

Digital Democracy Transformation in Indonesia: Opportunities, Challenges, and Future Solutions

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Abstract. In the era of globalization, Indonesia's digital democracy faces significant challenges such as misinformation, privacy issues, and the digital divide, despite its high internet penetration. These certainly pose a major threat to the sustainability of digital democracy in Indonesia and the development of digital democracy in the future. Therefore, this study intends to analyze how Indonesia can effectively improve digital democracy while addressing these challenges. Using a systematic literature review method, this study examines literature published between 2019 and 2024, applying strict inclusion and exclusion criteria. Inclusion criteria include peer-reviewed articles and research reports directly related to democracy, public participation, and technology, published in Indonesian or English. Exclusion criteria eliminate irrelevant opinions, outdated publications before 2014, and studies with weak methodology. The study findings reveal that increasing digital literacy can significantly reduce political polarization caused by misinformation. In addition, this study emphasizes the need for collaboration between the government, society, and the private sector to promote inclusiveness, transparency, and accountability in the democratic process. In conclusion, this study recommends policies that prioritize digital literacy and technology development to create a sustainable digital democracy. The implementation of these policy recommendations can provide a framework for increasing public engagement and trust in democratic institutions, ultimately contributing to a more resilient and equitable digital democracy in Indonesia.

Keywords: *Digital Democracy; Misinformation; Public Participation; Infrastructure; Indonesia.*

INTRODUCTION

In the age of globalization and swift progress in information technology, digital democracy has emerged as an exciting concept for many countries, including Indonesia (Wira Dhika et al., 2023). Amidst these changes, as the fourth most populous nation globally, Indonesia, with its rich cultural diversity, encounters distinct challenges and opportunities in incorporating digital technology into its political and governmental frameworks (Hafel, 2023). Since the 1998 reforms, Indonesia has undergone a transition

towards a more open and participatory democratic system. A key driving force behind the advancement of digital democracy in Indonesia is the widespread internet access and the prevalence of social media usage.

The most recent report indicates that Indonesia has hundreds of millions of internet users, positioning it among the countries with the highest number of internet users globally. Social media, being the most prevalent communication platform, has emerged as a new space for political discourse, mass mobilization, and public engagement

(Rachimoellah et al., 2024). However, this development is also accompanied by new challenges that arise, particularly regarding information and communication technologies. The internet is a powerful tool for political mobilization, information delivery, and public participation. With more than 200 million internet users, Indonesia has great potential to develop an inclusive digital democracy.

According to the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII), the annual number of internet users in Indonesia can be illustrated in the table below (Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia (APJII), 2024).

Table 1. Number of Indonesian Internet Users 2018-2024

Number Of Users	Year
221,56 million	2024
204,7 million	2022
169 million	2021
146 million	2020
128 million	2019
106 million	2018

The table above depicts the increase in the number of internet users in Indonesia between 2018 to 2024. The number of users has increased significantly, reaching 221.56 million in 2024. This increase shows a positive trend in the accessibility of digital technology, which can encourage public participation in the political process and digital democracy. With more internet users, opportunities for public involvement in political decision-making are increasingly wide open.

Bangladesh, as a developing country, faces challenges and opportunities in the development of digital democracy. As of early 2023, there are approximately 100 million internet users with a penetration rate of 38.9% and 44.7 million social media users, accounting for 26% of the total population. Despite having 179.9 million active mobile connections, Bangladesh ranks 49th out of 70 countries in digital freedom, with a score of 41 out of 100, reflecting government control over information and restrictions on freedom of expression (ANFREL, 2024).

On the other hand, Indonesia also faces similar challenges, although it has a higher number of internet and social media users. Indonesia has over 200 million internet users and a greater penetration rate, yet still grapples with issues such as the spread of misinformation and restrictions on freedom of expression (F. Amin et al., 2023). Both countries are working to enhance digital democracy through better internet access and the promotion of digital literacy, but Indonesia has greater potential for public participation due to its larger user base. Overall, while Bangladesh and Indonesia share challenges in developing digital democracy, Indonesia has the advantage of a higher number of users that can enhance public participation and transparency.

However, the challenges faced are no less significant. The spread of fake news (M & Hairunnisa, 2023), misinformation (Watts,

2020), and hate speech on social media (Sajlan, 2021) has disrupted the democratic process and created polarization in society (Vasist et al., 2024). Ross Tapsell in his writing *Disinformation and Democracy in Indonesia* clearly explains that the spread of false information, or disinformation in the context of Indonesian politics, actually does not only come from online media. In addition, the practice of disinformation has occurred under Soeharto's leadership, but was understood and spread in different ways (using face-to-face communication and mainstream mass media) (Tapsell, 2018). According to him, the current disinformation phenomenon is caused by the fact that people no longer trust the mainstream media and that the government does not provide alternative sources of information. As a result, people cannot distinguish between true and false information. The confusion and ignorance of netizens are exploited by a group of individuals who want to take advantage of this disinformation practice (Zainal & Megasari, 2019).

Concerns about privacy and data security are significant, as users frequently remain unaware of the risks linked to their personal information being shared online (Ioannou et al., 2021; Koohang et al., 2021). Furthermore, the ever-evolving technological infrastructure, including wider broadband access, is also a critical factor in shaping the future of digital democracy (Helbing et al., 2023). While there is still a digital divide

between urban and rural areas, government and private sector efforts to improve technology accessibility provide hope for increased public participation in the democratic process (Nurhidayat et al., 2024).

Jan Van Dijk in his book entitled *Digital Democracy: Vision & Reality* defines digital democracy as the exercise of democracy through various perspectives utilizing digital media in both online and offline political communication (Van Dijk, 2012). With this definition, it becomes clearer that the main focus of digital democracy is the perspective of democracy, not how easy it is to practice democracy using digital media for political communication (Rojas et al., 2017). The Indonesian government is also trying to regulate the digital space with various policies and regulations (Soemarwi & Susanto, 2021). Although this aims to protect the public from negative content, there are concerns that these regulations could be misused to limit freedom of expression. Therefore, it is important to find a balance between protection and freedom in the context of digital democracy.

On the other hand, public participation in the decision-making process through digital platforms is increasing (Syarifuddin et al., 2024). Various initiatives such as e-participation and the use of mobile applications for public complaints show that the public is increasingly actively involved in government (I. M. Widodo & Sutarman, 2023). This indicates the potential to create a

more transparent and accountable democracy. The future of digital democracy in Indonesia depends heavily on how the state, society, and technology can collaborate. Digital education and media literacy must be improved, so that the public can better sort information. In addition, the development of equitable digital infrastructure is essential to ensure that all levels of society can access and participate in the digital space.

Several studies are pertinent to this research. First, Hidayat's study titled "Partisipasi Warga Digital dalam Proses Demokrasi Pancasila" aims to compare the nine characteristics of digital citizens with a case study on their participation in promoting a more democratic and accountable government. The findings suggest that education in digital citizenship can enhance participation among digital citizens in fostering a more accountable and democratic governance. Thus, it is crucial for contemporary society to be educated about the nine elements of digital citizenship to collaborate effectively with various stakeholders, ensuring that the relationship between digital citizens and the government can reach common ground, thereby advancing Pancasila Democracy (Hidayat, 2023).

Additionally, there is a study by Indrawan et al. titled "Partisipasi Politik Publik di Era Politik Siber." This research aims to explore how the rapid advancement of information technology can positively

influence public political participation during the era of cyber politics. Public political participation is essential for selecting political leaders, as it plays a significant role in this context. The findings indicate that public political participation has increased in the cyber era, particularly through online platforms, notably through more frequent online campaigns conducted via social media. While these three studies differ in their focuses and methodologies, they are all interconnected by the theme of digital democracy in Indonesia (Indrawan et al., 2021).

Additionally, a study by Congge et al., titled "Digital Democracy: A Systematic Literature Review," aims to perform a systematic review of literature to uncover conceptual trends related to digital democracy. The findings reveal three key concepts: democracy, the internet, and social movements. Furthermore, the research indicates that the digital age has both beneficial and detrimental effects on democracy, emphasizing the significance of public knowledge in achieving high-quality digital democracy. It also highlights the considerable control exerted by elites within virtual democratic spaces (Congge et al., 2023). This study itself entitled "Digital Democracy Transformation in Indonesia: Opportunities, Challenges, and Future Solutions" aims to analyze the future of the implementation of digital democracy in Indonesia.

All of these studies have in common the same focus on public participation in the context of digital democracy. Hidayat's study emphasizes the importance of digital citizenship education to encourage more accountable and democratic participation. Indrawan et al. shows how information technology, especially online media, can increase public political participation. Meanwhile, research by Congge et al. highlights conceptual trends in digital democracy and the positive and negative impacts of the digital era on democracy. In this regard, all three studies, including this study, acknowledge the role of information and communication technology in facilitating political participation and the challenges faced in optimizing the potential of digital technology to support democracy.

Meanwhile, the main difference between the three studies and this study lies in the approach and objectives of each study. Hidayat's study focuses more on digital citizenship education, while Indrawan et al. assesses the impact of information technology in increasing political participation. Congge et al. conducted a systematic literature review to identify concepts in digital democracy, without directly examining the implementation in the field. On the other hand, this study entitled "Digital Democracy Transformation in Indonesia: Opportunities, Challenges, and Future Solutions" aims to comprehensively analyze the future of digital

democracy implementation in Indonesia, including identifying relevant opportunities, challenges, and solutions.

The novelty of this study lies in its holistic and in-depth analytical approach to the transformation of digital democracy in Indonesia, providing significant contributions that differentiate it from previous studies. This study not only identifies problems and challenges such as misinformation, the digital divide, and privacy issues, but also presents concrete and measurable recommendations for solutions that can be implemented in the future.

Unlike previous studies that may have focused more on certain aspects of digital democracy, this study integrates various perspectives and data from various sources to offer more comprehensive insights. In this way, this study seeks to facilitate closer collaboration between the government, society, and the private sector, emphasizing the importance of synergy in creating an inclusive and sustainable digital democracy ecosystem.

The main contribution of this study lies in its emphasis on developing policies that are not only reactive, but also proactive, with a focus on increasing digital literacy and equitable infrastructure. This approach provides a clear strategic framework for increasing public participation and trust in democratic institutions, making it an important reference source for policymakers and

researchers in the future. Thus, this study provides a more optimistic and practical picture of how digital democracy can develop in Indonesia.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a literature study method, which is a type of qualitative research. Researchers choose the literature study method in this study for several very relevant reasons. First, this method provides access to various sources of information related to the topic, such as journal articles, books, and policy documents. This is very important to explore the themes and patterns that exist in the context of digital democracy in Indonesia, given the ever-evolving relationship between technology and politics. Furthermore, literature studies are more efficient in terms of time and resources compared to collecting data from the field, which often faces challenges, such as accessibility and cost. By focusing on existing literature, researchers can speed up the analysis process without sacrificing the quality of information.

This method also serves to validate existing concepts, providing a strong foundation for further research on the future of digital democracy. By comparing information from various sources, researchers can ensure the accuracy and consistency of data, which is very important when discussing complex issues such as this. Thus, the use of the literature study method is the right choice,

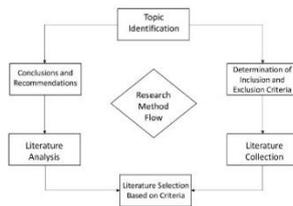
because it allows researchers to build a comprehensive understanding of the future of digital democracy in Indonesia, as well as identify the challenges and opportunities that may be faced. The research subjects include various sources, such as journal articles, books, research reports, and policy documents related to the application of digital technology in the political system.

In this research, inclusion and exclusion criteria are used to select relevant and quality literature. The inclusion criteria include literature that is directly related to the theme of democracy, such as public participation and the use of technology in the democratic process. Only publications that are published in recognized academic formats, such as peer-reviewed journal articles and research reports, will be included. Additionally, literature published between 2014 and 2024 and written in either Indonesian or English is also a requirement.

On the other hand, the exclusion criteria encompass literature that is not relevant, such as opinion articles or unverified sources. Publications that are too old, specifically those published before 2014, and studies with weak methodologies will also be excluded from the analysis. By applying these criteria, the research ensures that the resulting literature review is focused, accurate, and relevant, thereby strengthening the analysis of the future of democracy in Indonesia. In this research, the method flow used consists of several

interconnected stages as shown in the image below.

Figure 1. Research Method Flow



Based on the image above, it can be seen that the data collection procedure in this study begins with an important initial step, namely identifying the topic to be researched. Researchers determine the focus area they want to research. This is a crucial first step to ensure that the research has a clear direction. Once the topic is established, the next step is Determination of Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria. At this stage, the researcher sets specific criteria to determine which literature will be included or excluded from the analysis. These criteria are essential to maintain the relevance and quality of the data to be used. In this process, researchers utilize various academic databases and libraries to find the necessary sources, such as journal articles, books, research reports, and policy documents related to digital democracy in Indonesia.

After collecting these literature sources, researchers continue by reading and recording information that is considered important. This data collection process involves an in-depth understanding of the contents of each document, so that researchers can record key points, themes, and ideas that emerge from

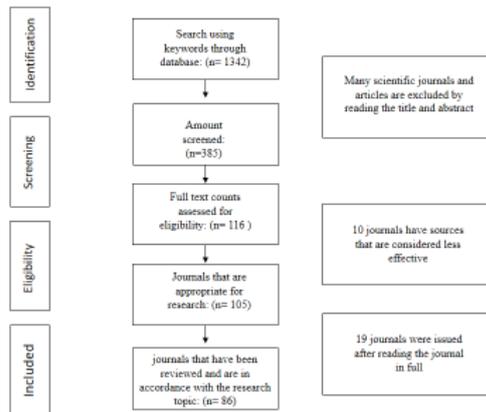
each source. Furthermore, researchers analyze the information that has been recorded. In this stage, qualitative analysis techniques are applied to identify relevant themes, patterns, and relationships from the literature reviewed. This process involves not only organizing data, but also critically understanding the context and meaning of each piece of information found.

In this research, the validity and reliability of the data are tested using the method of source triangulation. Source triangulation is an approach that involves collecting data from various sources to ensure the consistency and accuracy of information. This study utilizes a combination of academic literature, government reports, and survey data, including sources from both national and international journals. By doing so, the researchers can obtain a more comprehensive picture of the state of digital democracy in Indonesia.

The use of source triangulation aims to verify findings and reduce potential bias that may arise from a single perspective. By relying on diverse sources, researchers can ensure that the data collected is valid and reliable. Furthermore, this triangulation strengthens the arguments and conclusions drawn, making this research more credible in explaining the challenges and opportunities faced in the development of digital democracy in Indonesia. Thus, this study does not rely solely on one type of source, but integrates various

perspectives from national to international journals, which is crucial for providing a deep and holistic analysis. The analysis procedure in this study can be described in Figure 1. below.

Figure 1. Analysis Procedure



Based on the research procedure flow above, it is known that in an effort to conduct in-depth research and information collection, a search for academic journals was carried out using various keywords and effective search strategies. The search begins by determining keywords relevant to the topic being studied, such as "digital democracy," "political participation," and "internet users in Indonesia." With these keywords, exploration is carried out on various journal databases and academic publication platforms to find suitable articles. In addition, advanced search strategies are applied, including the use of Boolean operators such as "AND," "OR," and "NOT" to narrow or expand search results. Results are filtered based on year of publication, relevance, and journal quality, ensuring that only journals with high impact and credibility are selected. With this

systematic approach, a number of diverse and informative references have been collected, covering various perspectives and findings related to the topic being studied. These search results not only enrich understanding but also provide a strong foundation for further analysis. The validity of the data is ensured through source triangulation, by comparing information from various references to ensure consistency and accuracy. The literature analysis used is detailed in table 2 below.

Table 2. Literature Analyzed

Types of literature	Amount	Main Topic	Year
International Journal	378	Digital Democracy Transformation in Indonesia: Opportunities, Challenges, and Future Solutions	2014-2024
National Journal	746	Digital Democracy Transformation in Indonesia: Opportunities, Challenges, and Future Solutions	2014-2024
Books	124	Digital Democracy Transformation in Indonesia: Opportunities, Challenges, and Future Solutions	2009-2024
Website	56	Digital Democracy Transformation in Indonesia: Opportunities, Challenges, and Future Solutions	2019-2024
Reports	38	Digital Democracy Transformation in Indonesia: Opportunities, Challenges, and Future Solutions	2019-2024

Based on the table above, it is known that this research was conducted with a comprehensive literature analysis approach, covering various relevant sources of information. The sources used include books, national journals, international journals, as

well as websites and research reports. The analysis begins by identifying and collecting books that provide the theoretical basis and context needed to understand the topic being studied. National and international journals were selected to explore current research and relevant empirical findings, providing diverse and in-depth perspectives. In addition, websites containing articles, reports, and statistical data were also analyzed to obtain current and valid information regarding real conditions in the field. Research reports from various institutions and organizations provide reliable data to support the arguments and findings in this study. By integrating these various sources, this study not only enriches the insights obtained, but also ensures that the analysis carried out is comprehensive and based on strong evidence. This approach is expected to make a significant contribution to the understanding and development of the topic being studied.

DISCUSSION

The implementation of digital democracy in Indonesia does not only depend on technology, but also on the readiness of the community, existing facilities, and government policies. This can be illustrated in table 3. below.

Table 3. Results

Factors Affecting Digital Democracy	Current Status	Future Outlook
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Readiness of the Community	Good digital literacy, Society is open to technology	Needs improvement in digital literacy skills
Existing Facilities	Facilities are adequate, Digital divide still exists	Requires improvement to ensure equitable access
Government Policies	Currently lacking supportive policies	Need significant enhancement to support digital democracy
Overall Impact	If readiness, facilities, and policies improve, digital democracy will thrive.	If they remain inadequate, the situation will worsen.

Based on the table, it can be seen that in implementing digital democracy, it is necessary to pay attention to three elements of community readiness, namely a qualified community with good digital literacy skills, the availability of equitable and safe facilities, and government policies that are solution-oriented and support the development of digital democracy. All of these elements are interrelated and must be managed properly so that digital democracy can be realized effectively. Thus, the future of digital democracy in Indonesia is expected to build a stronger, more transparent, and participatory democratic system, giving voice to all citizens to contribute to national development. The future of digital democracy in Indonesia promises a significant transformation in the way society interacts with the government and the political process (Nurlaila et al., 2024).

Along with the advancement of information and communication technology, the implementation of digital democracy is becoming increasingly relevant to increase public participation, facilitate access to

information, and ensure government accountability (Amane et al., 2023). Where digital democracy serves as a bridge between society and the state, citizens can voice their opinions and contribute to decision-making that affects their lives.

Community readiness is a key element in shaping the future of digital democracy in Indonesia. Amidst the rapid development of information and communication technology, a community that is ready and able to adapt to these changes will be the main driver in creating a more transparent, participatory, and accountable democratic system (Ganiem et al., 2024). However, this readiness does not only depend on access to technology, but also includes the community's understanding, skills, and positive attitudes towards the use of technology in a political context. With increasing public awareness in using social media, the emergence of access to information sources will allow citizens to actively participate in public discussions and understand certain issues more deeply.

People who are ready to participate in digital democracy must have adequate digital literacy. Digital literacy includes the ability to understand and use technology effectively, including skills to search for information, analyze data, and communicate through digital platforms (Naufal, 2021). In Indonesia, many of the younger generation are already familiar with the use of social media and digital applications, but deeper digital literacy still

needs to be improved (Aifalesasunanda et al., 2024). Without a strong understanding of how to use technology to voice opinions or engage in political discussions, the potential for community participation in the democratic process will be hampered. Indonesia's digital literacy index (IDLI) from 2019 to 2022 according to the Ministry of Communication and Information can be summarized in the following table 3.

Table 3. Indonesia's digital literacy index from 2019 to 2022

IDLI	Year
3,54	2022
3,49	2021
3,46	2020
3,39	2019

Based on the table above, it can be seen that the Indonesian Digital Literacy Index (IDLI) shows positive developments between 2019 and 2022, as seen in Table 3. In 2019, IDLI was recorded at 3.39, indicating that there is still room for improvement in the understanding and use of digital technology. This figure increased to 3.54 in 2022, reflecting progress in the community's digital literacy. The increase in the digital literacy index has a significant impact on community participation in various aspects, including politics. This is in line with the view of Bulya & Izzati that with increasing public understanding of information and communication technology, individuals become better able to access, analyze, and use information available online. This allows them to be more actively involved in public

discussions and political activities. For example, people who have good digital literacy tend to be more critical in assessing the information they receive, including news and political content circulating on social media. This makes them better prepared to make informed decisions when choosing leaders or participating in elections. In addition, increasing digital literacy also encourages people to use online platforms as a means to voice their opinions and participate in political campaigns (Bulya & Izzati, 2024).

People with advanced digital literacy skills tend to engage more effectively in constructive and civil political discussions on social media platforms (Arifin, 2023). This perspective aligns with the opinion of Handoko et al., who noted that the implementation of digital literacy can assist individuals in using and accessing technology more wisely (Handoko et al., 2023). The application of digital technology is significantly connected to multiple sectors, including education (List, 2019), politics (la Rose & Detlor, 2021), public services (Evans & Gomes, 2017), social aspects (Podgorny & Volokhova, 2022), economy (Gautam & Kanoujiya, 2022), religion (Susilawati et al., 2021), and lifestyle (Oh et al., 2021).

Digital literacy, according to Jan van Dijk, is a very important ability to use information and communication technology (ICT) effectively. In an era where technology increasingly dominates everyday life, digital

literacy becomes a skill that determines how well individuals can participate in various aspects of social, economic, and political life.

Van Dijk underlines several key components that make up digital literacy. First, access is fundamental. This includes the ability to access digital devices and services, where adequate infrastructure and technical skills to use digital tools are essential. Without this access, individuals will find it difficult to engage in the digital world. Furthermore, competence in using software and applications to search for, process, and disseminate information is also a key aspect. This involves an understanding of how technology works as well as the ability to solve various technical problems that may arise. Without this competence, individuals may feel hampered in utilizing the potential of existing technology.

In addition, critical thinking is essential to evaluate information found online. Individuals must be able to distinguish between reliable and unreliable sources, as well as understand the context and bias that may exist in the information. This is an increasingly important skill amidst the proliferation of information circulating in cyberspace. Finally, participation in the digital environment is an inseparable aspect of digital literacy. This includes communication and collaboration skills across digital platforms, as well as an understanding of ethics and responsibility when interacting online. Active

involvement in the digital world allows individuals to contribute better to society.

Van Dijk also emphasized the importance of digital literacy education. He argued that without adequate education, the digital divide will continue to widen, creating inequalities in access to and use of technology. Therefore, the education system must adapt and incorporate digital literacy into the curriculum, so that future generations can be prepared to face the challenges of the digital world. Thus, digital literacy is not just a technical skill, but also an important foundation for life in this information age (Van Dijk, 2012).

Moreover, several studies have been carried out on this subject, focusing on the connection between social media usage and government policies regarding political participation in a broader context (Anggraheni et al., 2021). Saud et al. discovered the preferences and involvement of the younger generation in political engagement within the contemporary Indonesian context (Saud et al., 2020). Additionally, Saud and Margono examined the impact of digital media on the younger generation, highlighting how they utilize these platforms to engage in political activities (Saud & Margono, 2021).

Education is one of the determining factors in building community readiness to face the challenges of digital democracy. Schools and educational institutions must include political education and digital literacy

in their curriculum. Digital literacy must be promoted as an organized learning tool in the curriculum, or at least connected to the existing education system (Nurhaidah & Arifin, 2018). Good education can shape positive attitudes towards political participation and increase awareness of the importance of individual voices in society (Affandi et al., 2019).

In addition to digital literacy, people's attitudes toward technology also play an important role in their readiness to participate in digital democracy. People who have a positive view of technology tend to be more open to using digital platforms as a means to express their opinions and engage in the political process. Conversely, if people are skeptical or distrustful of the security and reliability of technology, they may be reluctant to use digital platforms to participate in decision-making. Therefore, it is important to build public trust in technology and demonstrate how the use of digital platforms can increase transparency and accountability in the political process (Murdoko, 2023).

Community readiness also includes the ability to overcome challenges arising from the use of technology in politics. For example, with the increasing use of social media, the community needs to have the skills to recognize misinformation or hoaxes. The community can strengthen their understanding of media literacy to recognize false information around them (Lubis et al., 2022).

The spread of incorrect information or hoaxes in cyberspace can result in various issues, such as creating panic or doubt about the real facts (Yusuf et al., 2024). In the digital era, the ability to filter accurate and relevant information is increasingly important (Prasanti, 2019). If the public is unable to distinguish between true and false information, they can get caught up in misleading narratives, which in turn can influence their views on political issues and decisions made by the government.

Furthermore, the readiness of society to participate in digital democracy can also be seen from their level of involvement in political issues. People who are active and care about public issues tend to be more motivated to use technology as a tool to voice their opinions and contribute to decision-making. Social media, for example, has become an effective platform for social mobilization and political movement organizations (Ema & Nayiroh, 2024).

The younger generation, which is the largest part of Indonesia's population, shows a high interest in social and political issues, and they often use digital platforms to interact and organize themselves. In Indonesia, digital activism practices are common, especially among the younger generation, such as Generation Z, who are often considered apolitical. However, they are actually involved in digital activism that highlights issues such as corruption, human rights, and various other

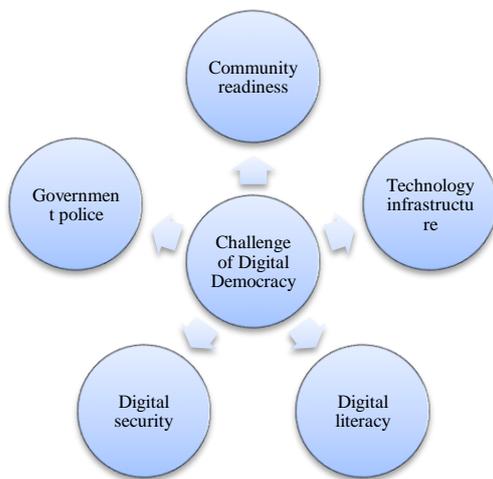
political issues (Firamadhina & Krisnani, 2021). The number of internet users in Indonesia shows a trend that continues to increase from year to year. Based on the data listed in Table 1 above, the number of internet users in Indonesia reached 106 million in 2018, then increased significantly to 221.56 million in 2024. This surge reflects the rapid growth in access to digital technology throughout the country. The increase in the number of internet users has a significant impact on people's political participation. With more than 200 million people connected to the internet, access to political information has become easier and faster.

This allows people to be more involved in political discussions, keep up with current issues, and access various sources of information that may have previously been difficult to reach. For example, in 2021, when the number of internet users reached 169 million, many social media platforms were used to disseminate information about the general election and the candidates competing. The younger generation, who are active users of social media, are increasingly involved in the political process, organizing campaigns, and voicing their opinions. This shows that digital engagement can encourage broader political participation.

This aligns with the findings of Andriyendi et al., which indicated that social media plays a crucial role in political participation among new voters, particularly

through the use of information and communication technologies, including electronic and print media as well as online platforms. Conversely, traditional approaches in social media do not appear to significantly affect new voters. This generation is generally interested in politics in a more casual setting. While there is some influence from their school and family environments, it is relatively minimal due to their strong familiarity with media usage (Andriyendi et al., 2023). Their readiness to utilize this technology is crucial to encourage broader participation in the democratic process. However, challenges remain. These challenges can be illustrated in Figure 3. below.

Figure 3. Challenges of Digital Democracy in Indonesia



Looking at the picture above, the gap in community readiness, both in terms of technology access and digital literacy, can create inequality in political participation. Lately, the term digital divide has emerged, which refers to differences based on user skills

and quality of access. Thus, the discourse on the digital divide has shifted from a focus on access to differences in skills, which reflect variations between groups of individuals in terms of the abilities needed to use the internet effectively (Jayanthi & Dinaseviani, 2022).

The digital divide can hinder active engagement in political and democratic processes, due to limited access to information and digital platforms (Munir et al., 2023). If only a small portion of the population is able to use technology effectively, the voices of certain groups may be more heard, while marginalized or excluded groups will be increasingly unheard. Therefore, efforts to improve community readiness must be carried out in an inclusive manner, ensuring that all citizens have the opportunity to develop the skills and understanding needed to participate in digital democracy.

The government and the private sector have a responsibility to invest in programs that increase community readiness. This includes digital literacy training in schools, workshops for the general public, and initiatives that encourage the use of technology in social and political contexts, as well as awareness campaigns to increase public understanding of the importance of political participation and the use of technology (Setyawan, 2023). By creating a supportive environment, people will be more motivated to engage in the democratic process and use technology as a tool to express their opinions and contribute to public policy.

In Indonesia, according to the Ministry of Communication and Information or Kominfo, a National Digital Literacy program has been implemented which is targeted to reach 50 million Indonesians by 2024. Currently, there are more than 12.4 million human resource development programs offered at the most basic level. This initiative is an opportunity for the community to learn about digital literacy. To date, around 2.6 million Indonesians have participated in digital literacy training. The National Digital Literacy Program includes four modules, namely digital skills, digital ethics, digital culture, and digital security (Kominfo, 2021).

Like Indonesia, several other developing nations, including India, face challenges related to the digital divide. The World Bank reports that "India is experiencing a significant digital divide." Despite being a global leader in information technology, a large portion of its population still does not reap the benefits of the digital economy. India's rapidly expanding business process outsourcing sector, particularly in southern cities like Hyderabad and Bangalore, has positioned it as a major exporter of IT services and skilled labor worldwide. However, approximately one billion people in the country lack internet access, making it the largest offline population globally (One Library Per Village, 2017). Furthermore, there are notable disparities in internet usage across different regions. Rural India struggles with fundamental issues such

as illiteracy, malnutrition, and extreme poverty, falling significantly behind cities like Bangalore, which, according to the UNHDR 2001, is more advanced in technological innovation than many cities in the US, Europe, and Japan (Ranjit, 2022).

The 2017 'Digital' report by Hootsuite, a social media management platform, reveals that only 35% of India's population uses the internet, in contrast to a global internet penetration rate of 50% (Hootsuite, 2017). Insufficient infrastructure, combined with a lack of knowledge on how to use that infrastructure, hinders many Indians from benefiting from access to the latest information and communication technologies. Consequently, despite India's international acclaim for its IT services, the country continues to grapple with a significant digital divide due to the relatively low percentage of its population with internet access (Prathapagiri, 2019).

Looking ahead, the readiness of the public to participate in digital democracy in Indonesia will greatly influence the future of the country's political system. With a public that is ready and able to use technology to engage in the political process, digital democracy can be an effective tool to increase accountability, transparency, and public participation (Katharina & Endi Jaweng, 2020). However, without adequate preparedness, this potential will not be realized. Therefore, all parties, from the

government, the private sector, to civil society, must work together to build community readiness in facing the challenges and opportunities offered by digital democracy.

The preparedness of facilities is also crucial in shaping the future of digital democracy in Indonesia (K. Amin, 2020). In this context, the facilities in question include technological infrastructure, stable internet access, secure digital platforms, and supporting educational resources. Digital infrastructure refers to an Information and Communication Technology (ICT) framework that provides digital functionalities, such as storage and computing services. As information and communication technology evolves rapidly, it is essential to develop sustainable digital infrastructure to ensure that technological advancements positively influence society.

Examples of digital infrastructure encompass the internet backbone, fixed broadband services, mobile communication technologies, data centers, cloud computing solutions, applications, and user devices, and the Internet of Things (IoT) (AIIB, 2020). When all these elements are well integrated, they will create an environment that supports public participation, transparency, and accountability in the political process. However, if these facilities are inadequate, the potential of digital democracy to improve the quality of governance and public participation will be hampered.

Technological infrastructure is the main foundation of digital democracy. In Indonesia, there is a significant gap in access to information and communication technology between urban and rural areas (Sinambela et al., 2024). While large cities such as Jakarta, Surabaya, and Bandung have fairly good infrastructure, many remote and rural areas still face major challenges in terms of internet access (Syifa et al., 2024).

Slow or even non-existent connections in some areas result in inequality in political participation. In the ever-evolving digital era, social media has served as an effective means of disseminating information, influencing views, and mobilizing the masses (Salman Farid, 2023). For example, people in areas without good internet access will have difficulty engaging in public discussions, accessing information about policies, or using digital platforms to voice their opinions. This can lead to their voices being marginalized in the decision-making process and creating injustice in the democratic system.

In addition to infrastructure and access, digital platform security is also a key factor in the readiness of facilities for digital democracy. The increasing use of internet technology poses new challenges in protecting privacy and personal data, especially as the practice of collecting, utilizing, and distributing individual data becomes more widespread. Delays in the development of instruments and regulations are one of the

factors causing weak mechanisms for protecting privacy and personal data (Dewi, 2016). To encourage public participation, it is important for citizens to feel confident that the systems they use to voice their opinions are secure and not vulnerable to fraud, such as the right to privacy.

Modern privacy rights include the protection of an individual's personal data and sensitive information from unauthorized use and surveillance (Martinelli *et al.*, 2023). If citizens feel that their data is not protected or that the voting process is not trustworthy, they will be reluctant to participate in the political process. Therefore, investment in technology that supports security and transparency is essential. Governments and the private sector need to work together to develop systems that protect citizens' personal data and ensure that the democratic process is fair.

Facility readiness also includes the provision of adequate educational resources. Various parties play an active role in increasing the digital literacy capacity of the community. The government also did not miss out by launching the Makin Cakap Digital movement in March 2021. Various community organizations also took part, such as Japelidi, Mafindo, NXG, Common Room, and dozens of other communities. In fact, they had started this initiative before the digital literacy movement was launched nationally (Astuti & Binu, 2022). When people have access to this training, they will be better prepared to use

technology and contribute to the political process. Digital literacy includes not only the ability to use technological devices, but also the ability to think critically about the information received and understand how to use digital platforms to voice opinions (Syahfira *et al.*, 2023).

real example of the relationship between facility readiness and digital democracy can be seen in several government programs that have been implemented. For example, the use of applications to collect public voices in public decision-making has begun to be implemented in several regions. As is the case with the DKI Jakarta Provincial Government developing the Qlue Application to make it easier for residents to report problems that occur in the DKI Jakarta area (Wahab & Rahaju, 2021). These programs require adequate infrastructure and stable internet access to function properly. However, without the community's readiness to use this technology, the initiative may not achieve the desired results. Therefore, the development of supporting facilities must be balanced with efforts to improve the community's understanding and skills in using technology.

Furthermore, facility readiness also includes the development of policies that support the use of technology in the political process. The government needs to formulate regulations that not only protect the rights of citizens but also encourage innovation in the use of technology to increase public

participation. Specifically, the government is expected to formulate ICTD policies that cover various aspects, such as creating an environment that supports policies and regulations, providing access to basic infrastructure, accelerating the development of basic ICT skills, and developing ICT materials and applications for development. In addition, it is also important to encourage ICT research and development to produce innovative solutions (Sulaiman, 2012). Policies that support the development of digital infrastructure and greater access can help create an environment conducive to digital democracy. Conversely, policies that restrict access or police online activity can hinder citizen participation and create distrust of government.

In this context, it is important to note that digital democracy is not just about technology, but also about building a relationship of mutual trust between government and society (Fajrina, 2020). When people feel that the government supports their participation and provides adequate facilities to contribute to the political process, they will be more motivated to get involved (BR et al., 2023).

On the other hand, if facilities are inadequate or government policies do not support participation, people may feel apathetic and reluctant to engage in the democratic process. The success of digital democracy in Indonesia depends heavily on the ability to overcome existing challenges and

build adequate facility readiness. This includes investment in technological infrastructure, development of secure digital platforms, provision of digital literacy training, and formulation of policies that support public participation (Hikmah *et al.*, 2024). All these elements are interrelated and must be managed well so that digital democracy can be realized effectively.

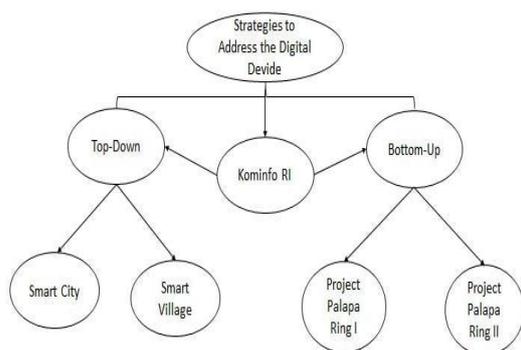
Government policies have a very important role in determining the future of digital democracy in Indonesia (Hutomo, 2023). In an era where information and communication technology is increasingly developing, policies taken by the government will affect how society can participate in the political process and how the government interacts with citizens. In implementing the concept of digitalization, the element of support plays a very significant and vital role. This support needs to come from various parties, including the government, local communities, and stakeholders.

Government support can take the shape of policies that promote the utilization of digital technology across different facets of public services, which includes establishing standards, clear regulations, and frameworks that ease the integration of technology (Christover *et al.*, 2023). When government policies support the use of technology to increase transparency, accountability, and public participation, digital democracy can thrive. Conversely, policies that restrict access

or police online activity can hinder public participation and create distrust of government.

One important aspect of government policy related to digital democracy is regulation of internet access. The government needs to formulate policies that encourage the provision of technology infrastructure that is evenly distributed throughout the region, so that all citizens, regardless of their geographic location, can access information and participate in the democratic process. Policies that support investment in digital infrastructure, such as the development of internet networks in remote areas, are essential to ensure that no group of people is marginalized in this digital era. In Indonesia, there are two strategies for addressing the digital divide, namely top-down and bottom-up as illustrated in Figure 4. below.

Figure 4. Digital Divide Handling Strategy



Through the Ministry of Communication and Information of the Republic of Indonesia, which serves as an accelerator, facilitator, and regulator of digital transformation, various initiatives are undertaken to enhance regional equality.

Alongside the Smart City and Smart Village Programs, one formal tool using a top-down strategy is the Palapa Ring, which covers 34 provinces in Indonesia. This major project, also known as the Sky Toll or Submarine Fiber Optic Cable Project, had Palapa Ring I developed from 2007 to 2019, while Palapa Ring II focuses on delivering internet connectivity to remote regions, divided into West, Central, and East Indonesia packages (Kementerian Komunikasi dan Informatika, 2022). Additionally, there exists a program for providing telecommunications services called the Universal Service Obligation (USO), which is funded by contributions from telecommunications operators (Jayanthi & Dinaseviani, 2022).

In addition, government policies must also focus on personal data protection and cybersecurity. Personal data protection policies as the privacy rights of every individual need to be flexible and proactive, considering the influence of environmental developments, such as ICT advances and business innovation. In an effort to provide data security protection to its citizens, a number of countries have developed policy frameworks through a bottom-up approach. This approach follows the development of ICT as a form of formalization of the dynamics of digital transformation that continues to take place in society (Hendra Wicaksana *et al.*, 2020). In the context of digital democracy, people need to feel confident that the

information they provide to the government or digital platforms is safe from misuse.

Policies that regulate personal data protection, transparency in data use, and cybersecurity will increase public trust in the digital systems used. When people feel that their data is protected and that they can participate without fear of privacy risks, they will be more likely to engage in the political process. This is an important step in building a healthy and sustainable democratic ecosystem. Government policies must also include the development of digital literacy education (Suriani, 2022). In order to prepare the public to participate in digital democracy, it is important for the government to include digital literacy education in the curriculum in schools. Schools are environments that have a significant impact on literacy skills, including the use of digital technology in active learning (Gioia, 2018).

Schools have a responsibility to raise awareness and form critical thinking patterns for students and their families, especially regarding the use of technology. In 2014, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child issued a socialization so that the government integrates digital literacy competencies into the national school curriculum (M. S. Putri, 2024). This education encompasses not only the technical skills required to use digital devices but also an awareness of citizens' rights and responsibilities in a digital environment. By enhancing digital literacy,

individuals will be more equipped to utilize technology for expressing their views, engaging in public discourse, and comprehending political matters that impact their lives.

Furthermore, government policies should also encourage the use of digital platforms to increase public participation in decision-making. Several local governments in Indonesia have begun implementing digital applications and platforms to gather citizen input on public policies. Policies that support the use of these technologies will strengthen accountability and transparency in government. When citizens have easy access to provide input and are involved in the decision-making process, they also have a say in the policies that affect their lives. This will create a greater sense of ownership of the democratic process.

However, challenges remain in formulating policies that support digital democracy. One of the main challenges is finding a balance between security and freedom of expression. The emergence of digital platforms has certainly expanded opportunities for freedom of speech, but on the other hand, it also presents complex challenges regarding the regulation of online content (Singer, 2017). Maintaining a balance between protecting freedom of expression and reducing the risks of uncontrolled online discourse is a key focus of policy in Indonesia (V. K. Putri & Priyana, 2023). Governments often feel the

need to monitor online activity to maintain security and prevent the spread of misinformation. However, if this monitoring is too strict or carried out without transparency, it can reduce freedom of expression and discourage people from participating in public discussions. Therefore, it is important for governments to formulate policies that guarantee freedom of expression while maintaining security and order.

In this context, community participation in formulating policies is also very important (Mariana, 2015). The government needs to involve citizens in the policy-making process related to digital democracy. Through discussion forums, public consultations, or digital platforms that allow the public to provide input, the government can listen to the voice of the people and ensure that the policies taken reflect the needs and aspirations of the community (Suropati, 2023). When people feel that they have a role in policy making then they will support and participate in its implementation.

The future of digital democracy in Indonesia is highly dependent on how the government manages existing policies. The value of the democracy index and governance of Indonesia is highly influenced by the implementation of policies (Pamungkas *et al.*, 2016). Policies that support the development of digital infrastructure, personal data protection, digital literacy education, and community participation in decision-making

will create a more conducive environment for digital democracy. The government strengthens digital networks, formulates supportive policies, and involves the community in the digital change process (Kementrian Komunikasi dan Informatika, 2022). On the other hand, policies that restrict access or monitor online activities can create distrust and apathy among the public. Therefore, the government must proactively formulate policies that support public participation and improve the quality of democracy.

As a step forward, governments need to invest in research and development to understand how technology can be used to strengthen democracy. By understanding trends and innovations in technology, governments can create policies that are responsive to changes and challenges. By recognizing the significance of transformational capabilities in government, we can be better prepared to face the challenges that continue to emerge in this modern era and move towards a more responsive, inclusive, and efficient government in serving the needs of the community (Sulistiyo *et al.*, 2023). This also includes leveraging new technologies, such as artificial intelligence and data analytics, to improve public services and citizen participation (A. Widodo & Permatasari, 2023). In this way, the government can create

an ecosystem that supports digital democracy and improves people's quality of life.

CONCLUSION

The future of digital democracy in Indonesia shows great potential to increase public participation in political and governance processes. With the advancement of information technology, the accessibility of digital platforms is increasing, allowing citizens to more actively contribute to decision-making. However, challenges such as the digital divide, the spread of disinformation, and privacy issues are still concerns that need to be addressed. This research aimed to explore these dynamics and assess how they impact public engagement in democratic processes.

While the findings indicate a promising landscape for digital democracy, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study. One significant constraint is the lack of empirical data on the direct effects of digital platforms on public participation. Future research could address this gap by conducting surveys or case studies across various regions, providing a deeper understanding of how these factors influence citizen involvement in digital democracy.

Collaboration between the government, society, and the private sector remains essential to create an ecosystem that supports inclusive and transparent democracy. The government acts as a regulator and facilitator,

while the community functions as a supervisor and active participant. The private sector can provide the technology and innovation needed to improve the accessibility and efficiency of the democratic system. The synergy between these three parties is crucial for increasing public participation, reducing the digital divide, and strengthening accountability in the governance process.

Based on these findings, several practical recommendations for policy implementation need to be considered. First, it is important to establish a regular forum involving all stakeholders, where discussions on policies, technologies, and challenges faced can be held. Second, the government and the private sector should collaborate in training programs to improve the digital literacy of the community, enabling them to actively participate in the democratic process. Furthermore, investment in equitable digital infrastructure must be a priority, especially in remote areas, so that all levels of society have equal access to digital democracy platforms. Encouraging public participation in monitoring the use of technology in elections and public services is another crucial step to maintain transparency and accountability. Finally, the resulting policies must be inclusive, considering the diversity of Indonesian society, to ensure that the voices of all groups, especially the marginalized, are heard and accommodated.

In conclusion, the integration of these strategies not only aligns with the goals of this research but also paves the way for future studies to further investigate the evolving landscape of digital democracy in Indonesia.

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