

‘Thank you for sharing’ A Deliberative Forum on Disinformation

Policy Briefing – SEARBO



Australian
National
University

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DISCLAIMER

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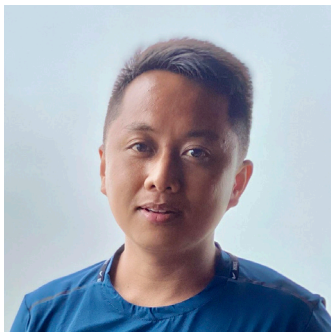


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Executive Summary

The Philippines has a dynamic community of stakeholders working towards addressing the challenges posed by disinformation in the 2022 elections. Journalists have launched fact check initiatives. Donors continue to invest in media literacy programmes. Tech platforms like Facebook and Twitter are strengthening their content moderation practices.

These initiatives, while valuable, overlook the voices of ordinary Filipinos. How do citizens characterise the problem of ‘fake news’ during elections? Do they find disinformation a serious challenge to electoral integrity? Does disinformation offer a greater threat than the longstanding issues of vote-buying, electoral fraud, political dynasties, disenfranchisement, and violence? What can we learn from the collective wisdom of ordinary citizens?

To answer these questions, our research team conducted a three-day deliberative forum on disinformation. Twenty-six randomly selected Filipinos from all over the country came together to learn about disinformation. They represented a variety of ages, genders, regions, and socio-economic status. They deliberated on the dangers created by the spread of ‘fake news,’ answering questions of who should be held accountable for the production of disinformation and who should safeguard social media from its harms.

Participants were then asked to generate collective recommendations for stakeholders leading campaigns against disinformation.

Five key insights emerged from deliberations.

1. First, participants situated disinformation as part of the wider problem of money politics. Politicians enhance their image by using paid entities to slander their critics through disinformation tactics. As one participant put it, ‘fake news is just like vote-buying.’ While vote buying pays for votes, ‘fake news’ pays for voice. It was a familiar practice for participants, one that predates social media.
2. Second, participants recognized that disinformation thrives and cannot be disentangled from economic insecurity. Those trafficking in disinformation can include both journalists struggling to make ends meet and ordinary citizens seeking creative ways to make money.
3. Third, beyond disinformation, participants perceived unfettered media power as an issue of electoral integrity. This finding connects with broader trends of

the public's declining trust in mainstream media, especially its independence from political and economic interests. While most participants primarily sourced their information from mainstream media organizations on television and online, they expressed concern over the media's capacity to publish or broadcast with impunity. The participants' concerns included misleading headlines, the unfair treatment of political personalities, and the smearing of innocent people. Participants wanted to learn how to assess and call out media bias, especially during elections.

4. Fourth, many participants recognized the individual's responsibility in the spread of disinformation. This does not mean that participants do not recognize the role of institutions in curbing disinformation. It underscores their desire to take control of their newsfeeds and make informed choices during elections.
5. Fifth, participants reached a near-consensus on the following recommendations: (1) to have an anti-fake news and anti-trolling law with safeguards that prohibit the state from weaponizing the law against political opponents and ordinary citizens; (2) to strengthen the implementation of the anti-political dynasty law to break the concentration of wealth and power to several families influencing the flow of information during elections; (3) to strengthen education campaigns with an intergenerational character and a clear focus on marginalised communities living in news deserts.

This report provides an overview of the project's methodology and analysis of these findings. It concludes with actionable input for consideration of the wider stakeholder community.

Project background

This project aims to generate policy-relevant research on disinformation in the Philippines. It is the continuation of the [#DisinformationTracker](#) project our team conducted from January to May 2019, which examined the disinformation tactics used by political campaigns in the Philippines' midterm elections.

The current project shifts its focus from understanding political campaigns to examining how ordinary Filipinos make sense of their experiences of 'fake news' during elections. We investigate how Filipinos from all over the country define fake news, the personalities they consider accountable for spreading disinformation, and the institutions they think are responsible for protecting social media from the harms of 'fake news.'

This project's innovation lies in using a deliberative forum to facilitate participants' considered judgment. Unlike surveys, interviews or focus group discussions, a deliberative forum is designed to give participants the opportunity to deepen their knowledge about disinformation by listening and critically reflecting on expert testimonies. It creates a venue for exchanging views with a diverse group of people in a respectful and other-regarding manner, and puts forward collective recommendations that can address disinformation in the forthcoming elections.

Overall, this project is an attempt to amplify how ordinary Filipinos perceive disinformation when given the opportunity to know more. It offers a range of perspectives on this complex, confusing, and dynamic issue.



The report **Tracking Digital Disinformation in the 2019 Philippine Midterm Election** is available at:

<https://www.newmandala.org/disinformation>

Disinformation in the Philippines

The Philippines stands out in the global disinformation ecosystem because of the diverse range of influence operations. The players involve the State, the private sector, domestic entrepreneurs and – from recent revelations – foreign operatives. While pro-democracy coalitions have developed initiatives protecting journalists, fact-checkers and human rights workers targeted by disinformation narratives and digital harassment, a broad set of disinformation producers have continued to innovate digital operations. The latest trends of digital disinformation include: 1) micro-targeted operations where micro-level influencers seed narratives at the level of small groups and private channels and 2) disinformation hybridized with red-tagging, hate speech, and conspiracy theory.

In the Covid-19 moment, individuals critiquing the government's pandemic response have been targeted by conspiracies insinuating links with the communist party, or ridiculed as 'pasaway' – unruly citizens who lack patriotism. Disinformation narratives circulating online include 1) anti-mainstream media, 2) historical revisionism around the martial law era, 3) anti-political establishment, 4) anti-China hate speech and conspiracy theory accelerated during Covid-19.

The continued evolution of influence operations suggest that the underlying infrastructure making disinformation production profitable is yet to be sufficiently understood. Most recent legislative attempts to promote election integrity blame technology platforms. While there have been some attempt at dismantling the disinformation machine, what public hearings were held at the legislature functioned largely as political theatre. The problem of disinformation was reduced to the televised misbehaviour of certain government officials or 'fake news queens.' Efforts to spotlight the complicity of private industry with the shady business of political campaigning have been unsuccessful. For-profit campaign consultants and digital operatives refuse attempts at regulatory or industry oversight. Crucially, the politicians benefitting from the disinformation campaigns produced on their behalf have not been held accountable.

The Philippines' fight against disinformation is at a crucial juncture. Countries like Germany, Turkey and India show an accelerating trend toward state control over the content moderation of tech platforms. There is potential that legal frameworks framed as 'anti-fake-news laws' will only add to the growing toolkit of surveillance and legal intimidation employed by authoritarian states.

It remains to be seen whether any legal reform to promote transparency and accountability in campaign finance will be introduced before the elections of 2022. Neither is the more robust monitoring of political advertising likely. The dirty

campaigning employed by political elites will go on as usual, with the burden of monitoring political disinformation falling on journalists, fact-checkers, and ordinary citizens.

This deliberative forum on disinformation is an attempt at reshaping the conversation and practice of disinformation by connecting the voices of ordinary citizens to these ongoing initiatives.

The practice of deliberation

In 2020, the OECD reported on a ‘deliberative wave’ taking place around the world. Public authorities are increasingly calling on ordinary citizens representing a microcosm of society to deliberate on a set of issues and collectively develop proposals that can inform decision-making.

Representative deliberative processes—or deliberative forums, as we will refer to them in this report—are carefully designed conversations where a representative subset of the population come together to engage in an inclusive, informed, and consequential discussion on a particular issue. Its aim is not to generate consensus but to clarify the extent of disagreements and create conditions that empower participants to create recommendations based on credible evidence and a fair hearing of different voices.

Its core features are the following:

1. **Representative.** A deliberative forum seeks to represent the microcosm of society. One way of doing this is to recruit participants through stratified random selection, representing different age groups, genders, regions, and socio-economic classes. Put simply, the composition of a deliberative forum mirrors the composition of the rest of society. This distinguishes a deliberative forum from, for example, roundtable discussion among experts or public consultations attended by self-selected respondents. A deliberative forum takes great care in recruiting ordinary participants—those who would otherwise not have the time, opportunity, or interest in taking part in existing channels of public conversation. Page 13 provides the profile of participants that took part in the deliberative forum on disinformation.
2. **Inclusive.** A successful deliberative forum gives a fair hearing to all relevant views. With the help of skilled facilitators, participants are encouraged to listen across differences and pay attention to voices that are not often heard in public

conversations.

3. **Informed.** Informed discussion is a key characteristic of deliberation. Unlike surveys, interviews or focus groups which provide a snapshot of what people think about an issue, a deliberative forum captures what participants think about an issue when they are given the opportunity to learn more about it and weigh the merits of their own views in light of other people's arguments.
4. **Consequential.** A deliberative forum seeks to connect to wider conversations in the public sphere and inform decision-making.

Deliberative Forums in the Philippines and the world



Far from being inconsequential talk shops, deliberative forums have served as circuit breakers in contentious political issues. The Irish citizens' assembly on abortion, for example, was designed to address the media's polarizing frames by fostering a 'friendly but serious' atmosphere among participants. After listening to experts and testimonies from various stakeholders, participants from different religious backgrounds decided to endorse the legalization of abortion. The referendum that followed affirmed the

citizens' assembly's decision. Deliberative forums are also useful in key constitutional moments, as in the cases of [Mongolia](#) and [Chile](#), that used deliberative processes to enrich the process of making constitutional amendments. It is now common in [Belgium](#) to know personally someone randomly selected to participate in a deliberative forum, given the extensiveness of this practice in a country attempting to overcome deep divisions.

Recently, deliberative forums have gained traction in issues related to freedom of expression and digital technologies. [Canada](#) convened a Citizens' Assembly on Democratic Expression where 120 randomly selected Canadians wrote a report that identified 'five values that should shape Canada's approach to internet regulation.' The Assembly put forward thirty-three recommendations to safeguard Canada's democracy and reduce the prevalence of harmful hate speech online. In [Finland](#), a citizens' panel proposed twenty-five measures 'to prevent hate speech and online shaming.' In both cases, the reports were turned over to government regulators, decision-makers and the wider public in an effort to inform their decisions.

There have been many efforts in the Philippines at bringing together a diverse group of stakeholders to deliberate and find solutions to shared problems. While the practice of recruiting ordinary citizens through random selection is its infancy, deliberation is customary in the country. *Malayang talakayan* in Tagalog and *harambang* in Waray are practices that celebrate free speech, critical thought, and open-mindedness. The challenge is to expand these conversations beyond the usual citizens who join these forums. To deepen democratic practice, we need to extend the opportunity for ordinary citizens to take part in public deliberation. We hope that this deliberative forum on disinformation is a step in that direction.

Our participants



The Deliberative Forum on Disinformation

The Deliberative Forum on Disinformation was held from 16 April to 18 April 2021. Twenty-six randomly selected citizens from across the Philippines were invited to join three days of deliberation to answer a question: How can we protect social media from ‘fake news’ during elections?

The deliberative forum on disinformation started with a learning session. On Friday, 16 April, participants were asked to complete their ‘homework’ in preparation for the forum: to watch, reflect, critique, and comment on pre-recorded videos by key experts and stakeholders in the campaign against disinformation. These videos were uploaded onto a private Facebook group accessible to participants and the project team. A member of the project team, Jonathan Corpus Ong, served as ‘expert on standby’ to answer the questions and comments of participants throughout the day. The aim of the learning session was to provide baseline knowledge to all participants and develop their confidence as they engage in deliberation. Page x has more information on the information session.

On 17 and 18 April, participants engaged in plenary and breakout group deliberations. This took place over Zoom for three hours on a Saturday and Sunday morning. The forum began with facilitators asking participants to set the ground rules for discussion. Norm-setting is a key feature of deliberation, for it establishes the legitimacy of the process on participants’ shared values. The participants agreed to take turns, avoid foul language, and remain calm and humble.

100% participation rate. All participants recruited to be part of the forum were present in both days of deliberation. This is no small feat for online deliberation. Many participants were faced with the challenges of poor internet connection and power interruption. One participant based in Marawi declined the invitation to participate for these reasons. Participants who confirmed participation proactively found ways to secure stable connections, such as travelling downtown (in areas where there are no lockdowns). One participant joined even during power interruptions using 3G and a fully charged phone.

The project team launched the deliberation by asking participants to diagnose the harms created by ‘fake news’ during elections. They were asked to identify the parties they considered responsible for the creation and spread of disinformation. Participants were also asked to examine the extent that they were concerned about disinformation spreading in the forthcoming elections, compared to longstanding issues on electoral integrity such as vote buying, disenfranchisement, threats of violence, and cheating. Page 18 provides the key insights from this exercise.

The third and final day of the deliberative forum began with a Zoom poll: considering the deliberations thus far, which entities did participants consider to be the most responsible for protecting social media from the harms of disinformation? ‘Ordinary citizens’ received the most votes, followed by the media and politicians (tied). Participants were then assigned to task groups to develop recommendations for (1) ordinary citizens and (2) media and politicians. Page 22 has a summary of recommendations.

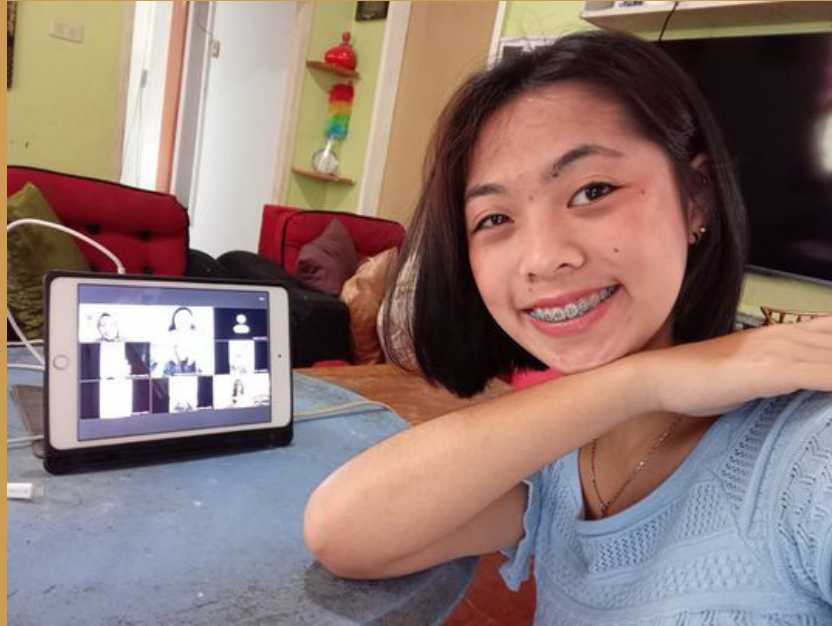
The deliberative forum concluded with a round of reflections from participants.

Participants* were selected based on a stratified random selection, taking into consideration a balance of age, sex, socio-economic class and region (National Capital Region, Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao).



*Note: Participants’ names were anonymised to protect their privacy. .

Motivations for Participation



Participant took a selfie to mark the occasion. Published with consent.

Deliberation is demanding. In this forum, participants were asked to watch expert testimonies on Facebook for more than one hour, deliberate for six hours over two days, and complete pre-and post-deliberation interviews. [Scholarship](#) on citizen participation cautions that people are often either ill-informed or too disinterested to participate meaningfully in politics. Why did ordinary Filipinos decide to join a deliberative forum at the height of the pandemic?

Most participants were motivated by the desire to learn about disinformation and have their say. 'At least we can express the voices of ordinary citizens,' said Lucky, a thirty-two-year-old man from Dagupan City who lost his job during the pandemic. He wanted to 'sift through what's fake, and what's real' so he can 'vote for the right person [in the next election].'

Stef, a twenty-one-year-old student in Cebu, shared a similar view. 'People rely on social media,' she said. She considered it important to have 'wider knowledge' on 'fake news in social media.'

Echo, a fifty-year-old tinsmith turned vlogger from Iloilo, said he appreciated the opportunity to learn the opinions of participants both young and old. It reminded him of

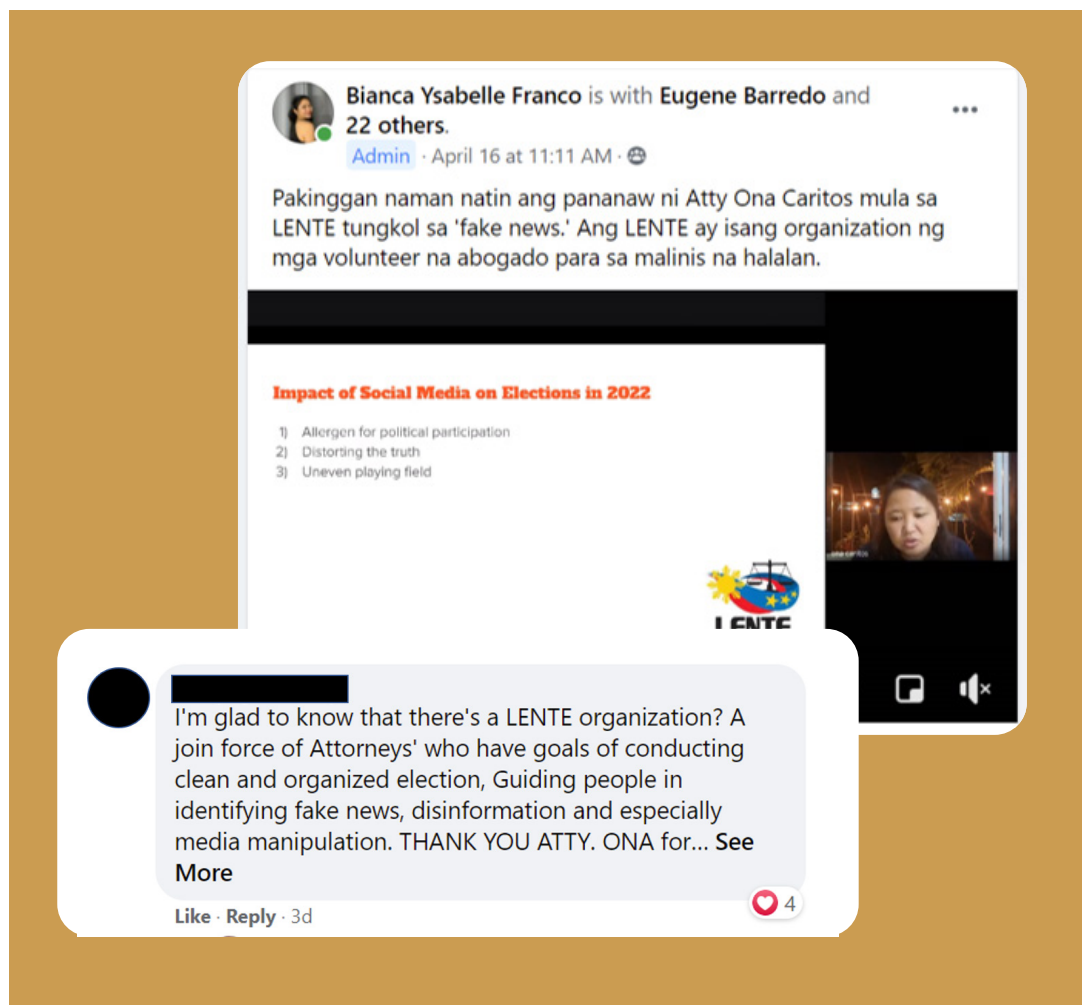
the need to be observant and analytical when reading social media.

These reasons, among others, affirm the scholarship on deliberative democracy.

‘I didn’t care [about disinformation] before. That’s why I got scared of the videos yesterday. We need to convert fear to action – we need to validate, instead of just sharing.’
– Nano, forty-year-old employee from Marawi City.

Participants value the intrinsic value of taking part in deliberations: the opportunity to express their views and learn from each other.

At the end of the forum, participants asked to keep the Facebook group active. It would allow them to remain updated and stay in touch with other participants. Some volunteered to be part of future campaigns against disinformation. Others committed to the proactive fact-checking of their own posts.



Expert Testimonies

A day before deliberations, we asked participants to watch short presentations (5-10 minutes) by experts on disinformation in the Philippines and Southeast Asia. We asked them to provide an overview of their own anti-disinformation initiatives and answer questions from participants in the comments section.*

The experts include the following:

1. Jonathan Corpus Ong from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst provided an overview of issues related to election-related disinformation. He put forward some of his proposals crafting disinformation strategies focused on the role of PR firms.
2. Celine Samson from VERA Files discussed why ‘disinformation’ is the preferred term over ‘fake news.’ She differentiated between ‘disinformation’ and ‘misinformation,’ and explained the role of fact checking in correcting false claims.
3. Facebook’s head of public policy Clare Amador shared Facebook’s experience battling disinformation and their current efforts at content moderation.

‘We are not just ordinary people during elections. We are the ones running the country.’ – Lucky, 31 years old, Dagupan City

4. Rona Ann Caritos from LENTE (Legal experts via Legal Network for Truthful Elections) discussed the role of volunteer lawyers in protecting electoral integrity.
5. Ross Tapsell from the Australian National University provided a summary of his research on disinformation in Southeast Asia. He cautioned against the experience of Southeast Asian countries where anti-fake news laws were weaponized to silence the political opposition.

We observed active engagement in the comments section. For example, one participant asked Facebook what it means when a post is taken down. We relayed this question to Clare Amador, who explained Facebook’s Community Standards.

Most participants cited expert testimonies when they conveyed their arguments during Zoom deliberations. For example, Z, a first-year college student in Baguio, proposed an anti-fake news law in the Philippines, with the caveat that this law must not be used by the government to silence the opposition and oppress the poor. She based her argument on Ross Tapsell's short lecture about the Malaysian and Singaporean experience on anti-fake news legislation. Several participants said they conducted further research on the work of LENTE and VERA Files after learning about their initiatives and expressed interest in learning how to fact check.

James Fishkin refers to deliberative democracy as 'democracy when people are thinking.' These observations demonstrate that ordinary Filipinos are willing and capable to consider expert evidence when constructing their points of view. A deliberative forum creates conditions that make this possible by giving citizens the time and resources to learn and reflect on credible information.

Silence speaks. After six hours of deliberation and 170 comments on the Facebook group page, only once was the Duterte regime and the political opposition as perpetrators of disinformation. Examples focused on participants' experiences in local politics and scepticism with mainstream media.

* Expert testimonies in English had Tagalog subtitles.

Content of Deliberations

The first substantive challenge we posed to participants was the identification of personalities and institutions they considered responsible for the spread of disinformation. We invited them to reflect on what they learned from expert testimonies. We asked them to share their own stories, observations, and arguments.

These are four main themes that emerged from deliberations.



Participant engages in discussion in a downtown restaurant with WiFi connection. Published with participant's consent.

1. **Disinformation is part of a wider problem of money politics.** 'Politics and the media are interconnected,' said Boom, a twenty-one-year-old college student from La Libertad, Zamboanga del Norte. 'Money is powerful,' he added, 'it can make you a demon.' Boom gave the example of a politician paying off journalists to spread stories that cast the politician in a good light to win votes. Politicians have long paid off radio announcers to fabricate stories that discredit political opponents and critics. Nano, an employee from Marawi City, described witnessing a politician bribing a radio journalist to clear the politician's name. 'Media has a role [in spreading disinformation],' she said, 'because there's a cash prize [for them].' While many participants considered disinformation a serious electoral problem, this remains closely linked to the power of money. As Criz, a

twenty-eight-year-old housewife from Bacolod put it, ‘fake news is just like vote buying.’ For the participants, disinformation is not a new phenomenon but a continuation of corrupt practices during elections.

2. **Disinformation thrives in the context of economic insecurity.** While participants distrusted journalists bribed by politicians to disseminate false information, some expressed understanding. ‘Of course, if you need money, you will spread [fake news],’ said Lucky from Dagupan City. ‘If you really need [money,] you’re on the edge, you have no choice.’ This observation connects to Jonathan Corpus Ong and Jason Cabañes’s research on the Architects of Networked Disinformation, where fake account operators see their role in perpetuating disinformation as nothing more than jobs putting food on the table.

Participants pointed to the same logic when they brought up ordinary citizens who are baited into spreading disinformation. They gave examples of apps like Cashzine and Buzzbreak that pay users to scroll through entertainment and political posts. Some participants suspected the apps are platforms to further spread disinformation. Other participants worried about rural areas that they referred to as ‘news deserts’ or ‘up the mountains.’ Spongebob, a fifty-one-year-old online seller from Caloocan, was concerned that hard-to-reach communities with limited news access were easy prey for manipulative politicians.

3. **Beyond disinformation, the issue is unfettered media power.** Participants spent a fair amount of time expressing scepticism over media practices that may not be considered disinformation but nevertheless pose threats to electoral integrity. Jeep, a twenty-three-year-old construction worker from Quezon City, asked if Rappler is a legitimate media organization. Manong, a twenty-seven-year-old call centre agent from Antipolo, named Rappler as a perpetrator of ‘fake news’ in his pre-deliberation interview. Both comments are consistent with narratives perpetuated by President Duterte and allied influencers that question Rappler’s integrity as a media organization. As a member of the project team, Nicole Curato clarified that Rappler is a legitimate media organization bound by journalistic ethics, but also recognized that some participants had issues with media’s framing of the news.

Jeep gave the example of ABS-CBN. ‘ABS[-CBN] is close to Mar Roxas, and is against Duterte,’ he said, ‘so the media can manipulate [the news], because they can edit it.’ Manong affirmed this observation. He was concerned that

the media had the ability to manipulate information, such as presenting misleading headlines that can influence people's opinions. As in the earlier example of Rappler, scepticism over ABS-CBN's impartiality is consistent with the state's accusations against the media giant, as well as anti-mainstream media narratives we have uncovered in [previous research](#). Meanwhile, Mon, a thirty-year-old engineer from Butuan City, shared how a local journalist slandered his sibling without consequences. 'As long as you're a writer, you can trample on the reputations.' While most participants considered mainstream

A deliberative encounter

Below is a vignette demonstrating an example of the power of deliberation in surfacing differences of opinion, clarifying disagreements, and generating workable solutions.

This vignette is edited for clarity.

Boom (21 years old, student): I agree with Manong that citizens should be responsible, but we should also think about those who didn't finish school and just use their smartphones. They only know how to read, but they don't know how to analyze what they're reading. They're not using critical thinking. Of course, when they see 'fake news,' they believe it.

Jeep (23 years old, construction worker): I disagree with what Boom said. We can't blame them, especially the older people. Of course, what they read is what they see on their newsfeeds. They have no control over what appears on their feeds. We shouldn't call them ignorant. We shouldn't judge these people.

Boom: Thank you, Jeep, I'm not mad at you, and I'm also not judging them. I'm just saying we should consider these people. It's not their fault they're illiterate.

Echo (50 years old, former tinsmith): We shouldn't say that old people don't know what's going on social media – that they don't know what fake news is. I blog, I post videos on YouTube and Facebook. Let's not underestimate old people. You should know we've also experienced disinformation. Thank you for sharing your opinion. Old people know social media. We're responsible too.

Elica (49 years old, freelancer): Yes, Echo's right. All citizens should be part of this. We should consider all scenarios. We should assist people who are not tech-savvy. We should think about the poor and the elderly. There should be an NGO that can educate people living in rural areas, old people, young people, poor people, the ones they haven't reached yet.

media as their primary source of news, some expressed scepticism over their fairness when presenting information. All participants recognised the power of the media in filtering information and shaping the narratives of the elections. They wondered how media could be held accountable to ordinary citizens.

4. Stopping the spread of disinformation is an individual's responsibility.

Participants emphasised the role of individual citizens in distinguishing fact from 'fake news.' 'Think before you share' and 'learn how to fact check' were some of the most common lines participants shared on Facebook's comments section and during deliberations. This, however, must not be interpreted as an abdication of responsibility from the media and political institutions. As the previous sections suggest, participants do allocate blame and responsibility to the political system. Instead, participants justified an individualised framing based on two arguments.

First, the desire to learn how to scrutinise election-related content is a means to protect the integrity of their vote. 'My concern, really, is how do I get to know [the politicians]?' asked Snoopy, a forty-eight-year-old woman from Tacloban who earns a living by running errands for her clients. 'We need to know the people we are voting for.' That desire includes knowing how to scrutinise content seen on social media. Lucky agreed. 'We are not just ordinary people during elections,' he said. 'We are the ones running the country.' Viewed this way, participants demonstrated a strong sense of responsibility in getting the right information that could inform their votes.

Second, an individualised framing demonstrates participants' desire to control the politics taking place in their newsfeeds. They view learning how to fact check as their main defence against the collusion between politicians and perpetrators of disinformation.

These four themes give a sense of the quality of deliberation that took place. Participants were able to avoid using polarizing frames and instead situated their discussion to the wider political and economic contexts in which disinformation takes place.

Recommendations

After characterising the problem of disinformation in the Philippines, participants were challenged to generate recommendations on how social media can be protected from disinformation during elections.

Based on a Zoom poll, participants decided to form two task groups. One task group was in charge of generating recommendations for ordinary citizens. Another task group focused on politicians and the media. Task groups presented their proposals during the plenary session, where participants, via viva voce, expressed approval or disagreement with the proposals.

Here are the proposals approved by a near consensus.

1. **Craft an anti-fake news and anti-trolling law.** Majority of participants support the passage of an anti-fake news legislation, but with clear caveats.
 - a. First, learning from the lessons from Malaysia and Singapore, there must be safeguards against abusing this law to silence the political opposition, the state's critics, and ordinary citizens.
 - b. Second, this law should only be implemented with proper funding. Mon, a thirty-year-old engineer from Butuan City, shared his experience of reporting cyber-crime at the National Bureau of Investigation only to be turned away because the NBI lacked the resources to track down the alleged cyber-crime perpetrator. In response, Jeep, a construction worker from Quezon City, proposed that the state should fund training programmes for IT workers in the Philippines to detect disinformation. This law is only possible when there is enough capacity for IT experts to detect and investigate disinformation.
 - c. Third, Elica, a former insurance agent from Dasmariñas, suggested that NGOs or civil society groups should play a role in determining what is considered fake news and trolling.

While most participants endorsed this recommendation, they are all cognisant of the unequal implementation of the law in the Philippines. They recognised that this law might only penalise the poor and excuse the rich, therefore they were clear in stating their caveats.

2. **Implement and strengthen the anti-dynasty law.** Since participants viewed disinformation as part of the wider issue of money politics, they recognised

that meaningful electoral reform can only unfold when the concentration of power to a few families is dismantled. Majority of participants endorsed this recommendation, except a forty-seven-year-old businessman from Davao who argued that some families ‘have the gift to lead the country.’

3. **Strengthen educational campaigns.** All participants endorsed the need to strengthen education campaigns which take the following character:
 - a. First, these campaigns should be intergenerational. Primary and secondary students should be formally trained to learn about disinformation, while corresponding campaigns should also be launched for older audiences struggling in navigating the online environment. Echo, a fifty-year-old tinsmith from Iloilo reminded younger participants not to underestimate the older generation. Their life experience listening to politicians, he said, equipped them with the skills necessary for the detection of disinformation.
 - b. Second, these campaigns should be consolidated. A businessman from Davao proposed an ‘anti-fake news educational day’ where all NGOs and civil society groups campaigning against disinformation ‘flood the internet’ with information about fact-checking and scrutinising social media content. The businessman said many good initiatives that citizens are unaware of, such as the work of LENTE, must be intensified and consolidated. He said these educational campaigns should be simple, straightforward, and attention-grabbing, especially for social media users who ‘have no energy’ to peruse complicated instructions.
 - c. Finally, educational campaigns should focus on outreach. Elica suggested that NGOs should proactively bring disinformation campaigns to residents of rural areas, the young, the old, and the poor.

Taken together, these recommendations demonstrate constructive, specific, and clear-headed thinking from participants who are cognisant of the realpolitik of policymaking and implementation.

Impact agenda

Our project aims to contribute to on-going anti-disinformation campaigns by amplifying the voices of ordinary citizens. We have a two-fold impact strategy.

First, we aim to present the findings of our report to different stakeholders engaged in anti-disinformation campaigns. Our project aims to serve as bridge between the voices of ordinary citizens to decision-makers, policymakers and campaigners who have the power to shape the conduct of the digital public sphere.

Second, our project aims to provoke a conversation to the wider public. We teamed up with FYT – a start-up media organization specialising in grassroots storytelling and media literacy. FYT will produce an immersive short film that documents the experience of two young participants in the deliberative forum – Jewel Lofstedt, a nineteen-year-old student from Baguio City, and Marlou A. Jumalon, a twenty-one-year-old student from Zamboanga del Norte. The film tells a story of how deliberation as political practice can get through disinformation and polarising discussion.

Overall, this forum is an attempt to present to the public a realised vision of what public conversations can be like if Filipinos are given the chance to learn, deliberate, and listen across difference.



FYT media featured two participants to tell the story of the deliberative forum.



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