Disinformation and Tradition as Prebunking:
The Case of Javanese Culture

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A B S T R A C T

Disinformation is a new concept for an old phenomenon. Living narratives, such as myth, have shown their existence and effect. Rethinking of the tradition as a tool to fight against disinformation is in line with prebunking. Prebunking is a tool to devoid disinformation, providing managing facts to opinioned discourse. The article starts with the assumption of the existence of tradition in its ability to literate the society from so called disinformation. Such tradition provides ways of life or wisdom that can be used to avoid misinformation. Disinformation itself has different types of reaction depending on the type of the society: whether it is in between modern and traditional or modern society at large Development in the Third World had situated the tradition as anti-modern and something that has to be changed into modern, achievement oriented, and somehow fit into western indicators. This research uses the FGD as a tool to discuss the issue on well-known people such as lecturer of Javanese culture, fact checkers' activist, media and social media expertise, and artists. Some issues are further examined by using interviews. This research finds that myth or local wisdom has been used as a way to manage disinformation, lessening the effect of disinformation. However, while much of the tradition has been forgotten and marginalized during the rise of Indonesia development, it still exists as the strengthening element in society. This finding might be true for people who are still attached to tradition. For other generation and the millennial, it could be something to reconsider. This paper suggests the rethinking of the tradition in the digital culture can be used as a way to apprehend disinformation in the digital age.

Keywords: *disinformation, prebunking, tradition, living narratives, digital*
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1. Introduction

Two important things have affected human relation lately: the rapid growth of information technology and Covid-19 pandemic. Communication that was once a face-to-face activity now has to be mediated by computer or other gadgets. It develops other tool of communication such as application, search engine. First start as tool to help people communicate and search faster and better. It influences and characterized people to their proximity to the era of digital. Immigrant for people born in the 60 to digital natives to new generation where digital is a part of their existence.

The pandemic Covid-19 has made digital leap due to the need of communication and human relation. People adapt and use computer and gadget for education, business in traditional market, and other social and political activities. New work activities rise such as buzzer, famous in political propaganda. In a very short time, internet becomes the main road for every information, the social media literacy develops later.

In general, people realize the information has flooded the digital world, where right and wrong, appropriate or not are debatable. The state as well as the civil society concern about how people's understanding and their behavior are affected by the social media. This situation is not unique to Indonesia. In the US, Trump winning the election has shown the existence or even the growth of racism. The US society has tried to erase or minimize marginalization of people due to discrimination, especially racism, affected by the digital media. The algorithm has made viral as important of most

search tools, at the same time, it also shows it is not easy to get netizen's attention.

In Indonesia, shocking experience similar to the US racism shown in the election whether to of presidency or for local leaders. Indonesia is the society in the making, as Anderson depicts it as imagine communities, meaning differences has been dominated by the need to develop Indonesia's society. Using Java as case, differences can be seen from social group such as *abangan, santri priyayi*, or cleavage such as NU and Muhammadyah. Indonesia political parties started as expression of identity, ideology, whereas in the New Order, it has been managed into big three issues such as religious, national professional and national. At present, social groups has increased due to globalization and other social element such as information itself. Anyhow, the election has shown the power of buzzer and other element of social media influencer in supporting one candidate over another. Only at those case, religious issues are commodified as political mobility.

Those explanation become more hectic due the usage of digital as medium of expression, of mobilization tools where sentiment become dominant. The social media become tools of negative sentiment and new authoritarian ("Kebebasan Berpendapat, Peretasan Bentuk Otoritarian Baru," 2022). There is a question as do society buy all the sentiments information through digital, or they have some resiliency.

2. Frame of Thought

There are several mechanisms to face disinformation, fact checker and media literacy. However the mass media can support by giving truth sandwich, by giving the fact and follow by the fake news ("Antara Membakar Lumbung Padi dan Memberi Roti Lapis Kebenaran," 2022). This article exposes to rethinking tradition to increase their resiliency toward disinformation. As a nation, Indonesia's politic is prone to disinformation especially in political context, where politic become the prime mover, somehow forgetting the democracy and the need for justice for society (Hidayat, 2022)

In the 60's prebunking was being discussed as a way to produce resiliency to the people of the authoritarian regime (Roozenbeek et al., 2020). Actually, it is sibling of the debunking, the most common fact checker, both are important tools for minimizing disinformation (Lewandowsky & van der Linden, 2021). It use the inoculation as the way to grow strength so as the society produce reasons to counter the existing domination (Boman, 2021)(Lewandowsky & van der Linden, 2021). Later on, the inoculation theory has been used to produce the strength in the flood of information of the mass media and now to the digital world. Those who support the fact checker activity soon realizes that numbers of people as well as diversity in geographical.

The digital become the medium of mobilization for murky social situation such as politics or fraud in manipulating economic transaction, or other avatar for deceiving audiences.

Our question would be, could tradition rethink to inoculate society. Although it is challenging to answer this question, there are some elements to think about. For example, as this case is the Javanese culture, which in Indonesia's case has been a stereotyping of Javanisation. This probably true for the era of New Order, however, not true at present where mobility is immense and transportation is open for urbanization.

The other problem has been connected to Indonesia development attitude toward tradition, such as some of the habits seems to slow the progress. Somehow tradition has been left behind, it becomes important where problem arise and tradition treat as instant remedy. For example, development has close relation to modernity, where some of the problem is loneliness. Here the tradition, is being discussed as the way to combat disinformation.

Digital become the tool for political mobilization for information as well as the fake news for the opponents, in the FGD, the information is revealed. He was a high school graduates, and already earn some money from his service to the political candidates. He used information taken from the internet and other sources such as rumours.

The case of Ahok in the Jakarta's governor election showed digital as effective mechanism for political mobilization. It reproduced and replicate the Al Maidah 22, a verse of Al Quran as the way to delegitimize him as political leader. As incumbent and has sufficient track record as governor, he has some advantage, however it is a proof of the strong digital as political mobilization.

Studies on the use of the WA group also show this platform consumes negative sentiments. People just forward or copy and seldom producing good information (Kurnia et al., 2020). The case of Covid-19, exhibit similar tendency, as it become the negotiated issue for disinformation (Widyawati et al., 2021).

The base of the need to encounter disinformation is its relation to the nationhood, it has been discussed as important opinion of how significance to save the politics from the disinformation. In Indonesia's case, the imagine communities, was important for the rise and the future of Indonesia as nation (Anderson, 2006)(Hidayat, 2022). As Information become the basic of Indonesia's nationalism, at present it become the part of information war.

Disinformation is similar to propaganda, it has some meaning, or ideology attached to it, it is not a random issue (Bjola & Papadakis, 2020). In Indonesia's case, the span of Japanese occupation was only limited in years, however its propaganda against Dutch and the West had succeded, such as in culture (Dewi et al., 2015), or in construction of women (Sasi, 2006). The Japanese propaganda expose the way the prebunking put the Dutch occupation norms and values as disinformation and substitute those with Asian norms. However, it base on the political power on the state level with distinct opponent. Which at this present time, there are blur and fluid, which then we have to base to rationality and other norms.

For in general we called western society, prebunking has been tried such as the scheme of bad news as the way to initiate ability to separate between fact and myth (Roozenbeek et al., 2020). This is a game online as a mechanism to educate society of the danger of disinformation. The other way is the game of "what if…." And "if only……", that take people back to the bad events and start discussing possibility to prevent them (Bertolotti & Catellani, n.d.). In Indonesia, this mechanism is rather new and not yet use as the way to counter disinformation, although the game of bad news and good news has been translated into Indonesia.

This paper suggest rethinking of using tradition, however, Hall (Hall, 1981), has three important element to consider. First, culture is believed as mechanism for the people to seek the meaningful from all of information. It helps people from information overload. Second, his high context culture for Western-individual character and low context culture-collectivist for nonwestern society, need assessment as contemporary situation might diffused such separation. Third, the context behaves as screening for selection between individual self to the society at large. As his theory base on the modern world, it might be changed due to the digital culture and the position of culture to the society.

FGD and interview are used to capture problem of disinformation and possible resiliency.

3. Study Cases

During the FGD, there are some explanations of the disinformation as old phenomena which can be found in myth, social and cultural habits. There are three elements explained in this article first is the living norms, it is like a proverb, for example

Kuntul Diunekake Dandang, Dandang Diunekake Kuntul
Stork was called crow, Crow was called Stork

This norm explains about people who say something without a reality. He twists such meaning. The other is about the danger of gossiping or rumors.

Sadawa-dawaning Lurung isih Dawa Gurung
As far as hallway, still esophagus is farther

People have to control their words, otherwise they are gossiping which would never end. Both are examples, culture taught people to listen and to care for making decision.

The second is the Mahabharata-puppets story. Such stories use to be a living local wisdom. In the FGD, it has been shown by the story of the death of Aswatama (name of an elephant) whish use to disinformation of Aswatama (name of Pandita Dorna's son). In the war zone of Kurusetra, the Pandawa face the problem from the Dorna who was the leader in the Kurawa side. The Pandawa then discussed the strategy on how to defeat the Korawa through Dorna. At that time, they were informed that Aswatama, name of an elephant had died. Narrotama is also the name of Dorna's son, which he dearly loved. So Whisnu, as advisor of the

Pandawa, ask Samiaji the King who has white blood to show that he never lied, to shout Narrotama was dead. Whisnu wanted to suppress Dorna People would believe Samiaji statement as true. There was no lie at that statement, because it was declaring the death of the elephant, however it has immense effect to Dorna which then off guard and killed. There are other stories of similar meaning, to show that people should aware of the effect of the disinformation.

In the living habits, the folk tales about Ken Dedes also showed similar situation (Yunus, 2022). Ken Dedes in the folk tales, is being remembered as beautiful women. In this book, the Amelia Yunus reconstructed using the inscriptions to reconstruct and retold the living folk tale. In order to defeat the more powerful kingdom, she uses the inscription and viewed in the eyes of Ken Dedes. In her story Ken Dedes is knowledgeable as she is the daughter of the Brahmin, or the highest caste, and also the wife of Tunggul Ametung, that makes her a good informative person in power relation. She planned and managed not only her domestic live but also the political and war strategy. She used the disinformation to downgrade the spirit of her enemy.

Counter factual is also a part of language ability. The *jarene* or somebody says, and its counterpart word such *tenane* or is it true; are two basic words that help people to take a distance, to think, and to considerate the disinformation. By using this, people can discuss and hold them of spontaneous or sided with the disinformation. Below is an example

"*halah jarena to; lha kuwi kan jarena; oran tenan; mung apus-apus; glembuk;*"
Oh, it is as people saying: it is just a saying; not a reality; just to mock

In the daily life, the Javanese culture was blamed for being not straight forward, have a lot of explanation before come to the result or opinion. Probably it is the tendency of the society, however Javanese culture that seen as soft, one of the cultures to blame of being slow and unresponsive to development. After reconsideration all the realities of the tradition, there are some rethinking and reconstructing to do. Tradition can be inoculated to strengthen resiliency, however there are several elements need to recontextualized. First, digital is a problematic for some generation, for example the baby boomers have different habit compare to the millennial, who born in digital age. For the millennial, tradition is something need to be learned, as for baby boomers, they need to widen their perspective. The baby boomers seem to acquire information in their own terms, and it is them who socialized that tradition hinders modernity.

From the interviews with the community about resiliency, the internal group feeling is important element. They consult each other; however, the dominant comment of their leader is still the important element. They, who are not tune in to the digital world due to their work, don't give much attention. In the interviews, it seems family has limited influence to the individual, due to the different of generations and digital knowledge.

As has been saying, as we discussed about Indonesia, it is easy to blame Javanisation, this article uses Java as a case.

In fact, Java is only to name local wisdom which could be found in other ethnic groups. It is the theory of *rumongso-titen*, a spiritual base knowledge on how to study nature and social life. *Rumongso* means to feel one ability, usually to remind people of being carefull. *Titen* is to observe details before making an action or opinion (Ubaidillah, 2022). Both concepts are intermingling, being reproduced until it become culture on daily basis (Baan et al., 2022)(Rahyono, 2015) such as in *ojo dumeh*, *ojo kagetan*, *ojo gumunan*, *eling lan waspada*, *tanggap ing sasmita*. In human relation, people might behave is right action (*bener*), however it might be possible to think also in the good (*pener*) relation. Society learns this attitude through ritual such as *slametan*, where one state the blessing of anything in their pray and also in their communication (Geertz, 2014). In culture, this become the ethic of Javanese culture where people support harmonious relation in multy cultural society (Magnis-suseno, 1985). The theory of *titen* and *rumongso*, blend not just rational base of thinking, but also in their depth understanding of universe through language (Stange, 2009)

4. Conclusion

Disinformation is an old phenomenon with new horizon, as digital world made it fluid, it become significant within the element of resiliency. As some research has shown, the information from the digital word tends to be consumed by people with similar tendency or preference. To some extent the gadget makes people sincere to his or her own idea or ideology. They are not shy or suppressed when they read, or forward, or copy paste the information.

Disinformation become important matter to democratic virtual room, a space needs to be guarded and growth. To some extent, character of one society is matter, such as the (post)colonial society, where disinformation (propaganda) is part of its management. Contemporary society face the anonymous subject; therefore, people face similar situation as disinformation, only with different social context.

In this term, to rethinking tradition as a way to combat disinformation in a parallel societal media literacy. This is important mechanism to build resiliency, so that society have wisdom to react toward information, and disinformation in particular. As (post)colonial society, Indonesia has endured different colonial power, the Dutch, The Japanese, The English. In term of disinformation as experience, the Japanese occupation is interesting, due to its short period of colonialism, it has made anti-west propaganda work, and also to tumble down social habits that has been implemented by the Dutch. Probably it was the time where the subaltern speak and try to develop its own imagination (Spivak, 1988).

The prebunking by using the tradition is a rethinking way to support the already implemented debunking by the fact checker. It tries to develop the old way of being careful to the information in the daily conversation, as well as in culture. This is a rethinking process, as the development paradigm has marginalized tradition as something that holding back progress and modernization. Culture and tradition expose in the local popular culture, that consume within ethnic group or in rural or near urban areas.

Society need prebunking campaign by using the tradition, therefore, there would be diverse version, such as by local language or approach. The next agenda is to show which institution need to develop this idea and to which target group for example among high school students who would be the first voter. The need to consider disinformation have to be supported by institution that would support the campaign.

Acknowledgements

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