
Indonesia's Electronic Information and Transactions Law: History, Impact, and Challenges

Adisti Puspa Setyawan¹, Antonius Sambodo Adi A², I Dewa BS Wirantaya³, Pina Mustika⁴, William Gomarga⁵

Universitas Pelita Harapan, Indonesia

Email: 01053240113@student.uph.edu, 01053240118@student.uph.edu,
01053240078@student.uph.edu, 01053240125@student.uph.edu,
01053240101@student.uph.edu

*Correspondence: Adisti Puspa Setyawan

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Abstract. This paper examines the history, impact, and challenges of Indonesia's Electronic Information and Transactions Law (Law No. 11 of 2008, as amended by Law No. 19 of 2016) through a descriptive qualitative approach. By conducting a systematic content analysis of primary legal texts, official ministry reports, and secondary scholarly literature, the study reconstructs the law's evolutionary trajectory from its initial focus on electronic signatures and contract validity to the expanded criminalization of digital offenses, including defamation, hate speech, and data misuse. The analysis is conducted using Miles and Huberman's coding technique to identify patterns related to regulatory developments, socio-economic impacts, and associated challenges. The research finding indicate that reveal that the ITE Law has enhanced digital governance in libraries by curbing misinformation and protecting intellectual property, strengthened consumer protection in online commerce by clarifying rights and dispute mechanisms, and initiated regulatory frameworks for emerging fintech platforms. Despite these positive developments, the research identifies persistent implementation challenges, including socio-cultural resistance, legal ambiguities, resource constraints, and the rapid pace of technological change, that hinder consistent enforcement across regions. The paper concludes by recommending targeted legal literacy campaigns, more explicit legislative provisions, and agile regulatory review mechanisms to ensure the continued relevance and effectiveness of the ITE Law in striking a balance between innovation, fundamental rights, and national stability.

Keywords: Electronic information and transactions law, digital governance, consumer protection, information literacy, fintech regulation, implementation challenges

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, Indonesia has experienced exponential growth in digital technologies, accompanied by a significant increase in electronic information and transactions. This rapid evolution has brought considerable benefits, such as broader access to information, streamlined public services, and new business opportunities. Yet, it has also exposed society to a range of legal and ethical challenges. The persistence of hoax news and misinformation, for example, has become a pressing concern: the Ministry of Communication and Information has documented a substantial rise in false reports circulating online, often undermining public trust and social cohesion (Balfas, 2014; Mahadevamurthy & Adithyakumari, 2015; Nafisah, 2023; Pakina, 2023; Septiadi, 2022; Vicki Dwi Purnomo et al., 2023). Within this environment, libraries, long regarded as bastions of reliable knowledge, face mounting difficulties in ensuring that their digital collections comply with both legal norms and moral standards, as reflected in recurring issues around copyright infringement and inappropriate content for children. Although Indonesia's Library Law regulates collection management, it lacks explicit provisions on permissible and prohibited materials, creating a regulatory gap that hinders effective information control.

Against this backdrop, the *Electronic Information and Transactions Law* (Law No. 11/2008, amended by Law No. 19/2016) emerges as a powerful legal instrument for regulating digital activities, ranging from the validity of electronic signatures and data protection to defining unlawful information, including defamation, extortion, hate speech, pornography, and fraudulent or misleading news. This law aims to protect individual rights (such as intellectual property and personal privacy) while upholding broader societal interests, such as public order and moral norms (Nafisah, 2023). Beyond information control, the ITE Law also plays a crucial role in consumer protection within online markets, as it clarifies the rights and obligations of digital service providers and users, aiming to redress the imbalance that often places consumers at a disadvantage in electronic transactions (Pakina, 2023).

Since its enactment, the ITE Law has had a profound impact on a wide range of legal, social, and economic domains. Early assessments underscored its potential to modernize Indonesia's legal framework in line with evolving global standards, promoting both fair digital commerce and legal certainty (Nurkholim, 2021). Yet, empirical studies have revealed persistent challenges in enforcement: socio-cultural factors can impede both preventive education and repressive measures. At the same time, controversies over defamation and freedom of expression continue to fuel public debate (Muhadir et al., 2022). Moreover, the explosive growth of fintech applications, particularly online lending platforms, has challenged the adequacy of existing regulations, prompting calls for more nuanced rules to strike a balance between consumer protection and innovation (Gaisani et al., 2021; Kumaeroh et al., 2021; Madu, 2018; Muslih & Supeno, 2022; Pratiwi, 2022).

The implementation of the ITE Law as an instrument of "social engineering" confirms its role in countering external threats that utilize digital channels to spread provocative propaganda (Prayatna et al., 2022). By criminalizing the spread of hoaxes that are deliberately designed to disrupt national unity or trigger tensions between groups, this law aims not only to punish the perpetrators but also to strengthen social resilience. This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to provide an in-depth description of how the ITE

Law is adopted and implemented in the practice of managing information and electronic transactions in Indonesia.

Previous studies have significantly explored the challenges and impacts of the ITE Law on Indonesia's digital landscape, particularly in terms of its regulatory and enforcement mechanisms. Nafisah (2023) highlights the growing concern of hoaxes and misinformation online, illustrating how the ITE Law plays a crucial role in addressing the issues of false information. While Nafisah provides a comprehensive view of the rise in hoaxes, it does not delve deeply into the specific legal and regulatory gaps that hinder effective enforcement of digital rights and responsibilities in libraries and other institutions. Pakina (2023) also examines the ITE Law from the perspective of consumer protection in online markets but focuses primarily on the rights and obligations of digital service providers and users, without addressing how libraries and educational institutions must navigate the challenges of balancing information access and legal compliance.

The objective of this study is to evaluate the impact of the ITE Law on information governance in Indonesia, specifically in the context of libraries' management of digital collections. This research will analyze the challenges and implications of implementing the ITE Law in libraries, focusing on the balance between providing access to information and complying with legal standards. The study's findings will contribute to the development of guidelines for libraries and other institutions, enhancing their ability to navigate the complex intersection of law, ethics, and digital information management. The research will also inform policymakers on the effectiveness of the ITE Law in regulating the digital environment and promoting social resilience.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research adopts a descriptive qualitative design to investigate the history, impact, and challenges of Indonesia's *Electronic Information and Transactions Law* (ITE Law). First, the study collects and analyzes primary legal documents, including Law No. 11 of 2008 and its amendment (Law No. 19 of 2016), as well as government reports and official statements issued by the Ministry of Communication and Information. Secondary data are drawn from peer-reviewed journals, academic books, and case studies that examine key applications of the ITE Law, such as hoax prosecutions, consumer disputes, and fintech regulation. All literature is sourced through systematic keyword searches (e.g., "UU ITE," "Indonesia," "hoax," "fintech," "consumer protection") across reputable academic databases, focusing on publications dated between 2020 and 2025.

Once collected, documents are subjected to content analysis following the Miles and Huberman (1994) method. An iterative coding scheme is developed to identify recurring themes related to legal evolution, enforcement mechanisms, societal impacts, and implementation challenges. To ensure robust interpretation, preliminary codes are reviewed by two senior *electronic information law* experts through a member-checking process. Findings from legal texts and scholarly analyses are then triangulated with illustrative case examples to validate emerging insights and enhance the credibility of the study.

Throughout the research process, methodological rigor is maintained via multiple validity and reliability strategies. Credibility is achieved through expert member checks and reflexive journaling, while transferability is supported by providing a context for each legal

provision and case example. Dependability is ensured by documenting all data collection and analysis decisions in an audit trail, and confirmability is reinforced through systematic triangulation of sources.

As this study relies exclusively on publicly available documents and literature, there are no direct interactions with human subjects; nevertheless, ethical considerations guide the research. Proper citation practices uphold intellectual property rights, and sensitive case information is handled with anonymity where necessary. By integrating these approaches, the study aims to deliver a comprehensive, contextually grounded mapping of the ITE Law's historical trajectory, socio-legal impacts, and enduring enforcement challenges in Indonesia.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis yields three central findings that correspond to the study's objectives: the historical evolution, societal impact, and implementation challenges of the ITE Law.

Historical Evolution

A content analysis of Law No. 11 of 2008 and its subsequent amendment (Law No. 19 of 2016), alongside official ministry reports, reveals a clear progression in the regulatory scope. Initially focused on establishing basic legal recognition for electronic signatures and contracts, the ITE Law's 2016 revision expanded to define and criminalize specific offenses such as defamation, hate speech, and data misuse, reflecting growing governmental concern over digital misinformation and social instability. This chronological mapping illustrates how emerging social threats motivated successive legal refinements. The chronological analysis underscores how the ITE Law evolved from a foundational framework for electronic signatures and contracts into a broader regulatory instrument targeting digital offenses. The 2016 amendments, which introduced explicit criminalization of defamation, hate speech, and data misuse, reflect a governmental response to mounting concerns over misinformation and social unrest. This evolutionary trajectory highlights the law's adaptive capacity but also signals a shift toward increasingly punitive measures, a development that warrants reflection on proportionality and the protection of civil liberties.

Initial Enactment (2008)

The ITE Law, officially known as Law No. 11 of 2008, was enacted by the Indonesian House of Representatives on April 21, 2008. This significant legislation aimed to create a robust legal framework for electronic transactions and communications throughout Indonesia. Its primary objectives included validating the legality of electronic documents and signatures, thereby promoting secure digital transactions, and regulating online business activities to ensure a trustworthy digital environment. This legal foundation became increasingly crucial as reliance on digital platforms grew across various sectors, such as banking, e-commerce, and public administration, where secure digital interactions became essential to the economy.

First Amendment (2016)

Almost a decade after its enactment, the ITE Law had led to a considerable number of convictions of internet users—commonly referred to as "netizens"—especially concerning defamation violations outlined in Article 27, paragraph 3. The law's broad definitions raised

significant legal challenges and sparked concerns about potential misuse against dissenting voices and the infringement of freedom of expression.

In response to increasing pressure from civil society organizations, human rights advocates, and various international entities campaigning for digital rights, the Indonesian government introduced Law No. 19 of 2016. This amendment sought to address some of the law's more contentious provisions by:

- a. Lowering the maximum penalties for defamation from up to six years of imprisonment to a more reasonable three years, thereby reducing concerns over excessively harsh consequences,
- b. Clarifying procedural requirements for prosecution
- c. Including more precise definitions of defamatory acts, and ensuring that victims had more accessible pathways for seeking justice,
- d. Highlighting the importance of restorative justice mechanisms, promoting solutions that focus on reconciliation rather than solely punitive approaches.

Despite these amendments, ongoing concerns about the vagueness of certain terms within the law and the potential for its misuse by authorities persisted, fueling continuing debates about how to balance the protection of free speech with the safeguarding of individual reputations in the digital landscape.

The Pros and Cons of the 2016 Amendment to Indonesia's ITE Law

The amendment to Indonesia's Law No. 11 of 2008 on Information and Electronic Transactions (ITE Law), now formalized as Law No. 19 of 2016, has sparked significant scholarly debate regarding its impact on freedom of expression and human rights in the country. While the revisions aim to address longstanding criticisms—particularly those related to Article 27(3) on defamation—they have generated both support and opposition among various stakeholders.

A key case that triggered calls for reform was that of Prita Mulyasari, who, in 2009, faced serious consequences after a private email expressing her dissatisfaction with a hospital's treatment was made public. This widely perceived unjust trial mobilized public sentiment and highlighted the risks associated with vague and punitive digital legislation.

Endorsement of the Amendment

Proponents argue that the amendment marks a step forward in protecting civil rights. Lawmakers assert that this reform mitigates the potential for governmental abuse by reducing the maximum sentence for defamation from six years to four years. This revision ensures that suspects can no longer be detained without a prior court order, thus aligning enforcement practices with the principles enshrined in the Criminal Procedural Code. Moreover, the amendment promotes responsible online conduct while striving to safeguard freedom of expression, provided that such expression adheres to standards of civility and truthfulness.

The Minister of Communications and Information Technology has underscored that the rapid proliferation of social media necessitated this legislative overhaul in order to prevent legal ambiguities and ensure the protection of internet users. The amendment revises eight articles and introduces two new provisions, aiming to establish a balance between the principles of free speech and the imperative of maintaining public order.

Conversely, critics argue that the recent modifications to the ITE Law fall short of addressing the need for substantial reform. Rather than abolishing contentious provisions such as Article 27(3), the amendment merely lessens the associated penalties. Furthermore, the expanded powers afforded to the government—such as the authority to block content and implement a 'right to be forgotten'—are perceived as excessive and lacking in transparency, particularly as such decisions may be executed without public scrutiny. These developments pose a risk of increased censorship and restricted access to information, thereby threatening internet freedom in Indonesia. Additionally, the opaque nature of the legislative process raises critical concerns regarding the potential erosion of democratic values within the nation.

In conclusion, the amendment represents a complex balancing act between the protection of freedom of expression and the maintenance of order within the digital realm. While it introduces safeguards, concerns about state overreach and the need for deeper legal reform persist. As Indonesia's digital ecosystem evolves, its legal instruments must adapt with greater transparency, inclusivity, and respect for fundamental rights.

Second Amendment (2024)

The second revision of Indonesia's ITE Law, enacted as Law No. 1 of 2024, presents crucial updates designed to address the increasing reliance on digital platforms. This amendment focuses on three critical areas: electronic transactions, international electronic contracts, and child protection in the digital environment.

a. Electronic Transactions

High-risk digital transactions particularly those involving financial activities conducted without in-person interaction are now mandated to utilize certified electronic signatures. This requirement seeks to enhance security and foster trust in online transactions.

b. International Electronic Contracts

Contracts that include foreign elements, such as citizenship or business location, must comply with standardized clauses and should be initiated by or involve digital service providers (PSEs) operating within Indonesia. This regulation aims to ensure legal clarity for cross-border digital agreements.

c. Child Protection

The law also implements measures to safeguard children utilizing digital platforms. These initiatives focus on regulating content and access to prevent exploitation while promoting safer online environments. These modifications reflect the government's commitment to bolstering digital regulations, protecting users, and encouraging responsible growth in the digital realm.

Ongoing Debates and Reform

In recent years, a diverse group of stakeholders—including the President, NGOs, and legal experts—has advocated for further revisions. Significant attention has been directed toward Articles 27–29, which are often referenced in cases of online criminalization. These discussions coincide with broader conversations about digital rights and the constitutional guarantees of free speech.

Societal Impact of the ITE Law

Triangulated themes from scholarly literature and case studies demonstrate that the ITE Law has significantly influenced three domains. First, libraries and information institutions have leveraged its provisions to enhance digital collection management, curbing hoaxes and protecting intellectual property. Second, consumer protection mechanisms have been strengthened in online commerce, with clearer legal recourse for transaction disputes. Third, fintech regulation has begun to take shape, although respondents note that legal certainty and enforcement capacity remain uneven. Together, these impacts suggest that the ITE Law has fostered greater trust in electronic transactions and information services. Findings reveal that the ITE Law has facilitated tangible improvements in digital information governance and consumer protection. Libraries now leverage legal criteria to filter harmful content, thereby enhancing public trust in institutional repositories. E-commerce stakeholders report clearer dispute resolution pathways, contributing to more secure online transactions. Meanwhile, nascent regulatory frameworks for fintech demonstrate progress toward oversight of digital lending. However, uneven enforcement and regulatory ambiguity underscore the need for capacity-building and more straightforward guidelines to sustain and deepen these positive impacts.

Digital Transactional Reform

The ITE Law has not only legitimized online contracts and digital documents but has also cultivated a robust environment of trust in digital transactions. This groundbreaking legislation has been instrumental in propelling:

- a. The exponential growth of e-commerce, transforming the way consumers shop and businesses operate.
- b. The rise of digital financial services, facilitating seamless online banking and financial transactions.
- c. Innovative e-Government initiatives, enhancing public service delivery and accessibility through digital platforms.

By codifying the legal recognition of electronic evidence, the law has significantly fortified the foundations of legal certainty, paving the way for a thriving digital economy.

Facilitating Cybercrime Enforcement

The ITE Law has crafted a comprehensive framework aimed at effectively addressing a spectrum of cyber-related offenses that threaten the integrity of the digital landscape. These offenses include:

- a. Sophisticated hacking and alarming data breaches that compromise sensitive information.
- b. Insidious online fraud and identity theft which undermine consumer confidence and security.
- c. The dissemination of explicit or illegal digital content that poses risks to broader societal norms.

Law enforcement agencies, particularly the Cyber Crime Directorate of the National Police, have strategically leveraged this legal framework to mount vigorous campaigns against digital criminal activities, reinforcing the safety of online environments.

Legal Constraints on Digital Expression

A particularly contentious element of the ITE Law is its application in prosecuting individuals for defamation, hate speech, or misinformation, often relying on ambiguous and subjective standards of interpretation. Numerous high-profile cases have emerged, involving journalists, activists, and ordinary citizens being charged for their social media expressions. This has raised significant concerns about:

- a. Overcriminalization, where actions that should be protected are unduly penalized.
- b. Infringements on free speech, creating a chilling effect on open discourse and expression.
- c. Self-censorship among individuals who may fear reprisal for expressing their thoughts in the digital sphere.

Implementation Challenges

Despite noteworthy advancements, several persistent obstacles impede the comprehensive realization of the objectives outlined in the legislative framework. Feedback from member-check processes and case evidence indicates a substantial socio-cultural resistance, particularly concerning public awareness of legal stipulations and apprehensions surrounding freedom of expression. Enforcement agencies have reported limitations in resources, as well as interpretative ambiguities within key provisions, resulting in inconsistent application across various regions. Furthermore, the rapid pace of technological advancement, as demonstrated by the emergence of fintech models and social media platforms, frequently outstrips the capacity for legislative updates, creating regulatory gaps.

Ambiguity of Legal Provisions

Certain articles, including 27(3), 28(2), and 29, exhibit a lack of precise legal definitions, rendering them vulnerable to broad interpretations. This ambiguity has engendered uneven enforcement practices and allegations of selective enforcement, particularly in contexts influenced by political or economic interests.

Enforcement and Judicial Capacity

Indonesia confronts substantial structural challenges in equipping law enforcement and judicial personnel with the requisite technical competencies to effectively interpret digital evidence and apply the law in a proportionate manner. Investigations pertaining to cybercrime frequently encounter limitations in digital forensic capabilities and gaps in inter-agency coordination.

Public Awareness and Digital Literacy

A significant segment of the population remains uninformed about the specific content that may contravene the ITE Law. This lack of legal literacy contributes to several critical issues, including unintentional offenses and a pervasive public distrust in the law and a "chilling effect" on digital engagement.

Balancing Regulation and Rights

A central challenge remains the necessity to strike an appropriate balance between safeguarding users from harmful activities—such as hoaxes, cyberbullying, and hate speech—and upholding democratic freedoms, including the rights to free speech, opinion,

and expression within the digital realm. Addressing these multifaceted challenges necessitates a comprehensive strategy that integrates proactive public education initiatives, harmonization of enforcement protocols, and nimble legislative revisions designed to keep pace with the ever-evolving technological landscape.

Reassessing the ITE Law: Ongoing Legal and Institutional Reforms

Since its enactment, Indonesia's Electronic Information and Transactions (ITE) Law has generated significant scholarly and public discourse due to its potential for misuse, particularly concerning defamation and freedom of expression. In 2021, President Joko Widodo publicly recognized these issues, advocating for a revision of the law aimed at preventing arbitrary legal actions and safeguarding civil liberties.

In response to these concerns, the government facilitated public consultation forums and collaborated with the Ministry of Communication and Information (Kominfo) to address challenges related to the law's implementation. This initiative sought to gather input from a diverse array of stakeholders, including legal experts, digital rights advocates, and the general populace, thereby promoting a more transparent and accountable revision process.

The urgency of reform was further underscored by the enactment of a new Criminal Code (KUHP) in 2022, which incorporates provisions overlapping with the ITE Law. Consequently, a legal harmonization process has been initiated to reconcile these inconsistencies and avoid duplicative regulations.

Civil society organizations have remained actively engaged throughout this reform process, persistently advocating for three key reformative measures:

- a. Decriminalization of Defamation: This measure seeks to prevent the law from being utilized as an instrument to suppress criticism.
- b. Clarification of Key Terms: Clearer definitions of critical terms within the ITE Law are necessary to reduce ambiguity and foster equitable enforcement.
- c. Strengthened Judicial Review Mechanisms: Enhancing judicial review processes is essential to protect against misuse and to uphold constitutional rights.

Constitutional Court Amends Several Articles in the ITE Law to Prevent Misuse

On April 29, 2025, the Constitutional Court of Indonesia issued a partial ruling in a case contesting several articles of the Electronic Information and Transactions (ITE) Law. The plaintiff, Jovi Andrea Bachtiar, argued that specific provisions within the ITE Law and related statutes had inflicted harm upon him and led to the criminalization of his conduct.

Jovi challenged a range of articles, including Article 310 of the Criminal Code and several significant provisions within the ITE Law—particularly those pertaining to defamation, the transmission of prohibited content, and incitement. He contended that the broad interpretation of these articles permitted law enforcement agencies to apply them arbitrarily, thereby infringing upon personal rights and freedom of expression.

In its judgment, the Constitutional Court partially granted Jovi's petition, emphasizing the necessity for clear boundaries within legal provisions to ensure equitable application and prevent misuse. Specifically, the Court clarified the interpretation of Article 28, paragraph (3), which concerns actions leading to public unrest, ruling that this clause should be understood as applicable solely to disturbances occurring in physical spaces, rather than

being extended to online expressions.

Furthermore, the Court underscored the significance of adhering to fundamental legal principles such as *lex scripta* (written law), *lex certa* (clear law), and *lex stricta* (strict interpretation). These principles are crucial for protecting citizens from vague or overly broad legal provisions that may be wielded to suppress dissent or legitimate public discourse.

Constitutional Court Rules Defamation Clause in ITE Law Does not Apply to Government and Business Entities

The Constitutional Court of Indonesia has determined that Article 27A of the ITE Law, which addresses defamation through electronic systems, pertains solely to individuals, excluding government institutions, corporations, or community groups. These ruling safeguards public criticism of institutions as a fundamental aspect of freedom of expression under the 1945 Constitution.

Constitutional Judge Arief Hidayat highlighted the necessity for legal clarity and cautioned against vague interpretations that could lead to the criminalization of criticism. The Court further refined the definition of terms such as "a matter" within the law, specifying that it must exclusively refer to actions that damage an individual's reputation, rather than vague insults or subjective opinions.

Moreover, the Court clarified that provisions concerning hate speech in Article 28(2) should only apply to intentional, harmful actions based on identity that provoke real risks of discrimination or violence. This ruling emerged following a petition from Daniel Frits Maurits, who argued that several articles of the ITE Law lacked clarity and posed a threat to civil liberties.

This decision is viewed as a significant advancement in protecting digital freedom and preventing the misuse of the law to suppress public criticism.

CONCLUSION

The *Electronic Information and Transactions Law* (ITE Law) has been instrumental in legitimizing e-commerce and addressing cybercrime in Indonesia. However, its ambiguous provisions and susceptibility to misuse have undermined public trust and compromised digital freedoms. Reform is needed to clarify legal language, enhance institutional capacity, and protect rights in line with constitutional commitments. While the government has taken steps toward reform, including stakeholder consultations, civil society's continued involvement is essential to ensure amendments protect democratic values and freedom of expression. The recent Constitutional Court ruling, which narrows the scope of contentious articles, marks a significant step in balancing public order and individual rights. This study examines the ITE Law's historical evolution and societal impacts, such as improvements in information governance and consumer protection. However, it also reveals challenges such as socio-cultural resistance, interpretative ambiguity, and the need to keep up with rapid technological advances. These findings highlight the law's dual role as a crucial legal framework while requiring ongoing refinement. To improve its effectiveness, policymakers should focus on legal literacy, clarifying ambiguous provisions, and establishing regular review mechanisms. Future research should evaluate specific cases, compare international approaches, and assess the long-term effects of regulatory updates on Indonesia's digital

landscape. Strengthening legal education initiatives, ensuring clear definitions in the law, and regularly updating the law to match technological advancements are critical. More empirical studies on the law's impact are needed to refine its application.

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