

Sharing Unverified Information among Generation Z: The Role of Institutional Trust and Self-Efficacy

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ABSTRACT

The widespread circulation of unverified information on social media indicates that trust in information sources does not always prevent the spread of misinformation. This condition raises questions about the role of trust in institutions and individuals' confidence in detecting misinformation in shaping the tendency to share information on social media. This study aims to examine the direct relationships between trust in institutions on social media, perceived self-efficacy in detecting misinformation, and reasons for sharing unverified information among Generation Z in Indonesia through three explanatory hypotheses. Specifically, this study explores the role of perceived self-efficacy in detecting misinformation as a mediating mechanism in this relationship. Using a survey approach, this study involves 140 Generation Z in Indonesia who are active social media users, to understand how trust in institutions on social media influences individuals' confidence in detecting misinformation and their reasons for sharing unverified information in online environments. The results show that trust in institutions on social media has no significant effect on reasons for sharing unverified information, whereas perceived self-efficacy in detecting misinformation has a positive and significant effect on the sharing of unverified information.

Keywords: Institution Trust; Share Information; Self-Efficacy; Misinformation; Social Media; Generasi Z

ABSTRAK

Kepercayaan terhadap sumber informasi tidak selalu mencegah penyebaran misinformasi. Kondisi ini menimbulkan pertanyaan mengenai peran kepercayaan terhadap institusi dan keyakinan individu dalam mendeteksi misinformasi terhadap kecenderungan berbagi informasi di media sosial. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji hubungan antara *trust in institutions on social media*, *perceived self-efficacy in detecting misinformation*, dan *reasons for sharing unverified information* pada Generasi Z di Indonesia secara langsung melalui tiga hubungan penjas. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan survei terhadap 140 Generasi Z di Indonesia yang merupakan pengguna aktif media sosial, untuk memahami bagaimana kepercayaan terhadap institusi di media sosial memengaruhi keyakinan individu dalam mendeteksi misinformasi serta alasan mereka dalam membagikan informasi yang belum terverifikasi di ruang daring. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa *trust in institutions on social media* tidak berpengaruh signifikan terhadap *reasons for sharing unverified information*. Sebaliknya, *perceived self-efficacy in detecting misinformation* berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap kecenderungan berbagi informasi yang belum terverifikasi.

Kata kunci: Kepercayaan Institusi; Berbagi informasi; Efikasi diri; Misinformasi; Media sosial; Generasi Z

INTRODUCTION

The current digital information environment is saturated with unverified information. In many cases, such information can be categorized as disinformation, and concerns about disinformation continue to grow alongside the rapid increase of fake news and misinformation on social media. Although the problem of inaccurate or false information is not a new phenomenon, the sheer volume and ease of access to such information makes it increasingly difficult to control and has far-reaching consequences for society. In recent years, academic and public attention to the spread of false and misleading information on social media has grown considerably.

Research suggests that social media has contributed to the emergence of a post-truth era, in which false information can spread faster than accurate information (Altay et al., 2022). The various forms of misleading information indicate that social media users face significant challenges in assessing the accuracy of information. Although social media enables the rapid and widespread distribution of information, limited oversight and quality control increase the risk of unverified information circulating freely.

Social media is often regarded as a medium for communication and information sharing; however, inaccurate content is pervasive on these platforms. Social media users also tend not to engage in deep evaluation of the information they encounter. Individuals frequently share unverified information without malicious intent for a variety of reasons, ranging from trust in the information source to the belief that the information is useful. Therefore, understanding why individuals share unverified information is critical to limit the spread of misinformation on social media.

A number of studies have sought to explain the motivations behind individuals spreading misinformation on social media. One factor receiving increasing attention is trust in institutions on social media. Institutional trust has been observed to decline in recent years, partly due to the increase of fake news, disinformation, the spread of conspiracy theories, and the development of a post-truth media environment that erodes confidence in facts and reality (Chambers, 2021). Paradoxically, however, research also indicates that trust in online sources can actually increase individuals' tendency to share unverified information (Khan & Idris, 2019).

In addition to institutional trust, prior research has also emphasized the importance of perceived self-efficacy in detecting misinformation, defined as individuals' confidence in their ability to identify false information. Studies on media and digital literacy indicate that individuals who feel confident in their ability to detect misinformation do not always possess proportional actual skills, and that excessive self-confidence can in fact lower vigilance toward information accuracy (e.g., Fendt et al., 2023). In this context, perceived self-efficacy may influence individuals' reasons for sharing unverified information, particularly when individuals feel no need to double-check the information they encounter.

Based on the previous statement, this study focuses on the relationships among trust in institutions on social media, perceived self-efficacy in detecting misinformation, and reasons for sharing unverified information. By examining the interrelationships

among these three variables, this study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the factors that drive Generation Z students to share unverified information on social media.

Trust and reasons for sharing unverified information

Trust is an important concept for understanding how individuals interact with content on social media (Gretry et al., 2017). Trust can both develop and diminish as a result of information exchanges that occur online. In this context, the spread of misinformation is closely linked to trust, as individuals tend to use their level of trust in an information source as the basis for deciding whether a piece of information is worth believing and sharing (Di Domenico et al., 2021).

Institutional trust is generally understood as individuals' belief in public institutions or official organizations, such as governments, educational institutions, and public authorities (Warren et al., 2014). These institutions are traditionally viewed as credible and authoritative sources of information, so information originating from them is often assumed to be accurate and trustworthy (Van Zoonen, 2012). In the context of social media, this trust leads individuals to rely more on institutional reputation and role rather than conducting in-depth evaluations of the accuracy of the information they receive (Hsieh-Yee, 2021).

Prior research indicates that institutional trust can reduce individuals' perceived risk of misinformation and encourage heuristic-based information processing (Pennycook & Rand, 2021). As a result, individuals with high levels of trust in institutions on social media tend to more readily share information they receive, even when that information has not been adequately verified. Earlier studies also show that individuals who trust information sources are more likely to share that information with others and tend to feel less compelled to verify it before sharing (Talwar et al., 2019; Metzger et al., 2021).

H1: Trust in institutions on social media is positively associated with reasons for sharing unverified information.

Perceived self-efficacy in detecting misinformation

Research indicates that individuals often share information on social media not because they judge it to be accurate, but because their attention is directed toward factors other than accuracy. Although information literacy is considered important for limiting the spread of misinformation, misleading information is often presented in a persuasive manner that encourages user engagement. In many cases, individuals share misinformation unintentionally because they are unaware that the information is false, or because they are driven by needs for self-expression, practical utility, or the maintenance of social relationships (Chen et al., 2015; Metzger et al., 2021).

This study argues that trust in institutions on social media can influence individuals' self-efficacy in detecting misinformation by diverting their attention away from information accuracy. Unlike prior views suggesting that self-efficacy can reduce the likelihood of individuals being deceived by misinformation, trust in a source can instead

inflate perceived self-efficacy. When individuals trust institutions on social media, they tend to feel confident in their ability to recognize false information, even without conducting adequate verification (Bandura, 1977; Khan & Idris, 2019).

Self-efficacy refers to individuals' belief that they are capable of performing a specific action, in this case detecting misinformation. A number of studies show that trust in information and its sources is positively associated with perceived self-efficacy. Institutional trust can function as a heuristic cue that leads individuals to regard information from such sources as credible, thereby enhancing their confidence in assessing the truthfulness of information (Hocevar et al., 2014; Khan & Idris, 2019).

However, an increase in perceived self-efficacy does not always yield positive outcomes. The concept of overconfidence explains that individuals who feel capable of detecting misinformation may become excessively confident and consider themselves relatively immune to the threat of misinformation. This condition leads individuals to share information without further verification. Thus, perceived self-efficacy may serve as a mechanism explaining how trust in institutions on social media contributes to individuals' reasons for sharing unverified information (Talwar et al., 2019).

H2: Trust in institutions on social media is positively associated with perceived self-efficacy in detecting misinformation.

Perceived self-efficacy and reasons for sharing unverified information

This study seeks to demonstrate that perceived self-efficacy in detecting misinformation is associated with reasons for sharing unverified information. This is consistent with prior research showing that individuals often share information on social media not solely based on accuracy assessments, but because their attention is diverted to factors beyond the truthfulness of the information (Pennycook et al., 2021). In this context, individuals' confidence in their own ability to detect misinformation can influence the decision to share information without conducting further verification.

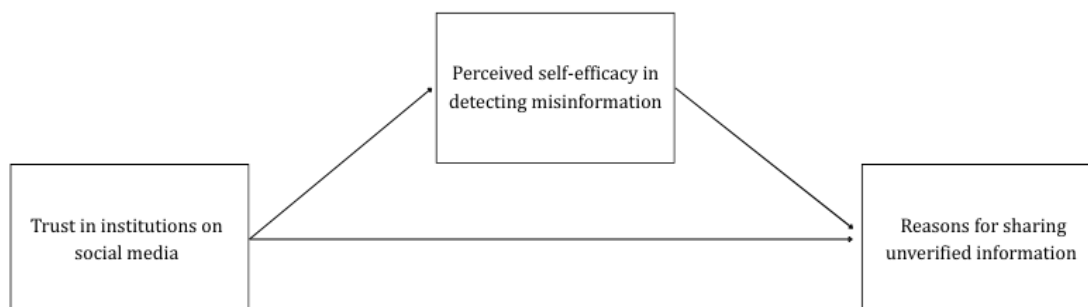
Prior research has often assumed that self-efficacy in detecting misinformation acts as a protective factor capable of suppressing the spread of false information. However, perceived self-efficacy does not always reflect individuals' actual ability to identify misinformation (Khan & Idris, 2019). Individuals who feel confident in their abilities tend to shift their attention away from the process of accuracy evaluation and rely more heavily on their own subjective judgment when interacting with information on social media. Furthermore, the overconfidence effect describes a condition in which individuals become excessively confident in their ability to detect false information. Serra-Garcia and Gneezy (2021) explain that individuals who believe they can distinguish between true and false information are more inclined to share information without verification, as they consider themselves relatively immune to misinformation. In this situation, perceived self-efficacy can heighten individuals' tendency to share unverified information.

In addition, research also links excessive self-efficacy to individuals' tendency to overestimate their own ability to evaluate information (Kruger & Dunning, 1999).

Individuals who are less competent in evaluating information often fail to recognize their own limitations and instead exhibit high levels of self-confidence. This condition amplifies the risk of unverified information spreading, particularly in social media environments that encourage rapid content sharing with minimal reflection.

H3: Perceived self-efficacy in detecting misinformation is positively associated with reasons for sharing unverified information.

Figure 1. Research Model



Source: Processed by the authors (2025).

Perceived self-efficacy in detecting misinformation in this study is positioned as a second independent variable tested separately against reasons for sharing unverified information, rather than as a mediating variable in the formal statistical sense (Baron & Kenny, 1986). The research model is explanatory correlational in nature, testing three direct relationships (H1, H2, H3) using correlation analysis and simple linear regression, without testing indirect effects.

METHOD

The respondents in this study consisted of 140 Generation Z individuals in Indonesia aged 15 to 29 years who are active social media users. Generation Z was selected as the study population because this group demonstrates a high level of involvement in the consumption and dissemination of information on social media. The sample size was determined using the rule of thumb, whereby the number of respondents equals ten times the number of questionnaire items used. The sampling technique used was online convenience sampling, in which the questionnaire was distributed through social media platforms to respondents meeting the inclusion criteria, namely being aged 15 to 29 years and being active social media users within the past six months. This approach is commonly used in digital behavior research as it allows rapid access to a widely distributed target population, although it carries limitations with respect to the generalizability of findings (Etikan et al., 2016). Data were collected from individuals who met the age requirements and had experience using social media as a platform for seeking or sharing information. In addition to data related to the research variables, demographic data were also collected to provide a profile of respondent characteristics.

This study used a quantitative approach using a survey method to examine the relationships among trust in institutions on social media, perceived self-efficacy in detecting misinformation, and reasons for sharing unverified information. The survey method was chosen because it allows for the measurement of individuals' perceptions of information on social media and enables empirical analysis of relationships among constructs. Data were collected using an online questionnaire, consistent with approaches used in prior research. The research instrument was adapted from primary reference journals previously used in studies on the spread of unverified information on social media. All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The adaptation of the instrument was carried out by preserving the structure and meaning of each item to ensure alignment with the variables being measured. This study employs three main variables as follows.

Table 1. Instrument

Item	Mean	SD	N
Trust in institutions on social media			
I trust information from educational institutions (e.g., schools and universities).	3,34	1,295	140
I trust information from public authorities (e.g., public health agencies and the police).	3,14	1,417	140
I trust information from the government.	2,86	1,365	140
I trust information from supranational organizations (e.g., the United Nations and the World Health Organization).	3,44	1,374	140
Perceived self-efficacy in detecting misinformation			
It is easy for me to identify false information.	3,88	1,160	140
I believe I am not easily influenced by false information.	3,96	1,112	140
My knowledge enables me to identify false information.	3,98	1,096	140
My experience helps me recognize false information.	4,08	1,119	140
Reasons for sharing unverified information			
I share unverified information because it comes from a trusted source.	2,56	1,561	140
I share unverified information because it aligns with my beliefs or opinions.	2,91	1,559	140
I share unverified information because it is new and attracts attention.	3,11	1,521	140
I share unverified information because it helps keep conversations going.	3,63	1,485	140
I share unverified information because it may help other people, even if I receive nothing in return.	3,37	1,584	140
I enjoy sharing information, even if it has not been verified.	3,26	1,615	140

Source: Processed by the authors (2025).

(1) Trust in institutions on social media was measured using several statements reflecting respondents' level of trust in information from institutions such as governments, public bodies, and international organizations. (2) Perceived Self-Efficacy was measured through statements reflecting respondents' confidence in their ability to

recognize false or misleading information on social media. (3) Reasons for Sharing Unverified Information as the dependent variable was measured using statements describing respondents' reasons for sharing unverified information, such as finding it interesting, perceiving it as consistent with personal beliefs, or believing it originated from a credible source. Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS. The data analysis was conducted in several stages, namely descriptive statistics to characterize the data, correlation tests to examine relationships among variables, and linear regression analysis to test the effects among variables in accordance with the research hypotheses (H1 to H3). The significance level was set at $p < 0.05$.

Table 2. Validity Test

Item	Corrected Item-Total Correlation
T1	0,694
T2	0,638
T3	0,532
T4	0,621
P1	0,407
P2	0,383
P3	0,406
P4	0,546
R1	0,327
R2	0,332
R3	0,294
R4	0,393
R5	0,421
R6	0,501

Source: Processed by the authors (2025).

Prior to reliability testing, construct validity was assessed using the corrected item-total correlation technique, with a threshold of $r \geq 0.30$ as the indicator of item validity (Hair et al., 2019). The results indicate that most items across the three variables yielded corrected item-total correlation values above 0.30 (range: 0.30–0.694). One item ("the information is new and attention-grabbing") showed a slightly lower value ($r = 0.294$) but was retained, as its removal decreased the construct's Cronbach's Alpha (from 0.648 to 0.635), indicating that it still contributed to internal consistency.

Table 3. Reliability Test

Variable	Total Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Trust in Institution on social media	4	0,805
Perceived Self-Efficacy	4	0,654
Reasons for Sharing Unverified Information	6	0,648

Source: Processed by the authors (2025).

The reliability test was conducted to assess the internal consistency of the research instrument. The results indicate Cronbach's Alpha values reflecting acceptable levels of reliability for survey research. The Cronbach's Alpha values for Perceived Self-Efficacy ($\alpha = 0.654$) and Reasons for Sharing Unverified Information ($\alpha = 0.648$) fall within the acceptable range for exploratory research, although they are considered

moderate (Taber, 2018). These moderately low values may be attributed to the items within both variables reflecting relatively heterogeneous motivational dimensions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Testing of the three research hypotheses was conducted through Pearson correlation analysis and simple linear regression. Of the three relationships tested, only one proved statistically significant. Trust in institutions on social media did not demonstrate a significant relationship with either reasons for sharing unverified information ($r = .021$, $p = .804$) or self-efficacy in detecting misinformation ($r = .128$, $p = .131$). In contrast, perceived self-efficacy was found to be positively and significantly associated with reasons for sharing unverified information ($r = .203$, $p = .016$), a finding subsequently confirmed through regression analysis.

Tabel 4. Pearson Correlation Test

		TR	PR	RE
TR	Pearson Correlation	1	0,128	0,021
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0,131	0,804
	N	140	140	140
PR	Pearson Correlation	0,128	1	0,203*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,131		0,016
	N	140	140	140
RE	Pearson Correlation	0,021	0,203*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,804	0,016	
	N	140	140	140

Source: Processed by the authors (2025).

The relationship between trust in institutions on social media and perceived self-efficacy in detecting misinformation yielded $r = .128$ with a significance of $p = .131$ ($p > .05$), indicating no significant relationship between the two variables. Similarly, the relationship between trust in institutions on social media and reasons for sharing unverified information yielded $r = .021$ with $p = .804$ ($p > .05$), indicating no significant relationship between institutional trust and reasons for sharing unverified information. The only significant relationship was found between perceived self-efficacy in detecting misinformation and reasons for sharing unverified information, with $r = .203$ and $p = .016$ ($p < .05$), indicating a positive and significant relationship between perceived self-efficacy in detecting misinformation and reasons for sharing unverified information. These

findings provide an initial picture consistent with the regression results for H1, H2, and H3.

Table 5. Linear Regression Test

Hypothesis	Relationship	Coefficient		t	p	R ²	Result
		B	β				
H1	TR → RE	0,018	0,021	0,249	0,804	0	Not Supported
H2	TR → PR	0,093	0,128	1,518	0,131	0,016	Not Supported
H3	PR → RE	0,241	0,203	2,433	0,016*	0,041	Supported

Source: Processed by the authors (2025).

The regression analysis results indicate that trust in institutions on social media has no significant effect on reasons for sharing unverified information ($B = 0.018$; $\beta = 0.021$; $t = 0.249$; $p = 0.804$; $R^2 = 0.000$), and thus Hypothesis 1 (H1) is not supported. The R^2 value approaching zero indicates that trust in institutions on social media contributes virtually nothing to explaining the variation in individuals' reasons for sharing unverified information.

This finding differs from a number of prior studies suggesting that trust in information sources can increase individuals' tendency to share content without verification (Khan & Idris, 2019; Talwar et al., 2019). In the context of Generation Z in Indonesia, this result indicates that information-sharing decisions are not determined solely by institutional trust, but also involve other personal and psychological considerations. This is consistent with the findings of van Zoonen et al. (2023), who demonstrated that the relationship between institutional trust and information-sharing behavior is not always direct and linear, but is instead shaped by more complex contextual factors.

The regression results also indicate that trust in institutions on social media has no significant effect on perceived self-efficacy in detecting misinformation ($B = 0.093$; $\beta = 0.128$; $t = 1.518$; $p = 0.131$; $R^2 = 0.016$), and thus Hypothesis 2 (H2) is not supported. Although the direction of the coefficient reflects the positive tendency predicted, the effect is not sufficiently strong statistically to reach the established significance threshold ($p < 0.05$).

This finding indicates that individuals' confidence in their ability to detect misinformation is not fully shaped by their level of trust in institutions on social media. This is consistent with the literature suggesting that self-efficacy is more strongly influenced by personal experience, digital literacy, and individuals' exposure to diverse types of information than by the reputation or credibility of information sources alone (Fendt et al., 2023; Hocevar et al., 2014).

In contrast to the two preceding tests, the results show that perceived self-efficacy in detecting misinformation has a positive and significant effect on reasons for sharing unverified information ($B = 0.241$; $\beta = 0.203$; $t = 2.433$; $p = 0.016$; $R^2 = 0.041$), and thus Hypothesis 3 (H3) is supported. The R^2 value of 0.041 indicates that perceived self-

efficacy accounts for approximately 4.1% of the variance in reasons for sharing unverified information, a contribution that is modest yet statistically significant.

This finding supports the concept of the overconfidence effect, whereby individuals with high confidence in their ability to detect misinformation tend to underestimate the risk of error in evaluating information accuracy (Kruger & Dunning, 1999; Serra-Garcia & Gneezy, 2021). In the context of social media, excessively perceived self-efficacy can divert individuals' attention from the process of accuracy evaluation and foster more impulsive information-sharing behavior without prior verification. This result reinforces the argument advanced by van Zoonen et al. (2023) that self-efficacy does not always function as a protective factor against the spread of misinformation. It should be noted that the strength of this relationship in the context of Indonesian Generation Z ($R^2 = 0.041$) is relatively smaller than findings from multinational samples, suggesting the possible influence of other socio-cultural factors on the magnitude of this relationship in the local context.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the influence of trust in institutions on social media and perceived self-efficacy in detecting misinformation on Generation Z's reasons for sharing unverified information. Based on a survey of 140 active social media users aged 15 to 29 years, three principal findings emerged that together paint a more complex picture than initially assumed.

First, trust in institutions on social media was not found to have a significant effect on reasons for sharing unverified information. This indicates that even when individuals place high trust in institutions such as governments, educational bodies, or international organizations, this does not directly drive them to share content without verification. Sharing decisions appear to be more influenced by personal considerations that are situational and psychological in nature.

Second, trust in institutions was also not found to have a significant effect on individuals' self-efficacy in detecting misinformation. This finding suggests that individuals' confidence in their ability to identify false information is not formed solely by the degree to which they trust institutions, but is instead shaped more by personal experience, digital literacy levels, and exposure to diverse types of information content.

Third, and most substantially, perceived self-efficacy in detecting misinformation was found to have a positive and significant effect on reasons for sharing unverified information. Individuals who feel confident in their ability to recognize misinformation paradoxically tend to share information more readily without first verifying it. This phenomenon reflects the overconfidence effect, in which excessive self-confidence reduces vigilance toward information accuracy and encourages more impulsive sharing behavior.

Overall, this study affirms that the behavior of sharing unverified information among Generation Z is more deeply rooted in internal psychological factors, particularly excessive self-confidence, than in orientation toward institutional trust. The practical

implications of these findings point to the urgency of digital literacy approaches that go beyond building self-confidence to explicitly fostering habits of critical thinking and verification before sharing content on social media. Future research is encouraged to consider socio-cultural variables specific to the Indonesian context in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of misinformation spread among young people.

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