election process left us with a lot to discuss, particularly the emerging role of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) during the campaign period.

Measuring the real impact of GenAI on elections is rather tricky, given its novelty. According to SAIL's Expert Survey, 81.72% of Indonesian stakeholders believe that GenAI has increased the production and spread of disinformation during the 2024 Elections (Krisetya *et al.*, 2024). On the other hand, it remains inconclusive whether the exposure of GenAI affected voters' preferences (Chiacchiaro, 2025; Stockwell *et al.*, 2024). Nonetheless, this research will take the discussion to another end by assessing the state of regulation and mechanisms available to respond to AI-enabled disinformation, the limits and reach of current

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interventions, and what needs to be done in preparation for the next electoral cycle.

INDONESIA'S CURRENT REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Despite GenAI's growing role in shaping political campaigns, Indonesian electoral laws remain largely unprepared to govern its influence. Indonesia's legal framework on elections—Law No. 7/2017 and PKPU No. 15/2023 for national elections (Pemilu), and Law No. 1/2015 alongside PKPU No. 13/2024 for local elections (Pilkada)—makes only limited mention of digital campaigning and lacks any reference to the use of emerging technologies such as generative AI.

Those regulations received criticism due to their unproductive effect on the spread of black and negative campaigns on social media. Approaches such as account registration are deemed ineffective because they fail to make digital campaigns accountable (Fernandes *et al.*, 2024a). In Pemilu 2024, for instance, many unregistered accounts were affiliated with election participants (Okhariza *et al.*, 2024), allowing those accounts to generate public discourse and manipulate voters without fear of punishment for any campaign violation. Although the connection between unregistered accounts and the spread of disinformation is yet to be measured, this inaccurate response has opened up opportunities for the emergence of such practices, including the spread of GenAI-powered disinformation.

Nevertheless, the recent Constitutional Court of Indonesia (MKRI) Ruling Number 166/PUU-XXI/2023 has diverted the course of GenAI utilisation by prohibiting an excessive alteration of a candidate's self-image due to its capacity to influence voters' perceptions (MKRI, 2025a). MKRI considered this disproportionate

alteration misinformation and demanded that Pemilu Law incorporate the decision (MKRI, 2025b).

President Prabowo's campaign in Pemilu 2024 set a fitting precedent, as his campaign utilised GenAI technology to create a new, more positive image through cute cartoons. This approach, as noted by Tapsell (2024), may have misled voters' perceptions of the candidate. Sana and Warburton (2024) also emphasised the extensive use of state social assistance funds, in addition to Prabowo's transformative image, which contributed to a landslide election result (58.59% of the popular vote).

Figure 1: Cartoonised Image of Prabowo-Gibran

Deepfakes are another form of GenAI-powered disinformation that emerged during Pemilu. SAIL's Public Opinion Survey found that 33,3% of respondents who saw the late President Soeharto's deepfake (11,8%) believed that the video was true, while 24,1% could not determine whether the video was real or not. The poll also found that the primary sources of exposure to generative AI include television (15.8%), Facebook (14.8%), TikTok (13.4%), and other sources (Fernandes *et al.*, 2024b). This highlights the public's vulnerability to identifying fabricated content and also the evolving circulation of information disorder.

Figure 2: Deepfake of the late President Soeharto

Anticipating the potential manipulation of voter perceptions by GenAI in Indonesia can be addressed through this year's amendment plan for the Pemilu and Pilkada Laws (Purnamasari, 2024). What is essential was not only ensuring that MKRI's Court Ruling is translated into the amended law but also how it harmonises with the current regulatory landscape of Indonesia's information ecosystem. At least, the existing laws display two main characteristics: to *call* and to *chastise*.

"Call" underscored the need for administrative compliance from social media platforms, such as requiring them to be registered on the Indonesian Government's list[5]. Meanwhile, another regulation could demand tech companies to remove content from their platforms when the Government deems it a threat to a fair,

[5] Regulation of the Minister of Communication and Informatics on Private Electronic System Providers (Permenkominfo) Number 5 of 2020. This regulation has been amended through Permenkominfo Number 10 of 2021.

accountable, safe, and innovative digital ecosystem[6]. For legal purposes, the Indonesian Government can also request that tech companies provide access to their electronic systems and data[7].

Failure to comply with such regulations will result in platforms being "chastised" with warnings, fines, and, in extreme cases, access termination. Formulas set by the Communication and Digital Ministry, for instance, can fine a user-generated content platform up to hundreds of millions of rupiah per content they fail to take down after the Government makes a request [8]. These characteristics demonstrate how a legal instrument can also serve as a medium for negotiation (Susskind & McMahon, 1985), making compliance a requirement that a tech company must fulfil.

What also needs to be prevented are potential bottlenecks in policy enforcement (Selepe, 2023), and ensuring that all processes are accessible to stakeholders is of utmost importance. Therefore, conversation and collaboration between the Indonesian Government, technology platforms, and civil society organisations (CSO) will illustrate how actors navigate themselves between the accelerated diffusion of GenAI and existing laws within Indonesia's information ecosystem.

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[6] Electronic Information and Transactions Law (ITE Law) Number 11 of 2008. The law has been amended twice through Law Number 19 of 2016 and Law Number 1 of 2024.
[7] Government Regulation Number 71 of 2019 on the Implementation of Electronic Systems and Transactions (PP PSTE)
[8] Decision of the Minister of Communication and Informatics on Guidelines for the Implementation of Non-Tax State Revenue Originating from the Imposition of Administrative Fines for Violations of the Obligation of Private Scope Electronic System Operators User Generated Content to Conduct Access Termination (Kepmenkominfo) Number 172 of 2024.

EXISTING INITIATIVES AND THEIR HURDLES

The majority of initiatives against information disorder in Indonesia share two key characteristics: they are led by CSOs and operate on a voluntary basis. The activities manifested into the likes of literacy programmes, awareness campaigns, capacity building, and research. Many of these have been implemented collaboratively by actors from the Indonesian Government, the private sector, supranational organisations, and CSOs.

Initiatives such as verification or fact-checking, community empowerment, education, and awareness campaigns were considered the most effective by stakeholders, whereas technology and innovation were seen as less effective, as suggested by SAIL's Expert Survey (Krisetya *et al.*, 2024). These results suggest that current interventions continue to rely on the same methods to address disinformation despite the recent electoral cycle indicating a shift in political campaigns towards short videos (Fernandes *et al.*, 2024a).

Aside from methods, three other challenges also hinder the current strategy to combat information disorder. The first is agenda-setting. Organisational objectives may differ among actors, resulting in potentially unaligned interests among inter-stakeholders (Government, CSOs, and platforms) or even intra-stakeholders (among CSOs) in Indonesia's information ecosystem. This is influenced by the varying ways organisations prioritise their efforts and objectives.

The second challenge is related to dependency. Members of an initiative should expect a scenario where the donor(s) no longer support them. Another anticipated scenario is where their leading figures, with an established connection to policymakers and government executives, are no longer part of the effort. These

challenges are not easy to solve, but all members must discuss them.

The third challenge is that disinformation spreads faster than its verification process and results (Wijaya *et al.*, 2024), making debunking efforts have to compete with the coverage, speed, and reach that disinformation can accomplish (Wack *et al.*, 2024). CSO initiatives, such as fact-checking, may decide to debunk selective information as a strategic countermeasure. However, verification results might end up ineffective since the majority of users will not fact-check or evaluate their information consumption (Burn-Murdoch, 2025).

PATHS FORWARD

Preparing for the next electoral cycle, an immediate effort can be made by incorporating the Court Ruling 166/PUU-XXI/2023 into the amendment plan of election laws. Having a clear legal basis will justify the Indonesian Government's restriction of GenAI-enabled manipulations while also helping them establish GenAI governance for Pemilu and Pilkada.

On the other hand, it is also essential to impose transparent and accountable sanctions for GenAI-powered disinformation, ensuring that legal misconduct is avoidable. This is to ensure that the Indonesian Government is moving forward from the "call and chastise" approach, and charting a path towards a collaborative governance model for generative AI.

To support it, the soon-to-be-amended election law should also harmonise with Indonesia's other digital governance laws (e.g., ITE Law and PP PSTE). Preventing legal overlap and confusion, while guaranteeing an interoperable legal framework.

In addition, the election law also needs to be synchronised with Indonesia's sub-national context, as various domestic traits make Pilkada unique and distinct compared to Pemilu. Differences in access to information, frequency of political discussion, and literacy may vary between provinces or cities, and this necessitates a precise calculation of how the amended election law will shape and is shaped by these sub-national contexts.

It is also important that the election law is enforceable, making it easy for all stakeholders to understand who is responsible for what and what they can expect to receive. Providing an open and continuous mechanism on how to comply with the regulation and rebut if it is deemed unfair for the information ecosystem. Such mechanisms should also accommodate input from diverse actors—tech platforms, CSOs, and local communities—to build trust and ensure practical implementation.

Lastly, compliance should also be supported by legal certainty, as an incentive and protection for the operationalisation of tech platforms. Meanwhile, CSOs could be invited to supervise the implementation of the law. This will strengthen them as an entity representing the public interest. By fostering this inclusive oversight, Indonesia can strike a balance between innovation and electoral integrity, setting a precedent for responsible governance of GenAI.

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