

Statistical authoritarianism: The government's strategy to control the media through data manipulation and digital transparency solutions

Muhammad Fikri¹ , Haura Mudya Maysa² , Abd. Rahman³ 

Affiliation

^{1,2,3} Faculty of Law, Hasanuddin University, Makassar, Indonesia, 90121

Correspondence

muhmmdfikri506@gmail.com

Funding Information

This research was conducted without financial support from external funding bodies, including public, commercial, or non-profit organizations.

Abstract

The rapid expansion of digital technology has transformed the relationship between the state, media, and society. Beyond facilitating communication and information exchange, digital infrastructure increasingly functions as a strategic arena for shaping public narratives and political legitimacy. This study examines how data and statistics can be utilized as instruments of information control within the digital media ecosystem and explores their implications for democratic governance. Using a qualitative approach through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), this study analyzes scholarly works on digital authoritarianism, media control, data governance, disinformation, and political communication published between 2019 and 2025. The analysis reveals that contemporary information control extends beyond censorship and digital surveillance to include the strategic selection, framing, and presentation of statistical data. In this context, public data can influence how citizens interpret social realities and evaluate government performance. Based on these findings, this study develops the concept of statistical authoritarianism, which refers to the use of data and statistics as instruments for constructing political legitimacy and shaping public perception without relying on overt repression. The study contributes to the literature by distinguishing statistical authoritarianism from digital authoritarianism and disinformation while highlighting the growing significance of data-driven power in contemporary digital societies.

Keywords

Statistical Authoritarianism, Digital Authoritarianism, Data Governance, Media Control, Political Legitimacy.

This is an open access article under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs License, which permits use and distribution in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, the use is non-commercial and no modifications or adaptations are made.

© 2026 MUHAMMAD FIKRI, HAURA MUDYA MAYSHA AND ABD. RAHMAN, *Journal of Government and Development* published by Department of Government Science, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Hasanuddin University

1 | INTRODUCTION

In the last two decades, the development of digital technology has fundamentally changed the pattern of relations between the state, the media, and society (Ravšelj et al., 2022). These transformations not only affect the way information is produced and distributed, but also change the form and mechanism of political power exercise. If in the past the practice of authoritarianism was synonymous with the use of physical violence, open repression, restrictions on civil liberties, and the imprisonment of opposition groups, then in the digital age political control develops through more subtle, complex, and often difficult to identify mechanisms directly (Hu & Rossi, 2024). This change shows that power no longer works solely through coercive institutional domination, but also through the mastery of the digital infrastructure that is the main space for social interaction and information exchange of contemporary society (Vogt, 2025).

Explained that the emergence of digital authoritarianism shows a shift from conventional forms of authoritarianism towards the use of digital technology as an instrument of supervision, information control, and the formation of community behavior (Lin & Ouyang, 2026). In this context, the state does not always have to resort to direct repressive measures to maintain its political legitimacy. On the other hand, control can be carried out through the use of data processing systems, algorithms, server networks, and social media platforms that are part of modern communication infrastructure. It even shows that digital surveillance, information censorship, and data-based governance allow the state to exercise social control more effectively than traditional repressive mechanisms because it works in a hidden and integrated manner in people's daily digital activities. As a result, information no longer functions only as a means of communication, but has become a strategic resource used to shape public perception, influence political preferences, and maintain the legitimacy of power.

The expansion of digital governance has created new forms of information management that extend beyond conventional censorship (Gaudreau & Cao, 2015). Research conducted in authoritarian and hybrid political systems demonstrates that governments increasingly combine digital infrastructures, communication technologies, and administrative mechanisms to regulate public discourse and maintain political stability. In Kazakhstan, for example, internet governance is supported through a combination of website blocking, internet shutdowns, content moderation, and administrative interventions that collectively shape the visibility of information in the public sphere (Rakhmetov, 2025). Such practices illustrate that contemporary political control increasingly operates through the management of information environments rather than through direct repression alone.

Similar patterns can be observed in other political contexts. Studies from Zimbabwe reveal how digital technologies that were initially expected to facilitate democratic participation have instead been incorporated into systems of online surveillance, information regulation, and narrative control (Desportes & Moyo-Nyoni, 2022). Digital platforms become spaces where governments can simultaneously monitor citizens, influence public opinion, and manage political communication. These developments suggest that technological innovation does not automatically produce democratic outcomes. Rather, the political consequences of digital technologies are largely determined by the institutional arrangements and power relations within which they operate.

Evidence from China provides an even more complex picture of the relationship between technology and political authority (Lu et al., 2020). Contemporary governance increasingly relies on extensive information systems, digital participation mechanisms, and performance-based administration to strengthen state legitimacy. While citizens are often encouraged to participate in governance processes through digital channels, such participation remains embedded within institutional structures designed to preserve political stability and centralized authority. As a result, transparency, participation, and accountability may coexist with sophisticated forms of information management and political control.

These findings indicate that contemporary authoritarianism should not be understood solely as a system of coercive domination. Instead, it increasingly functions through informational governance, namely the strategic

management of information flows, public visibility, and knowledge production. Under these conditions, information becomes a critical political resource through which governments shape collective perceptions, define social realities, and construct legitimacy. Consequently, understanding the role of data in contemporary governance requires moving beyond discussions of surveillance and censorship toward a broader examination of how information itself is organized, interpreted, and communicated to society (Wu, 2025).

To describe the state of digital freedom in Indonesia, this study uses Freedom on the Net 2024 data published by Freedom House. The index is widely used in various studies to measure the level of internet freedom based on the dimensions of access, content restrictions, and protection of user rights in the digital space. Indonesia's position in the index is important to analyze because it provides an empirical picture of the extent to which the digital space still allows for free and independent information exchange.



Fig. 1. Indonesia's Internet Freedom Score in 2024 Based on Freedom on the Net 2024.

Indonesia obtained a score of 49 out of 100 and is categorized as a country with a *partially free* status (Fig. 1). This achievement shows that Indonesia's digital space still faces various structural challenges related to access to information, restrictions on content distribution, and protection of the rights of internet users. Although this category does not show a full authoritarian state, the score indicates a tendency to increase control over the flow of information in the digital space.

These findings are relevant to the research focus because the practice of statistical authoritarianism does not always emerge through direct censorship or repression. Instead, control can take place more subtly through information management, data-driven narrative construction, and the use of official statistics to shape public perceptions of the success of government policies. Therefore, the condition of digital freedom shown in the Freedom on the Net index is an important context to understand how the relationship between data, media, and power develops in the digital communication ecosystem in Indonesia (Handayana et al., 2025).

This transformation can also be seen from the change in the function of digital infrastructure, which at the beginning of its development was seen as an instrument of democratization (Berg & Hofmann, 2021). The internet and social media were previously believed to be able to expand freedom of expression, increase public participation, and strengthen public access to information. However, the same technological development also opens up opportunities for the emergence of new forms of political control over digital public spaces. Digital platforms can be used to spread disinformation, build certain narratives unilaterally, and influence the collective behavior of society on a much broader scale than conventional media. In these conditions, social media, *big data*, and algorithms no longer function simply as a medium of communication, but develop into epistemic instruments that determine what information is known, trusted, and considered true by the public.

Through coordinated *media framing* practices, data and information can be constructed in such a way as to support specific political interests (Knüpfer & Entman, 2018). The presentation of selective economic statistics, the

prominence of indicators of government success without including adequate context, and the development of a narrative of digital nationalism are examples of how data is used to shape public perception. This phenomenon shows that power in the digital era does not only work through the control of the flow of information, but also through the management of the meaning contained in the data and statistics circulating in the public sphere. Thus, the development of contemporary authoritarianism is no longer only marked by the practice of digital censorship and surveillance, but also by the ability of political actors to construct social reality through data management.

At the same time, the increasing production and spread of disinformation in the digital space poses a serious challenge to the quality of democracy. explained that disinformation that is systematically produced and disseminated has the potential to weaken the foundations of democracy because it affects the way people understand the reality of the public sphere. highlight that the widespread circulation of false information in Indonesia's digital environment has fostered social polarization, undermined public confidence in governmental institutions, and distorted public political consciousness, creating conditions that facilitate information control and narrative manipulation (Alam et al., 2025). Disinformation in this context is not only understood as the dissemination of false information, but also as a political instrument used to shape public perception in a systematic manner. When public spaces are filled with biased and misleading information, people's ability to build an objective understanding of social and political realities becomes increasingly limited. As a result, democracy loses its function as an arena for open, rational, and participatory deliberation.

An important dimension that remains underexplored in the existing literature concerns the political role of official statistics and quantitative information. Most studies on digital authoritarianism focus on surveillance infrastructures, internet regulation, and restrictions on communication. Meanwhile, research on disinformation primarily examines false information, propaganda, and misleading narratives (Kunnathully et al., 2025). Although these perspectives provide valuable insights into contemporary information control, they pay relatively limited attention to the strategic use of officially produced data as an instrument of political influence.

In practice, statistical indicators occupy a privileged position within modern governance because they are widely perceived as objective, neutral, and scientifically valid representations of reality. Governments routinely employ economic growth figures, poverty reduction statistics, development indicators, public satisfaction indexes, and governance performance measurements to demonstrate policy success. Through continuous circulation in government reports, mainstream media coverage, and digital communication platforms, these indicators contribute to the construction of public perceptions regarding governmental effectiveness and institutional performance.

The political significance of statistics becomes particularly evident when quantitative information is selectively framed to support specific narratives. Data may remain technically accurate while simultaneously presenting only partial representations of social reality. Certain indicators may receive greater visibility, whereas alternative measurements, contradictory evidence, or contextual explanations receive limited public attention. Under such circumstances, political influence emerges not through the fabrication of information but through the strategic organization and interpretation of statistical knowledge (Masuku & Jili, 2019). This phenomenon suggests that data themselves may function as instruments of power capable of shaping public understanding and influencing democratic deliberation.

Consequently, the relationship between data and political authority deserves greater theoretical attention. In the digital era, where information is increasingly mediated through algorithms, platforms, and data infrastructures, official statistics possess considerable capacity to shape collective perceptions of social, economic, and political conditions. This creates a need for a conceptual framework capable of explaining how quantitative information can become a mechanism of subtle political control while maintaining an appearance of objectivity and transparency.

However, this study departs from the assumption that the phenomenon of government data manipulation cannot be fully explained only through the perspective of digital authoritarianism and disinformation. The literature

on digital authoritarianism generally focuses on the use of digital technology for surveillance, information censorship, and control of people's behavior through digital infrastructure. Meanwhile, the study Regarding disinformation, more emphasis is placed on the production and dissemination of false or misleading information to influence public opinion. Both perspectives have not adequately explained how official statistics, development indicators, and government data are used as political instruments to build the legitimacy of power.

Based on these conditions, this study develops the concept of statistical authoritarianism as an analytical framework to understand how data and statistics can be strategically employed as instruments of political control in the digital era (Cordell & Dukalskis, 2025). Unlike digital authoritarianism, which primarily operates through surveillance, censorship, and the control of digital infrastructures, and unlike disinformation, which focuses on the dissemination of false or misleading information, statistical authoritarianism refers to the selective framing, interpretation, and presentation of official data to construct political legitimacy and shape public perceptions. The novelty of this study lies in its conceptualization of statistical authoritarianism as a distinct form of data-based power relations that explains how official statistics may function as subtle mechanisms of information control without necessarily relying on data falsification. Accordingly, this research aims to analyze how state-driven data manipulation practices influence public opinion and democratic quality, while also formulating digital technology-based policy strategies to strengthen data integrity, information transparency, and societal resilience against information manipulation.

The concept of Statistical Authoritarianism proposed in this article therefore complements rather than replaces existing theories of digital authoritarianism and disinformation. Digital authoritarianism explains how states utilize technological infrastructures to monitor, regulate, and discipline society, while disinformation highlights the production and dissemination of false or misleading information. Statistical authoritarianism occupies a distinct analytical space by focusing on the political use of officially sanctioned quantitative information. It emphasizes how governments may employ statistics, indicators, rankings, and performance metrics to construct legitimacy, shape collective perceptions, and influence democratic discourse without necessarily relying on overt censorship or fabricated information.

This conceptual distinction is particularly relevant in contemporary governance systems characterized by increasing reliance on evidence-based policymaking, performance measurement, and data-driven decision-making. As data become central to public administration and political communication, the ability to control statistical narratives may become as influential as the ability to control information itself. Therefore, examining the political functions of statistics contributes to a deeper understanding of how power operates within increasingly digitalized societies and offers new perspectives for evaluating the quality of democratic accountability in the information age.

2 | LITERATURE OF REVIEW

2.1 | Digital Authoritarianism and Information Control

Digital authoritarianism refers to the use of digital technologies by state actors to monitor, regulate, and influence social and political behavior. Unlike conventional authoritarianism, which relies primarily on direct coercion and restrictions on civil liberties, digital authoritarianism operates through technological infrastructures such as surveillance systems, algorithms, data collection mechanisms, and digital communication platforms. These technologies enable governments to exercise power in more subtle and decentralized ways while maintaining the appearance of administrative efficiency and public service delivery (Mukherjee, 2025).

That digital authoritarianism increasingly operates through a combination of governance, participation, and information management rather than through repression alone (Liu, 2024). Research conducted in China shows that contemporary authoritarian systems have gradually integrated digital technologies into governance structures that simultaneously encourage citizen engagement while preserving state control over political discourse. conceptualizes

this phenomenon as participatory authoritarianism, whereby governments create channels for citizen participation but direct civic engagement into institutionally approved and politically non-threatening forms. Rather than eliminating participation, digital governance mechanisms selectively organize participation in ways that strengthen regime legitimacy and administrative effectiveness.

found that digital technologies can facilitate public participation even under restrictive political conditions. Their study on environmental participation in China demonstrates that citizens actively engage with digital governance platforms, although participation remains constrained by institutional arrangements and unequal access to digital resources (Zeng, 2016). These findings indicate that digital authoritarianism should not be understood solely as the suppression of political participation but also as the strategic management of participatory processes. In this context, governments exercise influence by determining the conditions under which participation occurs, the issues that receive public attention, and the forms of engagement considered legitimate within digital spaces.

Existing studies emphasize that digital authoritarian practices are commonly associated with surveillance, censorship, content moderation, and the restriction of online political participation (Sun, 2019). However, contemporary forms of information control increasingly extend beyond direct restrictions on information access. Political actors are also able to shape public understanding through the strategic management of information environments, influencing what citizens know, how they interpret social realities, and which narratives gain legitimacy in public discourse. Consequently, information control has become an essential dimension of governance in digitally mediated societies.

Recent scholarship has shown that digital authoritarianism is not limited to technologically advanced authoritarian regimes (Hellmeier, 2016). Democratic and hybrid political systems have also adopted various forms of digital monitoring, content regulation, and platform governance in response to concerns regarding national security, misinformation, and social stability (Karpa & Rochlitz, 2024). As a result, the boundary between legitimate digital governance and authoritarian information control has become increasingly blurred. This development suggests that digital technologies can simultaneously support democratic participation while creating new opportunities for centralized control over information flows.

The literature also highlights the growing importance of algorithmic governance as a mechanism of information control (Liu, 2025). Demonstrates that social media platforms in China function simultaneously as communication infrastructures and instruments of algorithmic governance. Through algorithmic curation, content prioritization, and state-mediated digital environments, public discourse can be subtly shaped without requiring direct censorship. Citizens often navigate digital spaces where information visibility, political narratives, and public sentiment are influenced by platform architectures that operate beyond immediate public scrutiny. These findings suggest that contemporary information control increasingly relies on shaping informational visibility rather than simply restricting information access.

That authoritarian propaganda systems increasingly focus on constructing discursive norms rather than merely suppressing dissent (Sharafutdinova, 2024). Public opinion management is achieved through continuous monitoring, classification, and interpretation of social sentiments, enabling governments to influence how citizens perceive social reality. Such practices indicate that information control has evolved into a broader governance strategy that combines surveillance, communication management, narrative construction, and legitimacy production within digitally mediated environments.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of digital authoritarian practices largely depends on the ability of political actors to influence the informational environment rather than solely restricting access to information. Contemporary governance increasingly relies on algorithms, recommendation systems, and platform architectures that shape visibility, attention, and public engagement. Consequently, power is exercised not only through direct intervention but

also through the capacity to structure the conditions under which citizens encounter, interpret, and evaluate information in digital spaces.

2.2 | Data Governance, Public Statistics, and Political Legitimacy

Data governance has emerged as a central component of contemporary public administration and policy-making (Guo & Liu, 2022). Governments increasingly rely on statistical indicators, performance metrics, and large-scale data systems to evaluate policy outcomes, allocate resources, and communicate development achievements. In principle, the use of public data is expected to enhance transparency, accountability, and evidence-based decision-making.

Recent studies suggest that the political significance of data governance extends far beyond administrative efficiency. The increasing adoption of big data systems, algorithmic decision-making tools, and digital governance platforms has transformed information into a strategic asset for contemporary governments. Argues that the integration of big data into governance systems enables states not only to improve administrative performance but also to strengthen political authority through more effective information management. The growing dependence of public institutions on digital data infrastructures therefore creates new opportunities for governments to monitor societal trends, evaluate citizen behavior, and communicate policy achievements through quantitative indicators.

In addition, research examining public trust and digital governance demonstrates that citizens frequently associate statistical evidence with governmental competence and effectiveness. Found that perceptions of government performance significantly influence political trust, suggesting that the communication of policy outcomes and development achievements plays an important role in legitimacy formation (Chan, 2026). As governments increasingly employ performance indicators, development statistics, and policy evaluation metrics, quantitative information becomes a central mechanism through which citizens assess the effectiveness of public institutions.

Nevertheless, scholars argue that statistical information is not entirely neutral because the production, selection, interpretation, and presentation of data involve political and institutional choices. Indicators can emphasize certain dimensions of reality while obscuring others, thereby influencing how citizens assess government performance and social conditions. Development statistics, economic growth figures, poverty indicators, and governance indexes often function not only as measurement tools but also as instruments for constructing political narratives and legitimacy (Anbleyth-Evans et al., 2020).

The growing importance of data-driven governance has strengthened the role of quantitative indicators in policy evaluation and public administration. Governments increasingly employ statistical evidence to demonstrate policy effectiveness, justify budget allocations, and communicate development achievements. In many cases, numerical indicators are perceived by citizens as objective and credible representations of reality, giving statistics substantial influence in public decision-making processes.

However, critical scholars argue that statistics are not merely technical outputs but are embedded within broader political and institutional contexts. Decisions regarding data collection, indicator selection, measurement methodologies, and reporting frameworks can significantly affect how social conditions are represented and understood. Therefore, the political significance of statistics lies not only in the information they provide but also in their ability to define which aspects of reality become visible within public discourse. As societies become increasingly dependent on quantitative evidence, the management of public data has become a crucial component of contemporary political legitimacy.

The relationship between data and legitimacy is particularly important in contemporary governance systems characterized by evidence-based policymaking. Statistical indicators increasingly serve as symbolic representations of governmental performance, development success, and institutional effectiveness. Because quantitative information is often perceived as objective and scientifically grounded, statistical evidence possesses substantial persuasive power

within public discourse. Consequently, governments are able to utilize official data not only to evaluate policy outcomes but also to communicate narratives of progress, stability, and national achievement.

This observation is consistent with broader debates on digital governance and legitimacy (Choi & Jee, 2021). Studies examining digital governance solutions reveal that citizens' support for data-driven governance is closely associated with trust in governmental institutions and confidence in the state's ability to manage digital systems effectively. As a result, data governance becomes intertwined with legitimacy construction, creating conditions in which control over statistical narratives may influence public perceptions as strongly as control over information itself.

2.3 | Disinformation and the Emergence of Statistical Authoritarianism

The literature on disinformation primarily focuses on the creation and dissemination of false, misleading, or manipulated information intended to influence public opinion and political behavior (Zhu et al., 2025). Research demonstrates that disinformation can weaken democratic deliberation, intensify social polarization, and erode trust in public institutions. Within digital communication environments, disinformation often spreads rapidly through social media platforms, algorithmic amplification, and coordinated information campaigns.

Despite these contributions, existing studies have paid limited attention to situations in which political influence is exercised not through false information but through the selective presentation and framing of officially verified data. In such contexts, information control may occur without fabricating facts or suppressing information. Instead, political actors shape public perceptions through strategic choices regarding which indicators are highlighted, how statistical evidence is interpreted, and which narratives accompany public data.

Several recent studies indicate that contemporary political influence increasingly relies on the strategic organization of information rather than the dissemination of entirely false content. Research on networked authoritarianism demonstrates that governments may exercise influence through the selective regulation of information flows, agenda setting, and narrative coordination across digital platforms. Argues that modern information governance involves the construction of infrastructures capable of shaping public communication environments while preserving the appearance of informational openness (Maréchal, 2017). Such practices reveal that information control can occur through mechanisms that remain largely invisible to citizens.

Similarly, studies of internet governance in China show that strong domestic information control can coexist with active participation in global digital networks (Pizzi & Tang, 2021). Demonstrates that governments do not necessarily require complete information isolation to maintain societal control (Nanni, 2024). Instead, selective regulation, strategic communication, and governance-oriented information management may be sufficient to shape public understanding and political legitimacy. These findings suggest that informational influence increasingly depends on the organization and interpretation of information rather than on outright censorship or misinformation alone.

While disinformation studies primarily focus on false or misleading content, the manipulation of public perception can also occur through the strategic use of accurate information presented in selective ways. In such situations, information does not need to be fabricated to influence public opinion. Instead, political actors may emphasize favorable indicators, minimize unfavorable evidence, or frame statistical findings within narratives that support particular policy objectives. This practice creates a more subtle form of informational influence that is often difficult to identify as manipulation.

This distinction is particularly important when examining the role of official statistics in contemporary governance. Unlike disinformation, which relies on inaccurate or misleading information, statistical influence may operate through technically accurate data that are selectively framed or strategically contextualized. Governments may emphasize favorable indicators, prioritize specific measurements, or repeatedly communicate particular statistical achievements while minimizing alternative interpretations. In such circumstances, public perception is shaped not by the falsification of information but by the selective visibility and interpretation of quantitative evidence.

Moreover, evidence from studies of authoritarian governance suggests that information collection, public participation mechanisms, and performance-based administration often function simultaneously as governance instruments and legitimacy-building tools. Demonstrates that participation mechanisms can serve broader systems of social control by generating information about citizens while maintaining an appearance of responsiveness (Paik, 2018). This insight is particularly relevant for understanding how statistical systems may perform both administrative and political functions within contemporary governance structures.

The emergence of data-centric governance further amplifies the importance of this phenomenon. As citizens increasingly rely on official statistics, dashboards, performance indicators, and digital information systems to understand social realities, control over data interpretation becomes a significant source of political power. Building upon this gap in the literature, this study introduces the concept of Statistical Authoritarianism to explain how data and statistics can function as instruments of political legitimacy and information control in the digital age. This concept complements existing discussions of digital authoritarianism and disinformation by highlighting the growing role of data-driven governance in shaping contemporary power relations and influencing public perceptions without necessarily relying on censorship, surveillance, or fabricated information.

3. METHODS

3.1 | Research Design and Search Strategy

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to examine the relationship between data manipulation, media control, digital disinformation, and power dynamics in the digital era. The SLR method was selected because it provides a structured and transparent procedure for identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing existing knowledge on a particular research topic. Through this approach, the study aims to map the development of scholarly discussions concerning digital authoritarianism and the political implications of information control in contemporary societies (Kurmanov & Knox, 2022).

The adoption of a Systematic Literature Review was considered particularly appropriate because the phenomenon examined in this study spans multiple academic disciplines, including political science, media studies, digital governance, public administration, and communication studies. Existing research on digital authoritarianism, information governance, and data-driven political control is characterized by conceptual diversity and fragmented empirical evidence. Consequently, a systematic review approach enables the integration of findings from different scholarly traditions while providing a comprehensive understanding of how information infrastructures, data systems, and governance mechanisms interact in contemporary political environments.

Studies indicate that the exercise of political authority increasingly involves complex relationships between digital technologies, governance systems, and information management practices. Research on big data governance in China, networked authoritarianism in Russia, and digital participation under authoritarian governance demonstrates that political control is no longer limited to censorship or surveillance but also encompasses the strategic organization of information environments and knowledge production processes (Zavadskaya et al., 2017; X. Zhou et al., 2025). Therefore, a systematic synthesis of the literature was necessary to identify recurring patterns and theoretical connections across diverse empirical contexts.

The literature search was conducted using four academic databases: Scopus, ScienceDirect, Google Scholar, and the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ). The search strategy employed combinations of keywords including “digital authoritarianism,” “statistical authoritarianism,” “data manipulation,” “media control,” “digital disinformation,” “digital governance,” “government transparency,” and “public opinion.” Boolean operators (AND, OR) were used to improve search precision and relevance. Publications were limited to the period 2019-2025 to capture recent developments in digital governance and information control practices. Only peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, and reports from reputable institutions were considered for inclusion.

The selected keywords were intentionally designed to capture both established and emerging discussions related to information control in the digital era. While terms such as “digital authoritarianism,” “media control,” and “digital disinformation” are widely represented within the existing literature, additional keywords such as “government transparency,” “data manipulation,” and “public opinion” were included to identify studies examining the political functions of statistical information and governance indicators. This broader search strategy was necessary because the concept of Statistical Authoritarianism intersects with several overlapping research areas that are often discussed separately in the academic literature.

The search process also sought to capture studies conducted across diverse political contexts, including democratic, hybrid, and authoritarian systems. Such diversity was important because the strategic use of information and data is not restricted to a single political regime type. Comparative evidence from Asia, Europe, Africa, and post-Soviet countries demonstrates that information governance practices frequently emerge under different institutional arrangements, although their intensity and political consequences may vary significantly. This approach enabled the review to identify both common patterns and contextual differences in the relationship between data, governance, and political legitimacy.

3.2 | Study Selection

The literature selection process was conducted in several stages. First, relevant publications were identified through keyword searches in the selected databases. Second, titles and abstracts were reviewed to assess their relevance to the research objectives. Third, full-text documents were examined to ensure substantive alignment with the themes of digital governance, information control, data manipulation, media influence, and political legitimacy (Liu, 2025).

Particular attention was given to studies investigating the interaction between digital technologies and governance processes. Publications discussing big data governance, algorithmic regulation, internet governance, digital participation, information control, political communication, and legitimacy construction were prioritized during the selection process. This decision was based on the observation that contemporary forms of political authority increasingly rely on informational infrastructures that shape how citizens access, interpret, and evaluate public information.

In addition, the review considered both conceptual and empirical contributions. Conceptual studies were valuable for identifying theoretical explanations of authoritarian governance and information control, whereas empirical studies provided evidence regarding the practical implementation of digital governance mechanisms across different national contexts. Combining these two forms of scholarship strengthened the analytical foundation of the review and facilitated the development of a more comprehensive conceptual framework.

The inclusion criteria consisted of publications discussing the interaction between digital technologies, information management, governance, and political power (Jack et al., 2021). Publications were excluded if they lacked direct relevance to the research focus, were unavailable in full text, or did not meet academic quality standards. The selected studies constituted the primary source of analysis for the review.

3.3 | Data Analysis and Conceptual Synthesis

The selected studies were analyzed using thematic analysis, a qualitative analytical technique that facilitates the identification, organization, and interpretation of recurring patterns across a body of literature. The analysis involved several stages, including familiarization with the literature, coding of relevant findings, categorization of codes into broader themes, and interpretation of relationships among themes.

The use of thematic analysis was particularly relevant because the reviewed studies employed diverse methodological approaches, including qualitative case studies, comparative political analyses, governance evaluations, communication research, and digital policy assessments. Rather than focusing on statistical aggregation of findings, thematic analysis enabled the identification of recurring conceptual patterns across different empirical

contexts. This approach facilitated the examination of how seemingly distinct phenomena such as surveillance, transparency initiatives, digital participation, propaganda, and statistical reporting converge within broader systems of information governance (Ding & Lin, 2021).

During the coding process, particular attention was devoted to identifying references to data production, information visibility, public communication, legitimacy construction, and governance performance. These dimensions repeatedly appeared across studies examining digital authoritarianism, networked governance, and information control. As coding progressed, it became evident that data and statistics frequently functioned not only as administrative resources but also as instruments through which political actors shape public understanding of social and political realities. This observation became a central foundation for the development of the Statistical Authoritarianism framework.

The review identified four major themes: (1) data manipulation and statistical distortion, (2) media control and digital surveillance, (3) disinformation and narrative construction, and (4) political legitimacy and information governance. These themes were subsequently synthesized to construct a conceptual framework of Statistical Authoritarianism. Through this process, the study explains how political actors employ data production, statistical representation, and digital information systems as instruments for shaping public narratives, influencing public perception, and reinforcing political legitimacy in digitally mediated societies.

Resulting conceptual synthesis reflects a broader transformation in contemporary governance identified throughout the reviewed literature. Across multiple political contexts, governments increasingly utilize digital infrastructures, information systems, performance indicators, and public communication strategies to strengthen legitimacy and manage public perceptions. While the specific mechanisms vary across countries, the reviewed studies consistently demonstrate that political influence increasingly operates through the management of information environments and the interpretation of data.

Accordingly, the concept of Statistical Authoritarianism was developed as an integrative analytical framework linking the four themes identified in the review. The framework does not treat data manipulation, media control, disinformation, and legitimacy construction as separate phenomena. Instead, it conceptualizes them as interconnected dimensions of informational power operating within digitally mediated governance systems. This synthesis provides the theoretical bridge between the literature reviewed and the empirical discussion presented in the subsequent sections, thereby ensuring coherence between the methodological process and the study's analytical findings (Saner, 2026).

4 | RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 | Information Control Transformation in the Digital Era

The results of the literature review show that the development of digital technology has changed the way the state manages information and maintains political legitimacy. If in the past control over society was more done through conventional media censorship and restrictions on direct political activities, then in the digital era this control developed through the management of information infrastructure, data utilization, and regulation of content distribution on digital platforms (D. Guo & Kostka, 2025). The development of digital authoritarianism allows the state to expand the capacity of surveillance and control of information without always having to use openly visible repressive mechanisms. In this context, digital technology not only functions as a means of communication, but also as a strategic instrument that influences how information is produced, disseminated, and consumed by society.

Similar findings have also been found in various studies highlighting the relationship between digital platforms and political power. Shows that digital media infrastructure is not neutral because it is built through political, economic, and technological relations that allow control over the flow of information. Even explains that digital surveillance, information manipulation, and control of public narratives have become the main characteristics

of what they call authoritarian informationalism. In this perspective, the state not only controls access to information, but also influences the process of shaping public opinion through the systematic management of the information ecosystem.

These findings are consistent with the first and second themes identified during the thematic analysis, namely data manipulation and statistical distortion, as well as media control and digital surveillance. Across the reviewed studies, information control rarely appeared as a single mechanism. Instead, governments increasingly combine technological infrastructures, communication strategies, and governance arrangements to influence how information circulates within society. Evidence from China, Russia, Kazakhstan, and several Southeast Asian countries demonstrates that digital platforms function simultaneously as spaces for communication, governance, monitoring, and narrative construction (Ceci & Rubin, 2022; Grigoriev, 2018; Koh & Baek, 2023; Taniguchi, 2022). This convergence suggests that contemporary information control should be understood as an integrated system of informational governance rather than merely a collection of isolated censorship practices.

The literature further indicates that political actors increasingly exercise influence by shaping informational visibility rather than restricting information altogether. Algorithmic recommendation systems, platform moderation policies, digital participation mechanisms, and state-managed communication channels collectively influence which issues become publicly visible and which narratives gain legitimacy. Consequently, power in digitally mediated societies is increasingly exercised through the ability to organize attention, prioritize information, and structure public interpretation of social realities.

The thematic synthesis also revealed that surveillance and participation frequently coexist within the same governance framework. Several studies demonstrate that governments encourage citizen engagement through digital platforms while simultaneously utilizing these platforms to collect information, monitor public sentiment, and guide political communication. This finding reinforces the argument that digital governance does not necessarily reduce state control; rather, it may create more sophisticated and adaptive mechanisms for managing public discourse and maintaining political legitimacy.

In the Indonesian context, various studies show that the digital space is experiencing paradoxical development. On the one hand, digitalization expands people's access to information and public participation. But on the other hand, various regulations and control mechanisms have emerged that affect the distribution of information in the digital space. Explained that the dynamics of digital space regulation in Indonesia show that there is a tension between the protection of public order and freedom of expression. This condition is also reflected in the *Freedom on the Net 2024* report which places Indonesia in the partially *free category*, showing that there are still various challenges related to freedom of information and citizens' digital rights.

In addition to regulation, information control in the digital era is also related to the ability of political actors to use data as the basis for shaping public narratives. Various studies show that economic statistics, development indicators, and government performance data are often the main sources in shaping public perception of the success of a policy (Sabet & Khaksar, 2024). However, a number of studies warn that data is not always present as a fully objective representation of reality. The selection of certain indicators, the emphasis on certain achievements, or the disregard of the broader social context can result in different interpretations of the same conditions (Carley, 2025).

The findings show that information control in the digital era does not only take place through censorship or restriction of access to information, but also through data-based knowledge production and distribution processes (Verwiebe & Hagemann, 2025). In a condition where society is increasingly dependent on data as the basis for decision-making, the ability to determine which data is displayed, how it is presented, and what narrative is built around it is becoming an increasingly important form of power in the contemporary political communication system (Charitonidou, 2022).

4.2 | Data as an Instrument of Political Legitimacy

The results of the literature synthesis show that data and statistics increasingly occupy an important position in the process of forming political legitimacy in various countries (Aragão & Linsi, 2022). Various development indicators such as economic growth, poverty rate, inflation, unemployment, and governance indices are often used as a basis for evaluating the success of public policies. In practice, the data not only functions as an administrative instrument or a measuring tool for development, but also has a political dimension because it affects the way people understand social realities and assess government performance (Ríos et al., 2024).

A number of studies show that the presentation of public data often involves the process of interpretation and construction of meaning. For example, showing that different poverty measurement methods can result in different welfare classifications even using the same population. The findings indicate that statistical figures do not always stand neutral, but are influenced by methodological choices and interpretation frameworks used. Similarly, research regarding regional governance in Vietnam shows that the achievement of certain development indicators does not necessarily fully represent the overall welfare condition of the community. Similar results were also found in the study economic development in the Philippines shows the difference between macroeconomic growth indicators and the reality of social inequality at the local level.

The findings obtained through thematic analysis indicate that statistical information occupies a distinctive position within contemporary systems of governance. Unlike political rhetoric, statistical indicators are generally perceived as objective representations of reality because they are associated with scientific measurement, technical expertise, and institutional credibility. As a result, numerical information often possesses greater persuasive capacity in shaping public perceptions of policy effectiveness and governmental performance. This explains why statistical indicators repeatedly appeared across the reviewed studies as important instruments in the construction of political legitimacy (Mudgal, 2019).

Furthermore, the review demonstrates that the political influence of statistics does not necessarily depend on the falsification of data. Instead, influence often emerges through the strategic selection, prioritization, and interpretation of quantitative information. Governments may repeatedly communicate favorable indicators while allocating less visibility to contradictory evidence or broader contextual factors (Y. Liu et al., 2026). In such situations, citizens are exposed to technically accurate information, yet their understanding of social reality may still be shaped by selective informational framing. This pattern was consistently observed across studies discussing governance performance, development communication, public administration, and digital information systems.

The coding process described in the methods section revealed that references to legitimacy construction frequently appeared together with discussions of data governance and information management. This recurring relationship suggests that statistics function not only as administrative resources but also as symbolic instruments that communicate competence, stability, and developmental success. Consequently, the concept of Statistical Authoritarianism developed in this study provides a useful analytical lens for understanding how data-driven governance can simultaneously support administrative functions and political objectives.

In the Indonesian context, a similar phenomenon can be found in various public debates regarding the interpretation of economic and social data. Various macroeconomic indicators show post-pandemic improvement, but at the same time public discussions also highlight the problems of inequality, job quality, and people's purchasing power that are not always directly reflected in aggregate indicators. This condition shows that statistical data has an important role in shaping policy narratives because it is the basis for the public to assess the success or failure of the government. Thus, the debate about data is not only a technical issue of statistics, but also related to how social reality is represented in the public space.



Based on these findings, this study develops the concept of statistical authoritarianism as an analytical framework to explain the use of data and statistics as an instrument for the formation of political legitimacy. This concept is not intended as an established theory in the literature, but as a conceptual development built from the synthesis of various studies on digital authoritarianism, information control, and data governance. If digital authoritarianism focuses on the use of digital technologies for surveillance, censorship, and control of information, then statistical authoritarianism focuses on the use of data and statistics as instruments to shape public perceptions of social reality and government performance (Yilmaz, 2023).

4.3 | Comparative Perspective: Indonesia and Some Asian Countries

The development of data-based information control is not only happening in Indonesia, but can also be found in various forms in Asian countries with different political characteristics. Although the mechanisms used are not always the same, there is a similar trend, namely the increasing role of the state in managing the flow of information through digital regulations, the use of statistical data, and the influence on the digital media ecosystem. In Vietnam, the government is actively integrating national development data into public communication strategies to strengthen the legitimacy of economic policies (Ho & Kim, 2025). That successful poverty alleviation and economic growth are often the main focus of government communications, although various indicators of people's quality of life show more complex variations between regions. This condition shows how development statistics can function as an instrument to form the image of state success in the public sphere. A relatively similar phenomenon has also been found in the Philippines. Explained that national economic growth indicators are often used as the basis for the narrative of development success, while regional inequality and access to public services do not always receive equal attention in policy communication. This situation shows that statistical data not only functions as a measurement tool, but also as a means of framing the social reality that is to be displayed to the public.

Different comparisons can be found in China. Various studies on digital governance in the country show that information management is carried out through a combination of digital surveillance, content moderation, and platform-based censorship systems (W. Zhou et al., 2022). If Indonesia and the Philippines use a more regulatory approach in managing the digital space, then China implements a more integrated control mechanism through state involvement in the national digital infrastructure. These differences suggest that the level of state intervention may vary, but the main objectives remain related to the management of information stability and political legitimacy (Table 1).

Table 1. Comparison of Information and Data Management Practices in Several Countries

No	Country	The Dominant Form of Information Management	Main Instruments	Implications
1	Indonesia	Framing of digital space development and regulation indicators	Public statistics, regulation of digital platforms	Influencing public perception of government performance
2	Vietnam	Development communication based on economic indicators	Economic growth and poverty reduction data	Strengthening the legitimacy of development
3	Philippines	Highlights of macroeconomic indicators	National development statistics	Potential to simplify the problem of social inequality
4	China	Integrated digital information surveillance and control	Platform censorship, content moderation, digital surveillance	More systematic control of public discourse space

Source: Processed by the author (2026).

The comparative analysis also demonstrates strong consistency with the four themes identified during the thematic synthesis. First, the theme of data manipulation and statistical distortion appears in the selective communication of development indicators and economic performance statistics across several countries. Second, media control and digital surveillance are reflected in varying forms of platform regulation, content moderation, internet governance, and monitoring mechanisms (Chen, 2026). Third, disinformation and narrative construction emerge through strategic communication practices that frame policy outcomes and shape public perceptions of governmental effectiveness. Finally, political legitimacy and information governance are evident in the extensive reliance on digital infrastructures and statistical reporting systems to strengthen public confidence in state institutions.

An important observation emerging from the comparison is that the intensity of information control differs across political contexts, yet the underlying logic remains similar. Governments increasingly recognize that information constitutes a strategic resource capable of influencing social behavior, political preferences, and public trust. Consequently, the management of information environments has become a central component of contemporary governance regardless of whether a country is categorized as democratic, hybrid, or authoritarian.

These comparative findings further support the conceptual framework proposed in this study. The reviewed evidence suggests that Statistical Authoritarianism should not be interpreted as a fixed institutional model restricted to particular political regimes (Brown, 2023). Rather, it represents a continuum of governance practices through which official statistics, digital communication infrastructures, and public information systems are strategically employed to shape collective understandings of social reality. The degree of state intervention may vary considerably, but the political significance of data remains evident across different governance arrangements.

Comparisons between countries show that information control in the digital era is not always realized through censorship or direct restrictions on access to information. In many cases, state influence works through more subtle mechanisms, such as managing statistical data, framing development narratives, and regulating the distribution of information in the digital ecosystem (Törnberg, 2024). Differences in political and institutional contexts have resulted in variations in forms of control, but all of them show the increasing role of data as a strategic instrument in contemporary political communication. In this context, data no longer only functions as a tool for measuring public policy, but also as a medium that shapes public perception of social reality and government performance (Hossin et al., 2023). This development confirms that the relationship between data, media, and power needs to be understood more critically because it affects the quality of public space, the process of forming opinions, and political legitimacy in the digital society (Rosa, 2022). It is at this point that the concept of statistical authoritarianism becomes relevant to explain how data can be used as an instrument of political influence that works subtly through the construction of information and representation of social reality.

Furthermore, the comparative perspective presented in this section highlights the need for future research to move beyond conventional analyses of censorship and media restrictions by examining the more nuanced mechanisms through which data governance influences public discourse. The expansion of digital infrastructures, algorithmic communication systems, and state-led information management practices suggests that statistical authority increasingly shapes citizens' perceptions of social conditions and policy effectiveness. Consequently, understanding the intersections among data production, information dissemination, and political power has become essential for evaluating the quality of democratic governance and safeguarding the integrity of public communication. Strengthening transparency, independent data verification, and digital literacy initiatives therefore represents a crucial step toward ensuring that statistical information serves the public interest rather than becoming an instrument of symbolic control within contemporary digital societies.

5 | CONCLUSION

The development of digital technology has changed the way countries manage information and build political legitimacy. In a society that is increasingly dependent on data, statistics no longer function solely as an instrument for measuring public policy, but also become part of the process of constructing social realities that affect people's perceptions of government performance. This study shows that the relationship between data, media, and power takes place through various mechanisms, ranging from the selection of indicators, framing information, to the distribution of narratives through the digital media ecosystem. In this context, this study develops the concept of statistical authoritarianism as an analytical framework to understand how data and statistics can be used as instruments for the formation of political legitimacy without having to rely on open repressive practices. This concept complements the study of digital authoritarianism by placing data as a strategic arena in the contest of meaning, knowledge, and power in the public space.

The experiences of various countries, including Indonesia, show that data-driven information management has significant implications for the quality of democracy, public trust, and the capacity of the public to build critical assessments of public policy. These challenges demand the strengthening of data governance that is more transparent, accountable, and verifiable by the public. Therefore, efforts to increase data disclosure, strengthen information verification mechanisms, and develop data literacy and statistical literacy are important elements in maintaining the quality of digital public spaces. These measures not only contribute to strengthening information integrity, but also support the creation of a democratic process that is more participatory, deliberative, and responsive to the needs of society in the era of digital transformation.

Acknowledgments

The author expresses his greatest appreciation to the entire academic community of Hasanuddin University, especially for all forms of support provided during the writing process of this article. This support, whether in the form of direction in the preparation of manuscripts, ease of access to library resources, and constructive suggestions, has made a very significant contribution to the completion of this work.

Disclosure Statement

The author states that this research was conducted independently without any financial, political, or institutional conflicts of interest that can affect the research process, data analysis, and manuscript preparation. All arguments and findings in this article are compiled based on a review of the academic literature and relevant scientific sources as listed in the bibliography.

Data Availability Statement

The data used in this study came from publicly available secondary sources, such as scientific journal articles, academic books, reports of international institutions, and official government documents that have been published. All data sources used have been listed in full in the bibliography section so that they can be accessed and verified by readers.

References

Anbleyth-Evans, J. W., Araos, F., Ríos, F. T., Cortés, R. S., Häussermann, V., & Aguirre-Muñoz, C. (2020). Toward marine democracy in Chile: Examining aquaculture ecological impacts through common property local ecological knowledge. *Marine Policy*, 113. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2019.103690>

- Aragão, R., & Linsi, L. (2022). Many shades of wrong: what governments do when they manipulate statistics. *Review of International Political Economy*, 29(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2020.1769704>
- Berg, S., & Hofmann, J. (2021). Digital democracy. *Internet Policy Review*, 10(4). <https://doi.org/10.14763/2021.4.1612>
- Brown, K. P. (2023). Rumor has it: Strategies for ethnographic analysis in authoritarian regimes. *Ethnography*, 24(1), 132–153. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1466138120923713>
- Carley, M. (2025). Social measurement and social indicators: Issues of policy and theory. In *Social Measurement and Social Indicators: Issues of Policy and Theory*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003638117>
- Ceci, M. V., & Rubin, L. (2022). China's 5G networks: A tool for advancing digital authoritarianism abroad? *Orbis*, 66(2), 270–288. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.orbis.2022.02.013>
- Chan, K. K.-L. (2026). The Penchant for Technology in Non-Democratic Elections: Evidence From Hong Kong's Digital Authoritarianism. *Asian Politics and Policy*, 18(2). <https://doi.org/10.1111/aspp.70070>
- Charitonidou, M. (2022). Urban scale digital twins in data-driven society: Challenging digital universalism in urban planning decision-making. *International Journal of Architectural Computing*, 20(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/147807712111070005>
- Chen, L. (2026). Performing Nationalism: Celebrity Politics and Audience Boundary Work Under Authoritarianism. *American Sociological Review*, 91(3), 405–434. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00031224261435132>
- Choi, C., & Jee, S. H. (2021). Differential Effects of Information and Communication Technology on (De-) Democratization of Authoritarian Regimes. *International Studies Quarterly*, 65(4), 1163–1175. <https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqab053>
- Cordell, R., & Dukalskis, A. (2025). Authoritarianism, Global Politics, and the Future of Human Rights. *International Organization*, 79, S162–S179. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S002081832510101X>
- Desportes, I., & Moyo-Nyoni, N. (2022). Depoliticising disaster response in a politically saturated context: the case of the 2016–19 droughts in Zimbabwe. *Disasters*, 46(4), 1098–1120. <https://doi.org/10.1111/disa.12516>
- Ding, C., & Lin, F. (2021). Information authoritarianism vs. Information anarchy: A comparison of information ecosystems in Mainland China and Hong Kong during the early stage of the COVID-19 pandemic. *China Review*, 21(1), 91–105. <https://www.scopus.com/pages/publications/85102746440?origin=resultslist>
- Gaudreau, M., & Cao, H. (2015). Political Constraints on Adaptive Governance: Environmental NGO Networks in Nanjing, China. *Journal of Environment and Development*, 24(4), 418–444. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1070496515602044>
- Grigoriev, I. S. (2018). Law clerks as an instrument of court–government accommodation under autocracy: the case of the Russian Constitutional Court. *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 34(1), 17–34. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1060586X.2018.1408927>
- Guo, D., & Kostka, G. (2025). Knowing Is Disturbing: Emotions and Public Attitudes toward Digital Control under Autocracy. *Perspectives on Politics*. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592725103551>
- Guo, J., & Liu, M. (2022). Experimental state rescaling, goal-oriented governance, and urban transformation in China: The case of Lanzhou. *Geoforum*, 137, 72–82. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2022.10.012>
- Handayana, E. P., Arifin, Z., & Fernando, Z. J. (2025). Criminal Penalties in Cyberspace: Between the Development of Digital Democracy and Authoritarianism. *Indonesian Journal of Criminal Law Studies*, 10(1), 45–82. <https://doi.org/10.15294/ijcls.v10i1.19652>
- Hellmeier, S. (2016). The Dictator's Digital Toolkit: Explaining Variation in Internet Filtering in Authoritarian Regimes. *Politics and Policy*, 44(6), 1158–1191. <https://doi.org/10.1111/polp.12189>
- Ho, D. H., & Kim, H. S. (2025). Government Communication in Tourism Governance: Analyzing Ministerial Responses to Parliamentary Inquiries and Voter Petitions. *Tourism and Hospitality*, 6(3). <https://doi.org/10.3390/tourhosp6030143>
- Hossin, M. A., Du, J., Mu, L., & Asante, I. O. (2023). Big Data-Driven Public Policy Decisions: Transformation Toward Smart Governance. *SAGE Open*, 13(4). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440231215123>

- Hu, J., & Rossi, J. (2024). Control Through the State of Exception: Opposition, Surveillance, and Fragmentation under Chinese Digital Authoritarianism. *Verfassung Und Recht in Ubersee*, 57(4), 608–626. <https://doi.org/10.5771/0506-7286-2024-4-608>
- Jack, M. C., Chann, S., Jackson, S. J., & Dell, N. (2021). Networked Authoritarianism at the Edge: The Digital and Political Transitions of Cambodian Village Officials. *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction*, 5(CSCW1). <https://doi.org/10.1145/3449124>
- Jundan Restu Alam, Lukman Yudho Prakoso, Yulian Azhari, Rachmat Setiawibawa, & Arifuddin Uksan. (2025). The Influence Of Social Media In The Spread Of Polarization And Peace Counter-Narrative Efforts In Indonesia; *Algebra : Jurnal Pendidikan, Sosial Dan Sains*, 5(4), 1256–1261. <https://doi.org/10.58432/4959z937>
- Karpa, D., & Rochlitz, M. (2024). Authoritarian Surveillance and Public Support for Digital Governance Solutions. *Comparative Political Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00104140241290208>
- Knüpfer, C. B., & Entman, R. M. (2018). Framing conflicts in digital and transnational media environments. *Media, War & Conflict*, 11(4), 476–488. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750635218796381>
- Koh, H., & Baek, K. (2023). The Differential Impact of Traditional and Social Media on Public Confidence: The Case of Kazakhstan. *Demokratizatsiya*, 31(1), 91–112. <https://www.scopus.com/pages/publications/85166764388?origin=resultslst>
- Kunnathully, K., Satyanarayana, P., Anute, N., Sharma, M., Sureshkrishna, G., Manjunath, T. C., & Selvakumar, P. (2025). Propaganda, Social Media and AI. In *Digital Populism and the Use of Neo-Propaganda and Fake News* (pp. 19–38). IGI Global Scientific Publishing.
- Kurmanov, B., & Knox, C. (2022). Open government and citizen empowerment in authoritarian states. *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, 13(2), 156–171. <https://doi.org/10.1177/18793665221104118>
- Lin, F., & Ouyang, Y. (2026). Building digital authoritarianism 2.0: Social construction of bounded legitimacy of facial recognition technology in China and the United Kingdom. *Big Data and Society*, 13(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/20539517261442374>
- Liu, H. K. (2024). Exploring Relationships Between Nonprofit Participation and Political Participation in Asian Context. *Voluntas*, 35(1), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-022-00538-8>
- Liu, J. C.-E. (2025). China’s Climate Grand Propaganda on Social Media and Mass Media: Evidence from Twitter and State Newspapers. *Energy Research and Social Science*, 125. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2025.104086>
- Liu, Y., Fu, W., & Schiller, D. (2026). The making of government-business relationships through state rescaling: a policy analysis of China’s artificial intelligence industry. *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, 67(2), 149–177. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15387216.2024.2388890>
- Liu, Z. (2025). Algorithmic Governance and Public Sentiment: Social Media’s Dual Role in China’s Domestic Legitimacy and External Image Crisis. *Journal of Human Security*, 21(1), 59–64. <https://doi.org/10.12924/johs2025.210111>
- Lu, H., Tong, P., & Zhu, R. (2020). Does Internet Use Affect Netizens’ Trust in Government? Empirical Evidence from China. *Social Indicators Research*, 149(1), 167–185. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-019-02247-0>
- Maréchal, N. (2017). Networked authoritarianism and the geopolitics of information: Understanding Russian internet policy. *Media and Communication*, 5(1), 29–41. <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v5i1.808>
- Masuku, M. M., & Jili, N. N. (2019). Public service delivery in South Africa: The political influence at local government level. *Journal of Public Affairs*, 19(4). <https://doi.org/10.1002/pa.1935>
- Mudgal, V. (2019). A Vital Report on Trends in Media Freedom and Its Link with the Future of Democracy. *Journal of Creative Communications*, 14(2), 160–170. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0973258619852004>
- Mukherjee, J. (2025). Populism, public administration and democratic backsliding: the Indian experience. *Policy Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01442872.2025.2547860>

- Nanni, R. (2024). Whither (de)globalisation? Internet fragmentation, authoritarianism, and the future of the Liberal International Order: evidence from China. *Pacific Review*, 37(5), 1016–1040. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09512748.2023.2294787>
- Paik, W. (2018). The Institution of Petition and Authoritarian Social Control in Contemporary China. *Issues and Studies*, 54(2). <https://doi.org/10.1142/S1013251118500054>
- Pizzi, E., & Tang, W. (2021). Managed Mobilization: Ethnic Identity and Political Participation in China. *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 27(4), 456–477. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13537113.2021.1960553>
- Rakhmetov, B. (2025). Internet Censorship in Authoritarian Contexts: A Case Study of Kazakhstan. *Journal of Eurasian Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/18793665251411329>
- Ravšelj, D., Umek, L., Todorovski, L., & Aristovnik, A. (2022). A Review of Digital Era Governance Research in the First Two Decades: A Bibliometric Study. *Future Internet*, 14(5), 126. <https://doi.org/10.3390/fi14050126>
- Ríos, A. M., Guillamón, M. D., & Benito, B. (2024). The influence of local government transparency on the implementation of the sustainable development goals in municipalities. *Journal of Public Budgeting, Accounting and Financial Management*, 36(4). <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBAFM-12-2023-0229>
- Rosa, H. (2022). Social Media Filters and Resonances: Democracy and the Contemporary Public Sphere. *Theory, Culture and Society*, 39(4). <https://doi.org/10.1177/02632764221103520>
- Sabet, N. S., & Khaksar, S. (2024). The performance of local government, social capital and participation of villagers in sustainable rural development. *Social Science Journal*, 61(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/03623319.2020.1782649>
- Saner, R. (2026). From Neue Sachlichkeit to techno-authoritarianism: historical legacies and contemporary governance risks. *Journal of Management History*, 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JMH-07-2025-0122>
- Sharafutdinova, G. (2024). Authoritarian welfare and resilience: politics of child benefits in Russia. *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 40(4), 326–343. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1060586X.2024.2360365>
- Sun, T. (2019). Deliberate Differentiation by the Chinese State: Outsourcing Responsibility for Governance. *China Quarterly*, 240, 880–905. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741019000420>
- Taniguchi, M. (2022). Governance and state–society relations in Vietnam during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Critical Asian Studies*, 54(2), 198–213. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14672715.2022.2051723>
- Törnberg, P. (2024). Platforms as States: The Rise of Governance through Data Power. In *Data Power in Action: Urban Data Politics in Times of Crisis*. <https://doi.org/10.56687/9781529233551-006>
- Verwiebe, R., & Hagemann, S. (2025). Bourdieu revisited: new forms of digital capital–emergence, reproduction, inequality of distribution. *Information Communication and Society*, 28(11). <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2024.2358170>
- Vogt, L. (2025). Elites invoking the commons: The techno-utopias of the Indian national knowledge portals. *Critique of Anthropology*, 45(1), 71–83. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308275X251315269>
- Wu, C. (2025). Urban morphology as a theatre of power: the Pombaline paradox of secularization and enlightened authoritarianism in Lisbon (1755–1805). *Urban Morphology*, 29(2), 111–130. <https://doi.org/10.51347/UM29.0016>
- Yilmaz, I. (2023). The Nexus of Digital Authoritarianism and Religious Populism. *Religions*, 14(6). <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14060747>
- Zavadskaya, M., Grömping, M., & Martinez I Coma, F. (2017). Electoral sources of authoritarian resilience in Russia: Varieties of electoral malpractice, 2007–2016. *Demokratizatsiya*, 25(4), 455–480. <https://www.scopus.com/pages/publications/85034634329?origin=resultlist>
- Zeng, J. (2016). China’s date with big data: Will it strengthen or threaten authoritarian rule? *International Affairs*, 92(6), 1443–1462. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2346.12750>
- Zhou, W., Dai, L., Zhang, Y., & Wen, C. (2022). Personal information management on social media from the perspective of platform support: a text analysis based on the Chinese social media platform policy. *Online Information Review*, 46(1). <https://doi.org/10.1108/OIR-06-2020-0249>



- Zhou, X., Lin, Y., Hooimeijer, P., & Monstadt, J. (2025). Institutional Design of Collaborative Water Governance: The River Chief System in China. *Environmental Policy and Governance*, 35(3), 525–537.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/eet.2152>
- Zhu, H., Manion, M., & Rothschild, V. (2025). Crisis and Correction: Do Government Rectification Efforts Restore Citizen Trust After Governance Failure? *Political Behavior*, 47(4), 1595–1620.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-025-10005-x>