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Fact-Checking and Political Misinformation: Evidence from Indonesia and Taiwan during the 2024 Election

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A B S T R A C T

This study examines how fact-checking institutions in Indonesia and Taiwan responded to the escalation of political misinformation during the 2024 election cycle. As digital media reshapes political contestation, both democracies face growing pressure to maintain information integrity. Employing a comparative qualitative design, this study analyzes outputs from Indonesia's Mafindo and CekFakta with Taiwan's FactCheck Center and Cofacts, supported by expert interviews and documentary reviews. The findings demonstrate contrasting misinformation ecologies and institutional responses. In Indonesia, misinformation is primarily generated domestically and is dominated by video-based false connections circulating on YouTube and TikTok. In contrast, Taiwan confronted coordinated geopolitical disinformation and AI-generated deepfakes aimed at democratic legitimacy and Taiwan–U.S. relations. While both countries rely on fact-checking as a civic defense, Taiwan's verification ecosystem is more systematically integrated into a participatory governance model than Indonesia's fragmented efforts. Drawing on Habermas's public sphere, the study argues that fact-checking is a crucial pillar of democracy, especially regarding information in both countries.

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INTRODUCTION

The 2024 election cycles in Indonesia and Taiwan are poster children for the enormous threat to democracy in the digital age posed by political misinformation. Both nations host the main venues for political discussion on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter. Images were manipulated, misinformation was spread, false accusations were circulated, and disinformation campaigns became widespread. Misinformation proliferates more readily on social media because politically charged or emotionally driven content receives more interaction on these platforms than factual content (Vosoughi et al., 2018; Weismueller et al., 2024). Misinformation in politics distorts public dialogue and undermines the legitimacy of democratic politics and trustworthiness of democratic politics (Egelhofer & Lecheler, 2019; Tandoc et al., 2018). This is why fact-checking should be viewed not just as an organizational or technical function but as something that is institutionalized and that society can and must do so. Fact-checking institutions are key to providing correct information. These organizations are neutral gatekeepers of public opinion, news coverage, and political actors. They function as fact-checking entities that debunk misinformation and foster a culture of truthfulness and accountability.

However, their effects depend on the settings. In Indonesia, where digital literacy and trust in traditional media are still quite uneven, they have sought to marry verification with civic education and community-based monitoring. It engages with journalists and the Ministry of Communication and Technology (Kominfo), which has a mission to tackle misinformation. Kominfo reported over 2,300 election-related falsehoods between January and February 2024, ranging from vote sabotage to defamation of religion. Many of these stories recycled ancient hoaxes from the 2019 elections, repackaged using modern images or AI-generated images. For instance, the same data showed 221 hoax samples detected with turnbackhoax.id, among which highly emphasized video misinformation on YouTube and TikTok, targeting key candidates with things like fake diplomas and manipulated court rulings (Arum & Saputra, 2025). The national 2024 'Freedom on the Net" report also revealed that disinformation spread on social media and paid commentator networks (buzzers) linked to political and economic elites before the election. Fact-checking groups such as the Indonesian Anti-Slander Society (Mafindo) and Tempo.co's CekFakta network counteract this by watching viral posts, verifying claims, and offering corrections. More recent research indicates that these are not simply corrective organizations, but educational ones that build young people into the habit of verification and digital literacy (Hadi Pradana et al., 2024; Lim & Toh, 2020) . Nevertheless, overcoming these barriers is crucial—fact-checks tend to be viewed by fewer audiences than original lies, and an increasingly polarized media landscape restricts their universal reach(Dangin et al., 2023).

At the same time, the January 2024 presidential and legislative elections in Taiwan also fueled a wave of politically driven misinformation, featuring stories connected to foreign influence operations. Most misinformation focused on international relations, especially Taiwan-US relations, and was frequently

disseminated through images and fake news websites(Chang et al., 2024). A further case of AI-based disinformation in Taiwan reported that deepfakes and manipulated content in Taiwan were "utilized unabated" during the election campaign(Hung et al., 2024). The Taiwan FactCheck Center (TFC) and Cofacts, in cooperation with the Digital Ministry and civic-tech communities, have enhanced verification with cross-platform linkages and real-time correction functions. This process in Taiwan shows an alternative that has been increasingly more comprehensive and combined in that fact-checking can take place within a participatory digital governance framework to promote transparency and citizen feedback (Firmin et al., 2025; Walter & Phillips, 2020). Such experiences drive home the point that fact-checking has become an essential part of modern information defence in one form or another. It is the main workforce (and civic mechanism) to protect electoral discourse, which goes beyond a peripheral journalistic function. However, its emerging role has not come without debate: Does fact-checking matter in reality? Some argue that fact-checking minimizes misperceptions if audiences trust the source and discover corrections early and from credible sources (Nyhan & Reifler, 2019), while others contend that its distribution and reach are limited because of echo chamber effects or partisan resistance (Fridkin et al., 2015).

Indonesia and Taiwan demonstrate both the potential and constraints of fact-checking organizations in maintaining democratic resilience in the face of the recent misinformation crisis. Although fact-checking is now a key feature of information governance, its effectiveness in reducing political misinformation remains uncertain. In Indonesia, fact-checks are often overlooked in favor of viral falsehoods, which are amplified by algorithmic engagement and partisan social-media networks. Taiwan's institutional support and transparency have made fact-checking more visible to the public; however, misinformation continues to proliferate through cross-platform dissemination and emerging rhetorical strategies. These divergent conditions underscore a central issue: fact-checking efforts exist within larger socio-technical structures that both facilitate and constrain remediation abilities. Knowledge of how these bodies operate in various political, cultural, and technological contexts is crucial for evaluating their effectiveness in protecting electoral communication. This study examines the role of fact-checking institutions in Indonesia and Taiwan as key players in combating political misinformation on social media during the 2024 election. It considers their cross-checking systems, organizational strategies, and institutional partnerships, as they deal with political contexts that impact their effectiveness. Over time, this study attempts to elucidate the concept of fact-checking as one aspect of safeguarding democratic discourse and maintaining the integrity of information in two very different (yet similar) Asian democracies.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Using Habermas's Theory of the Public Sphere (Friedland & Kunelius, 2023; Habermas, 2022) as the main framework for analysing political misinformation. Habermas describes the public sphere as a space where citizens participate in rational debate to build shared narratives and support democratic

authority. In this setting, communication relies on evidence, sincerity, and shared reasoning rather than coercion or manipulation. However, Internet-based communication has disrupted these norms. Algorithms now boost emotional and partisan content, and anonymity and virality reduce accountability of the content. Political misinformation is an example of what Habermas calls systematically distorted communication, where persuasion replaces reasoned discussion. In this context, fact-checking corrects these distortions and helps restore the conditions needed for informed debate.

Political Communication in the Digital Sphere

Today, citizens' experiences and reasoning about public issues are changing rapidly. The classic model of political communication, described by Lasswell (Sapienza et al., 2015) as focusing on who says what, through which channel, to whom, and with what effect, has shifted into what Chadwick (2017) calls a hybrid media system. In this system, news organizations, political figures, and audiences collaborate to create political stories. Here, misinformation is not just false information but also politically charged content that influences what people see, how they feel, and how they identify. Agenda-setting and framing theories show that repeated exposure to certain stories, even if they are not accurate, can direct public attention and shape how people interpret events (Entman, 1993; Valenzuela & McCombs, 2019) . As a result, the public sphere becomes fragmented, with debates focusing more on competing stories and emotional appeals than on careful reasoning.

The Persistence of Misinformation and Limits of Correction

Research in cognitive and media psychology builds on Habermas's ideas by showing why misinformation often persists, even after people try to correct it. Two main ideas are important here: the continued-influence effect, where people remember false information even after it is corrected, and motivated reasoning, where people's beliefs are shaped by their political or group loyalties (Fridkin et al., 2015; Lewandowsky et al., 2023). These studies show that misinformation not only confuses facts but also weakens the public's ability to think critically about them. Therefore, correcting misinformation requires more than just providing the right facts. It also requires the use of trusted sources, clear reasoning, and open discussion (Clayton et al., 2022; Pennycook et al., 2021). Fact-checking is a way to show commitment to reasoned communication and to rebuild trust in shared evidence.

Fact-Checking as Deliberative Practice

However, recent scholarship sees fact-checking as part of a larger shift in political communication, in which public debate becomes more reflective. Graves (Graves, 2016) refers to this shift as 'journalistic objectivity 2.0,' indicating that fact-checking has evolved beyond newsroom practice to become a civic responsibility. Other studies use the term meta-communication to explain fact-checking, which essentially means that truth is built and agreed upon publicly (Graves, 2016; Haigh et al., 2021). For Habermas, this project is to rebuild public spheres. By sharing verified information, cooperating with media and civic

groups, and advocating a skeptical approach to checks for accuracy and fact-checking, they say, can restore the rigor of debate that misinformation has diminished. However, the analysis sees fact-checking as not just about correcting errors — it is about how knowledge is created and contributes to the democratization of knowledge.

Research conducted between 2020 and 2025 corroborates these theories, demonstrating that fact-checking is most effective in certain contexts. Studies across various democratic nations suggest that fact-checking is most effective in open and cooperative information environments (Clayton et al., 2022; Hung et al., 2024; Sun et al., 2022). Conversely, in regions where the media landscape is fragmented or public trust is diminished, corrective initiatives frequently fail to gain traction or are perceived as being biased (Lim, 2020). Applying Hallin and Mancini's (2004) framework, these findings underscore the distinctions among media systems: pluralist systems such as Indonesia and more structured systems such as Taiwan establish trust through cross-sector collaboration. These comparative analyses substantiate Habermas's proposition that a robust public sphere depends on strong institutional and cultural foundations to facilitate rational discourses.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative design to analyze how fact-checking organizations in Indonesia and Taiwan operated to counter political misinformation during the 2024 election cycle. Data were drawn from sources, first by fact-checking content analysis from major verification organizations, Mafindo and Cek Fakta in Indonesia, and Taiwan FactChek Center (TFC) and CoFacts in Taiwan from January to March 2024. Second, semi-structured interviews were conducted with academic, civic organization, independent researcher, and university student participants. Third, documents, including reports, research, news articles, and public statements, were examined to map coordination among the media, civic groups, and others.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and interprets the findings derived from the content analysis, supported by interview and document literature reviews. The analysis of fact-checking efforts during the 2024 election cycle in Indonesia and Taiwan reveals a fascinating dichotomy in strategic approaches, driven by unique informational environments yet facing shared global challenges. Indonesia, confronting a massive volume of domestically driven political hoaxes and a significant migration of misinformation. Meanwhile in Taiwan

Political Misinformation Trends during the 2024 Election.

The first step of data gathering is summarizing political misinformation trends in both Indonesia and Taiwan during the election 2024. In the Indonesian context, the data indicate that the primary challenge lies in the massive volume and shifting content format disseminated across digital platforms. Mafindo recorded significant data regarding the increase in political hoaxes, which

reached approximately 1,292 cases in 2023, constituting 55,5% of the total hoaxes. The data show a strong misinformation momentum leading into the election year (Mafindo, 2024). The data are shown in the table below:

Table 1. Mafindo Reports, 2024

Indicator	**Key Findings**	**Source**	**Interpretation (Analytical Commentary)**
Total Hoaxes in the First Half of 2024	2,119 hoaxes identified — nearly double the number from the first half of 2023.	Mafindo, *Hoax Landscape Report, Semester I 2024*	The sharp increase signals an escalation in misinformation activity surrounding the 2024 elections. The volume indicates both higher content production and improved detection by fact-checking networks. It also suggests that political contestation intensified online months before voting day.
Election-Related Hoaxes	31.6% of all hoaxes recorded between January and June 2024 were directly related to the general election.	Mafindo, *Hoax Landscape Report, Semester I 2024*	Almost one-third of hoaxes were politically motivated, confirming that elections remain a primary catalyst for misinformation. This pattern aligns with global trends showing that electoral periods generate concentrated disinformation aimed at influencing public perception.
January 2024 Focus	33.3% of hoaxes circulating in January 2024 focused on support for presidential and vice-presidential candidates and public reactions to televised debates.	Mafindo, *Hoax Landscape Report, Semester I 2024*	January marked the peak of campaign-related misinformation, illustrating how debates and candidate performance serve as triggers for partisan manipulation. This phase reflects the transformation of political debates into digital arenas of emotional and symbolic contestation.
Content Dominance	Video content became the dominant misinformation format, replacing images/photos from the 2019 election. This shift poses greater challenges for fact-checkers.	Mafindo, *Press Release, February 2024*	The dominance of short-form video (e.g., TikTok, YouTube Shorts) reflects the evolution of misinformation toward more immersive and persuasive formats. Verification is more complex due to editing, deepfakes, and multimodal manipulation, requiring new technical capabilities in audiovisual analysis.

Indicator	Key Findings	Source	Interpretation (Analytical Commentary)
Primary Platforms	YouTube accounted for 44.6% of total hoaxes, followed by Facebook (34.4%) and TikTok (9.3%) as of February 2024. Visual-based platforms show rising misinformation rates.	Mafindo, *Press Release, February 2024*	The platform distribution confirms that misinformation has migrated to video-centric ecosystems. YouTube and Facebook remain influential among older demographics, while TikTok is emerging as a fast-growing vector among youth voters. Fact-checking strategies must adapt to these distinct audience and platform behaviors.
Post-Election Issues	Post-election misinformation cantered on allegations of electoral fraud, including claims of manipulation in the official vote-counting system (*Sirekap*). These narratives spiked after February 14, 2024, and risked fueling rejection of official results.	Mafindo, *Press Release, February 2024*	Post-election misinformation shifted from campaign framing to institutional delegitimization. The persistence of fraud allegations shows how misinformation extends beyond electoral campaigning into challenges against democratic legitimacy, echoing global "post-truth" crises in electoral trust.

Source : Mafindo Report, 2024

Meanwhile, the content analysis from CekFakta Coalition revealed that the majority of disinformation was driven by *false connection* and *false context* type dominationg at a percentatge as high as 43,88% (Imam et al., 2025). The research also mentioned that the crucial part of the findings is the content migration to the video format into platforms like YouTube and TikTok, which account for over 77,78%.

Table 2. Content Analysis from Cek Fakta 2024

Typology of Disinformation (Based on CekFakta Analysis)	Percentage of Findings	Description & Context (Q1 2024)
False Connection	~43.88%	Most Dominant Tactic. The title or thumbnail (especially on YouTube) does not support or align with the content of the video/article (often *clickbait* for political hoaxes).

Typology of Disinformation (Based on CekFakta Analysis)	Percentage of Findings	Description & Context (Q1 2024)
False Context	~34.69%	Highly Prevalent. Genuine content (a real photo or video clip) is used with a false, misleading narrative (common in hoaxes related to vote counting or candidate statements).

Source: CekFakta, 2024.

One of the hoaxes clarified by CekFakta was a claim that KPU's Sirekap data was manipulated to inflate votes for one of the President Candidates'. This hoax spread right after the election on February 14, 2024, and was spread through several platforms, especially YouTube and WhatsApp Messenger. Mafindo and CekFakta actively clarified the hoax by saying there was technical mistake in the reading data system and not the intended manipulation, and the official result of the election was based on manual tiered recapitulation and not based on Sirekap (Mafindo, 2024)

In other hand, based on the comparative research literature, the major political misinformation during the 2024 election cycle period January to March 2024 illustrating that primary threat was geopolitical influence operation aimed at eroding trust in the U.S – Taiwan alliance, combined with the persistent delegitimization narratives that exploited internal political sensitive. Furthermore, the threat confirmed evolute to the use of AI-generated content and deep fakes as synthesis on the table below:

Table 3. The Taiwan Political Misinformation Trend 2024

Indicator	Key Findings	Primary Source(s)	Interpretation
Narratives Attacking US-Taiwan Relations	Primary focus was on distrust of the U.S. ("Taiwan will be sacrificed like Ukraine") and economic issues linked to the US alliance.	CoFact Data Analysis (nearly 11,000 LINE posts); Harvard Kennedy School Misinformation Review (2024); Dartmouth Research (2024).	Misinformation, often driven by external/pro-Beijing actors, aimed to damage U.S. credibility with the Taiwanese public and influence geopolitical choices.

Indicator	Key Findings	Primary Source(s)	Interpretation	
Coordinated Inauthentic Behavior (CIB)	Disinformation often originated from non-native Taiwanese accounts, using VPNs to disseminate pro-Beijing or anti-US narratives.	Dartmouth Research (2024); Taiwan AI Labs Observation Report (2024).	Confirms that misinformation efforts were part of coordinated foreign influence operations exploiting domestic political divisions.	
Electoral Delegitimization and Fraud Claims	Post-Election Fraud Claims	A surge of claims immediately after January 13 alleging vote counting manipulation via edited videos or misinterpreted screenshots.	Taiwan FactCheck Center (TFC) Report (2024); The Associated Press (2024).	Claims were an example of False Context or Manipulation to delegitimize the election results and the democratic process.
	Recycled Hoaxes (Rumors)	Nearly half of the pre-election fraud claims were old narratives being recycled (e.g., rumors about special ink or secret ballot boxes).	TFC Report (2024).	A tactic aimed at systematically eroding public trust over multiple election cycles by using familiar, easily digestible claims of fraud.

Indicator	Key Findings	Primary Source(s)	Interpretation	
AI-Generated Content and Deepfakes	AI Voice Cloning and Video	Confirmed use of AI-generated audio clips to mimic politicians' voices and manipulated videos combining real footage with synthetic audio.	Safer Internet Lab (2025); Microsoft Threat Analysis Center (2024).	Signals an evolution of the threat where fast and cheap content can be created for smear campaigns, requiring advanced media forensics in fact-checking.
	Fully AI-Generated Content	Attempts to create high-volume source material (e.g., fake e-books) that were then amplified by AI to generate fake news anchor videos.	Safer Internet Lab (2025); Doublethink Lab (2024).	Experiments to create seemingly credible, high-volume source material targeting social media audiences with fabricated narratives.

Source: TFC Report, 2024

One of the misinformation clarified by the TCF after January 13, 2024, was related to the delegitimate election result. Circulated misinformation includes manipulated videos of the election officer deliberately adding the voice of one of the candidates. The other misinformation was a claim about the powerful party using a specific tint to increase the major voice illegally.

Cofact, a fact-checking organization integrated with the LINE platform, verified approximately 140.300 posts were verify by CoFacts and almost 10.000 posts focusing on Taiwan, the US, and China Geopolitics. One of the misinformation clarified by Cofacts was a video about US economy support that will lead to the fall of Taiwan's fiscal and worsen the economic situation.

Combating Misinformation through Fact-checking tools during 2024 Election

Interviews with students in Indonesia and Taiwan highlighted critical cross-cultural differences in young audiences' understanding, assessment, and engagement with information verification in the digital world. Although both groups are aware of misinformation risks, their verification practices vary markedly, highlighting structural differences in digital literacy culture and the institutional embedding of fact-checking in those cultures.

For Indonesian respondents, verification was recognized as important but was deployed inconsistently. One student said, *"One of the things that can be done is to keep verifying and not believe in things immediately,"* which was reflective in content but individualistic in finding the truth. Another confessed, *"I try to check the news, but sometimes I just trust it is from friends,"* exemplifying the social-trust bias that impedes critical thinking. This finding indicates that Indonesian students exist in informal trust networks where personal relationships, peer approval, and popularity often surpass institutional credibility. Therefore, fact-checking is still optional and reactive, not part of a habitual approach.

In contrast, Taiwanese respondents repeatedly portrayed verification as being integrated into their normative digital behavior. One participant explained, "*I always check with other sources before I go on to share, because it is a part of digital literacy*", another put forward, *"We must evaluate before believing, otherwise we can spread har"*. Such statements exhibit a deep feeling of civic responsibility and ethical reflexivity in digital interactions. Taiwan's fact-checking is not merely a technical process but a socially reinforced norm through shared awareness and digital-literacy education. Such tendencies are reflected in the attitudes and practices of participants toward formal fact-checking utilities.

Indonesian students were familiar with the available verification websites but rarely used them. *"I have heard of fact-checking websites, but I never use them,"* as one interviewee explained, exposing a latent awareness without behavioral internalization of this knowledge. This partial adoption fits with larger findings that, although the verification ecosystem in Indonesia is active through institutions like Mafindo and CekFakta, it remains a function not built into citizens' daily information habits. In contrast, Taiwanese students reported regularly relying on platform-based tools, such as Cofacts, a chatbot integrated into LINE, to collaboratively verify claims. *"If I'm not sure, I'll check it on LINE using Cofacts,"* one student explained, while another asserted, *"Fact-checking tools are part of what we do now in Taiwan."* Such responses reflect a normalized verification culture in which technological infrastructure and social norms co-support critical engagement.

In Taiwan, fact-checking behaviors are a concrete manifestation of a type of institutionalized communicative rationality, a structure in which citizens, media, and civic organizations collectively maintain deliberative standards through easy-to-access verification mechanisms. In Indonesia, however, the process is still disjointed in a digital environment that is pluralized and less institutionally embedded, leaving little room for sustained deliberative repair. In sum, the interviews show that the effectiveness of fact-checking is fundamentally dependent on the communicative habits of its users. When verification is socially

embedded, as in Taiwan, rational-critical discourse becomes part of everyday civic practice. Where it depends on the individual, as in Indonesia, misinformation still plays to mistrust and media decentralization.

However, the verification process in Indonesia is a different issue. An independent researcher and specialist on digital safety stated that *"verification is a different problem not only in Indonesia, but maybe for all Southeast Asian countries. Challenges and adaptations require significant efforts. Once again, the definition of misinformation in Indonesia shifted. So the question raised is, what is the role of fact-checking tools or organization now days?"* (SH – Indonesian Independent Researcher)

According to SAFENET, an Indonesian civic organization concerned with misinformation content, there are around six official and registered fact-checking tools and NGO that focus on internet safety. However, the effectiveness of these fact-checking tools is questionable. As they mentioned in their statement, "they were still confused about how to respond to toxic positivity, whether this falls under misinformation or not."

From the Taiwan expert perspective interview, misinformation in Taiwan rose after the election of 2016, as did the established fact-check organization, *"we are Taiwanese are carefull about misinformation, maybe after the election of 2016, and after that so many fact-chech organization establishe in Taiwan"* (CL, Taiwan – a Professor in National University)

The Role of Fact-Checking Organizations in Indonesia and Taiwan During the 2024 Election.

To overcome misinformation and address the growing volume of misinformation during the 2024 election, Mafindo, Indonesia's largest fact-checking organization, expanded its network by recruiting and training new volunteers to act as fact-checkers. These volunteers had the technical and ethical verification skills needed to successfully combat time-sensitive misinformation (Tameez, 2023). As the phenomenon of misinformation evolved, Mafindo shifted its focus to video and AI-driven content, creating specific training materials to identify manipulated videos and deepfake formats appearing on channels such as YouTube and TikTok. Mafindo also collaborated with Meta companies like Facebook, Instagram, Google, and YouTube to expedite the removal and labeling of reported false information. In addition to using digital validation, efforts were made in offline and online literacy to directly reach the communities.

At its core, CekFakta.com, a partnership between the Indonesian Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI), Indonesian Cyber Media Association (AMSI), Mafindo, and dozens of media outlets, serves as the collaborative backbone of Indonesia's fact-checking ecosystem. During the election season (January to February 2024) and the vote counting period (February to March 2024), CekFakta activated a collective newsroom of member media outlets through the Joint Fact-Check Hub (Posko Bersama). CekFakta.com also allows verified fact-checks generated by a single member outlet (Kompas.com or Tempo.com) to be automatically disseminated by more than 20 affiliated news platforms. After

February 14, CekFakta.com redirected its focus to post-election misinformation, specifically disinformation about the digital vote tabulation system.

Quoted from Mafindo's Foreward in the AJI/Mafindo Research Report, '*the collaboration between the AJI, the AMSI, and Mafindo, together with 22 media outlets, represents a strategic initiative with two main missions; to strengthen the culture of fact checking within newsrooms and to enhance public digital literacy*" (Fact-Checking Journalism, Against Disinformation, 2024)

Taiwan is best known for its nimble and creative anti-disinformation strategies, which can be seen as radical transparency. It focuses on speed, transparency, and civic engagement over strict legal enforcement, which would enable Taiwan to respond to information threats more quickly and efficiently. However, TFC and CoFact were key components of Taiwan's whole-of-society defense against misinformation, particularly during the 2024 election. On the front line of technology and civil society battle between coordinated foreign influence and evolving digital misinformation (Bergstrom, 2025).

Fact-checking in Taiwan not only clarifies misinformation but is also an integral part of a whole-of-society approach. Quoting a previous interview, "*Fact-checking organizations in Taiwan, such as TFC, not only focus on debunking but also pre-bunking. They operate as vital components of Taiwan's whole-society approach. In the political context, their role is not simply to prove truth or falsity, but rather to build societal immunity so the public is more skeptical of the divisive and coordinated claims from outside*" (Dr. Hsin-I Lu, an academic researching Disinformation and Media Resilience in Taiwan, early 2024)

The TFC and CoFact roles comprised three functions: rapid response and crowdsourcing, strategic debunking of geopolitical narratives, and proactive AI threat monitoring. CoFact serves as the primary high-volume intake mechanism for citizen-flagged content, enabling the speed and scale needed to combat peer-to-peer viral misinformation (Olson, 2024). CoFact also acted as a hub integrated with the most popular messaging app in Taiwan, Line. For any suspicious content their users came across, they could proceed to the CoFact bot for timely verification.

In contrast TFC brought the hard thinking and in depth analysis; often targeting discourses designed to systematically discredit the election and Taiwan's alliances, like countering alleged electoral fraud, particularly on January 13, the election day, and quickly debunking a spike of allegations of counting fraud (Li, 2024a). A 2024 survey data indicates that 71.03% of Taiwanese respondents used fact-checking tools to check about information and 68.41% consider Taiwanese fact-checking organizations trustworthy and increasing much from the previous year (Li, 2024c) .

TFC and CoFact both play crucial roles in detecting and identifying the rise of the potential next generation of misinformation threats, particularly in the 2024 elections. The two organizations also identified and explained new AI-generated threats in relation to AI cloned audio clips and videos edited with AI voice cloning which were published in the public sphere; the TFC built AI literacy into its workshop so that citizens are equipped with the skill set to recognize manipulated AI content before it becomes a more significant tactic (Li, 2024b).

Furthermore, the Taiwan fact-checking organizations, TFC and CoFact, are the backbone of Taiwan's information defense. They operate not only as fact checkers but also as innovative civil resilience actors integrated into Taiwan's national strategy against misinformation.

The role of fact-checking organizations during the 2024 elections in both Indonesia and Taiwan transcends a mere account of digital defense; it constitutes a practical reconstruction of Habermas ideal of the public sphere. Jurgen Habermas defined the public sphere as the crucial space where private individuals engage in rational critical debate to form a legitimate, truth oriented public opinion (Habermas, 1999). Misinformation, particularly that driven by opaque algorithms and foreign strategic interests, directly assaults this foundation. It replaces rational debate with polarized echo chambers, where communication of power, which define as the ability of citizens to collectively shape political will is overridden by the manipulative steering media of political and economic forces (Habermas, 2022; Utomo, 2022). Fact-checking serves as a necessary, constant form of critical intervention that seeks to fulfill the communicative presuppositions of democracy, commitment to truth, and rejection of strategic manipulation. Thus, the public sphere becomes a possibility, even though it is never perfectly realized.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The comparative findings from Indonesia and Taiwan underscore that fact-checking has evolved from a reactive media function into a crucial pillar of democratic communication in both countries. In both countries, 2024 electoral misinformation exposed the fragility of the public sphere when emotional narratives and algorithmic amplification overshadowed evidence-based discourse. However, Taiwan's experience demonstrates that when fact-checking is institutionally integrated into a participatory governance model—supported by civic technology, transparency, and citizen collaboration—it becomes a proactive form of "communicative immunity." Indonesia's efforts, while growing in scale and sophistication, continue to be constrained by uneven digital literacy, limited institutional coordination, and public scepticism toward media authorities. Fact-checking thus represents more than a corrective mechanism; it embodies Habermas ideal of rational-critical debate. It restores public reasoning by providing transparent and verifiable information and nurturing a culture of digital responsibility. However, its success depends on two interlinked dimensions: first, the social embedding of verification practices into everyday digital behavior, and second, cross-sectoral alliances that bridge the state, media, and civil society. As AI-driven manipulation and coordinated inauthentic behaviors escalate, future initiatives must move beyond reactive correction toward anticipatory strategies such as pre-bunking and media literacy integration. Ultimately, the resilience of democracy in the digital era rests on citizens' capacity to access facts and recognize and defend the truth as a shared public good.

FURTHER STUDY

Future research is recommended to expand comparative analysis of fact-checking effectiveness by examining how different institutional structures,

digital literacy levels, and platform governance mechanisms influence the spread and correction of political misinformation during elections in Indonesia and Taiwan. In particular, future studies may explore the role of artificial intelligence, cross-platform misinformation networks, and foreign information interference in shaping voter perceptions, as both countries experienced significant social-media-driven disinformation campaigns and AI-assisted narratives during the 2024 election cycle. Researchers are also encouraged to apply mixed-method and longitudinal approaches to assess whether fact-checking interventions produce lasting improvements in public trust, given evidence that misinformation circulated widely online and influenced electoral discourse in Indonesia and Taiwan despite ongoing verification initiatives.

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