

## A systematic review on social media echo chambers and political persuasion

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**Abstract** This study addresses the increasing concern surrounding social media echo chambers and their impact on political discourse. While echo chambers are often framed as a universal phenomenon, reinforcing existing beliefs and limiting exposure to diverse perspectives, this review recognises that cultural, political, and infrastructural factors significantly influence how echo chambers form and operate in different contexts. Factors such as social media regulation, censorship policies, and linguistic diversity play crucial roles in shaping these dynamics beyond Western settings. This research aimed to uncover how algorithmic curation, selective exposure, and socio-political contexts shape social media echo chambers and political persuasion. It seeks to analyse cognitive and affective factors reinforcing partisan beliefs and misinformation, evaluate cross-cultural differences, and identify strategies to foster cross-partisan dialogue and democratic engagement. This study employed a Systematic Literature Review approach, drawing upon the Scopus Database to evaluate existing studies, identify key themes, and highlight areas for future research. The PRISMA guidelines were followed to ensure methodological rigour and transparency. Key findings reveal that algorithmic curation and selective exposure, combined with the sharing of emotionally charged content, systematically limit exposure to contradicting evidence, allowing disinformation to thrive unchecked within insular communities. Furthermore, affective polarisation intensifies partisan hostility, making users more receptive to accepting false or exaggerated claims. Intensifying partisan hostility creates an emotional environment where individuals become more likely to accept false or exaggerated claims aligned with their political identity. The study recommends that future research should focus on exploring the psychological drivers of echo chamber participation, developing strategies for mitigating the impact of disinformation, and examining the effectiveness of interventions aimed at promoting critical thinking and media literacy.

**Keywords:** social media; echo chambers; political persuasion; polarisation

### INTRODUCTION

Echo chambers on social media are environments in which users are primarily exposed to information confirming their existing beliefs. Selective exposure is driven by algorithmic filtering and user behaviour that limits engagement with diverse perspectives (Enjolras & Salway, 2023; Januškevičiūtė, 2022). Macro-level factors, including political polarisation and social exclusion, further intensify this phenomenon as like-minded individuals increasingly cluster together (Chan et al., 2023). Although some studies suggest that bridging interactions across ideological divides may occur (Erickson et al., 2023), most evidence confirms that digital platforms favour homophily, ultimately constricting the variety of viewpoints encountered (Januškevičiūtė, 2022). The limitation of exposure strengthens individual biases and hinders democratic deliberation by diminishing genuine debate across perspectives.

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Psychological factors such as confirmation bias and personality traits predispose individuals to seek information that aligns with their beliefs, thereby reinforcing echo chambers (Boulianne & Koc-Michalska, 2022; Enjolras & Salway, 2023). Additionally, social dynamics particularly social exclusion, political polarisation, and group identity drive the formation of homogenous online clusters (Enjolras & Salway, 2023). Algorithms on social media can exacerbate these tendencies by curating content that matches users' preexisting views, reinforcing both the psychological inclination toward confirmation and the social reinforcement of group boundaries (Chan et al., 2023). Consequently, both intrinsic cognitive biases and extrinsic social pressures play critical roles in creating and sustaining echo chambers in digital environments (Boulianne & Koc-Michalska, 2022; Enjolras & Salway, 2023). The prevalence of echo chambers on social media is a significant concern, as they have the potential to profoundly impact democratic discourse and political persuasion.

The phenomenon of homophily where individuals preferentially connect with like-minded others significantly accelerates the formation of ideologically homogeneous clusters within social media networks (Enjolras & Salway, 2023). This tendency fosters echo chamber environments by reinforcing existing beliefs and reducing exposure to contrasting viewpoints (Tsai et al., 2020). Such homophilic interactions are often amplified by social media algorithms, which curate personalised content feeds that prioritise content aligning with users' preferences, thus intensifying selective exposure (GREEN et al., 2025). This interplay between homophily and algorithm-driven curation creates feedback loops that deepen ideological divides and reinforce polarisation across digital communities (GREEN et al., 2025). Consequently, these processes contribute to the fragmentation of the public sphere, diminishing opportunities for balanced dialogue and constructive deliberation (Chan et al., 2023). Recognizing the interconnectedness of homophily, algorithmic filtering, and polarisation is crucial for understanding how echo chambers form and sustain themselves, ultimately influencing societal discourse and democratic processes (Enjolras & Salway, 2023).

Echo chambers are fostered on social media platforms through algorithmic personalisation, wherein content is selectively suggested to users based on their demonstrated preferences and historical interactions. Social media algorithms analyse users' past interactions and preferences to curate personalised content feeds, contributing significantly to echo chamber formation. These algorithms reinforce existing views by preferentially suggesting content that aligns with users' ideological leanings, thereby filtering out dissenting opinions (Januškevičiūtė, 2022; Shamir et al., 2024). This process creates filter bubbles that limit exposure to diverse perspectives and intensify partisan segmentation (GREEN et al., 2025). Additionally, the networked curation mechanisms inherent within these platforms further fragment audiences along ideological lines, reducing the likelihood of encountering alternative viewpoints (Ecker-Ehrhardt, 2023). Such algorithmic personalisation not only amplifies preexisting biases but also underscores the challenges in achieving balanced public discourse in digital environments (Ecker-Ehrhardt, 2023; GREEN et al., 2025; Januškevičiūtė, 2022).

These algorithms prioritise content that aligns with a user's existing viewpoints, effectively limiting their exposure to diverse or opposing perspectives. Social media algorithms contribute significantly to echo chamber formation by curating feeds that reinforce users' existing ideologies. By analysing past engagements, these algorithms preferentially deliver content aligned with preexisting viewpoints, effectively filtering out diverse or opposing perspectives (GREEN et al., 2025; Januškevičiūtė, 2022). This personalisation intensifies selective exposure and promotes homophilic information environments, where users are increasingly constrained to ideologically congruent content (Enjolras & Salway, 2023). Moreover, such algorithmic curation magnifies political polarisation by consistently reinforcing cognitive biases, while simultaneously reducing opportunities for cross-ideological dialogue (GREEN et al., 2025). The resulting echo chambers undermine balanced democratic discourse, as users are rarely exposed to rebuttal or alternative viewpoints, thereby limiting the potential for deliberative engagement in pluralistic media environments (Enjolras & Salway, 2023; Januškevičiūtė, 2022).

The prevalence of echo chambers on social media platforms significantly impedes political persuasion and challenges the democratic process. Insulated digital environments encourage selective exposure, reinforcing existing viewpoints while limiting access to countervailing perspectives critical for informed debate and electoral decision-making (Erickson et al., 2023; Peterson, 2022). Such segmentation amplifies partisan messaging, inhibiting the

cross-ideological dialogue essential for democratic legitimacy (Boulianne et al., 2020; Törnberg & Törnberg, 2024). Research indicates that tightly knit online communities, characterised by reciprocal communication, diminish opportunities for genuine political deliberation, thereby curtailing persuasive engagement (Ackland et al., 2024). Additionally, the fragmentation of the public sphere into isolated clusters undermines trust and the capacity for consensus-building, which are foundational to a well-functioning democracy (Ecker-Ehrhardt, 2023). Collectively, these dynamics exacerbate political polarisation and may ultimately erode the quality of public discourse and democratic accountability.

When individuals are predominantly exposed to content that reinforces their preexisting views, they tend to exhibit confirmation bias, leading to diminished openness toward opposing perspectives (Neely, 2021). According to social identity theory, this tendency is reinforced as individuals align with their in-group's views to maintain a positive social identity, further intensifying selective exposure and dismissal of out-group perspectives (Enjolras & Salway, 2023). This selective exposure intensifies cognitive entrenchment, whereby dissenting information is systematically avoided, further solidifying individuals' prior beliefs (Enjolras & Salway, 2023). The absence of countervailing viewpoints not only limits opportunities for critical reflection but also fosters an environment where differing opinions are perceived as illegitimate, deepening ideological polarisation (Enjolras & Salway, 2023). Moreover, reduced exposure to diverse information undermines deliberative engagement and the potential for balanced political persuasion, reinforcing echo-chamber dynamics (Steinfeld & Lev-on, 2024). Consequently, politically motivated avoidance and the persistence of homophilic networks contribute substantially to the entrenchment of partisan positions, impeding efforts to achieve a more pluralistic public discourse (Neely, 2021; Steinfeld & Lev-on, 2024).

The reinforcement of preexisting beliefs in echo chambers contributes notably to the hardening of ideological divides and a diminished capacity for constructive political discourse. When users are continuously exposed to homogeneous views, their selective engagement reinforces partisan identities and deepens polarisation (Enjolras & Salway, 2023; Neely, 2021). This self-perpetuating cycle limits opportunities for reciprocal dialogue and cross-ideological debate, thereby constraining the development of nuanced political deliberation (Erickson et al., 2023). Empirical analyses of online networks reveal that the absence of constructive engagement further entrenches partisan positions, undermining the potential for consensus-building and healthy public debate (Ackland et al., 2024). Such dynamics underscore the pressing need for interventions that foster exposure to divergent perspectives and encourage balanced, deliberative communication across ideological lines (Erickson et al., 2023; Neely, 2021).

Echo chambers foster a self-reinforcing information environment where like-minded users seldom encounter counterarguments or rigorous fact-checking, creating fertile ground for misinformation and conspiracy theories (Enjolras & Salway, 2023; Januškevičiūtė, 2022). Research demonstrates that selective exposure encourages the circulation of unverified and extremist content because the absence of diverse perspectives undermines the corrective influence of dissenting information (Chan et al., 2023). Empirical studies have specifically linked such homogeneous digital networks to the proliferation of false narratives, including public health conspiracies (Thelwall et al., 2021). As echo chambers limit users' exposure to alternative viewpoints, they inadvertently magnify the prevalence and impact of disinformation, thereby destabilizing informed public discourse and democratic engagement. Collectively, these findings underline the need for integrative strategies that disrupt homogeneity in digital news feeds to mitigate the spread of inaccurate or manipulated information.

Echo chambers on social media undermine democratic deliberation by reinforcing partisan divides that reduce the likelihood of cross-ideological understanding. Research has demonstrated that these homogeneous environments foster selective information exposure, impeding citizens from engaging with diverse perspectives and thus hindering informed decision-making (Boulianne et al., 2020; Januškevičiūtė, 2022). Moreover, studies reveal that reciprocal communication essential for deliberative democracy is often disrupted within these closed networks, leading to increased polarisation and reducing the effectiveness of public discourse (Ackland et al., 2024). Erickson et al. further show that bridging such isolated clusters is challenging, as users preferentially engage with ideologically similar content (Erickson et al., 2023). These dynamics stifle meaningful dialogue and erode the foundational elements of a

healthy democracy by curtailing the critical exchange of ideas necessary for informed civic participation (Ackland et al., 2024; Boulianne et al., 2020).

While echo chambers are often criticised for reinforcing existing beliefs and limiting exposure to diverse perspectives, some research calls this prevalence into question, suggesting a more complex and context-dependent reality. For instance, (Erickson et al., 2023) argue that the extent of echo chambers on social media may be overstated, highlighting that many users routinely encounter cross-cutting content incidentally through platform features such as hashtags, trending topics, and recommendation algorithms. These design elements can facilitate exposure to ideologically diverse viewpoints, enabling users to navigate beyond their typical information bubbles. Moreover, studies have shown that social media platforms can sometimes offer broader access to heterogeneous perspectives compared to traditional or offline networks, where exposure to differing views is often more limited (GREEN et al., 2025; Steinfeld & Lev-on, 2024). However, this incidental cross-cutting exposure does not necessarily guarantee meaningful engagement or perspective-taking, as algorithmic curation and user behaviour still tend to favour content that aligns with existing beliefs. Therefore, while acknowledging the potential of platform design to mitigate informational isolation, it remains essential to recognise that echo chambers persist as influential environments shaped by both technological affordances and individual selection processes. This nuanced understanding underscores the importance of examining how structural platform features interact with users' media habits to influence the degree and quality of political exposure in the digital age.

Building up on this, this systematic literature review provides a comprehensive examination of the existing research on social media echo chambers and their significant influence on political persuasion and discourse. By synthesizing findings from a diverse range of scholarly sources, this study offers valuable insights into the intricate mechanisms and far-reaching implications of these polarizing information ecosystems. Through a rigorous and systematic approach, the review sheds light on the complex cognitive biases and social identity processes that contribute to the entrenchment of partisan positions within echo chambers. Moreover, it underscores the critical role of misinformation and disinformation in exacerbating the destabilizing effects of these homogeneous digital networks on informed public debate and democratic engagement. Ultimately, this study serves as an important contribution to the growing body of literature on the intersections of social media, political persuasion, and the future of deliberative democracy. This systematic literature review aims to provide a comprehensive examination of the mechanisms of echo chambers in social media and their influence on political opinions, to investigate the cognitive biases and social identity processes involved in political persuasion within echo chambers, and to assess the role of misinformation and disinformation in echo chambers and their far-reaching impact on political discourse and the health of democratic deliberation.

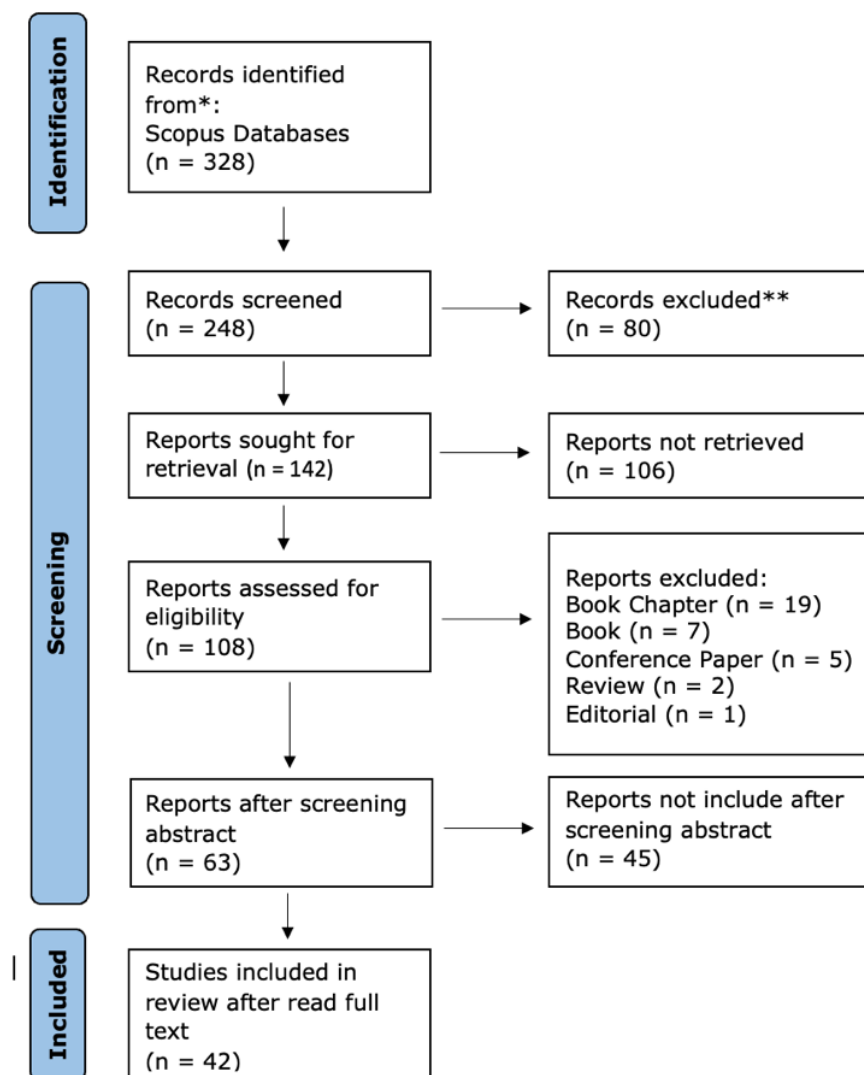
This systematic literature review critically examined the role of social media echo chambers in shaping political persuasion and public discourse. While prior research has highlighted concerns that algorithm-driven content curation and homophilic social networks reinforce partisan divides and hinder cross-ideological dialogue, there remains ambiguity regarding the extent and mechanisms through which these echo chambers operate in diverse digital environments. The central research question guiding this review is: To what degree do social media platforms foster insular echo chambers that hinder democratic deliberation, and what role do platform design features and user behaviours play in facilitating or mitigating these effects? By synthesizing findings from a broad range of scholarly sources, this study aimed to offer a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics underlying echo chambers and their impact on political persuasion.

This review contributes to the existing literature by identifying critical gaps in our understanding of the nuanced interactions between platform algorithms, social identity processes, and incidental exposure mechanisms. While many studies emphasise the isolating aspects of echo chambers, recent research suggests that exposure to diverse viewpoints can occur through feature-driven design elements like hashtags, trending topics, and cross-recommendations, which have been underexplored in current discourse. By examining these factors, this review seeks to challenge deterministic views of social media insularity and propose more balanced perspectives on digital polarisation. Ultimately, the study aims to inform

strategies for designing social media environments that promote pluralistic dialogue and bolster democratic resilience in the digital age.

## METHODOLOGY

To investigate the impact of social media echo chambers on political discourse, a systematic literature review was conducted using the Scopus database. PRISMA guidelines were rigorously adhered to throughout the review process to ensure methodological validity and transparency, thereby enhancing the reliability and replicability of the findings (Pérez-Escolar et al., 2023). The search strategy began with the keywords 'Social', AND 'Media ', and 'Echo', and 'Chambers', and 'Political', yielding an initial dataset of 328 documents. To ensure the relevance and currency of the research, the search was limited to articles published within the five-year period from 2020 to 2025, resulting in 248 documents. Further refinement was achieved by restricting the subject area to Social Science, narrowing the focus to 142 documents. The selection process involved several stages of screening and evaluation. Initially, only articles were considered, reducing the dataset to 108 items. Subsequently, the abstracts of these articles were carefully reviewed to assess their suitability for inclusion, leading to the selection of 63 articles. After a thorough full-text review of the articles, 42 were ultimately selected as meeting the inclusion criteria (See Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** PRISMA flowchart of identification and selected studies.  
Source: Processed by Author (2025)

These 42 articles are sourced from the Scopus database through a systematic and rigorous selection process adhering to PRISMA guidelines, providing a robust and representative foundation for analysing and synthesising findings related to the critical role of social media echo chambers in shaping political discourse and persuasion. The systematic literature review was employed to conduct a thematic analysis, enabling the identification of recurring patterns, concepts, and themes across the selected studies. After applying inclusion and exclusion criteria, relevant articles were coded manually. Themes were then synthesised to highlight key findings and theoretical insights related to the research objectives. The case studies spanned a diverse range of countries, including Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Croatia, Denmark, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Iceland, Israel, Hungary, Kuwait, Lietuva, Netherlands, Norway, Peru, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The multi-step search strategy and the use of the Scopus database ensured a comprehensive and systematic approach to identifying relevant literature, minimising bias and maximising the inclusion of high-quality research.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This systematic literature review reveals key insights into the complex dynamics of social media echo chambers and their significant influence on political persuasion and public discourse. The findings shed light on the intricate mechanisms underlying these polarising informational ecosystems and their far-reaching implications for the critical exchange of ideas necessary for a healthy, thriving democracy. By synthesising Scopus Database research from diverse sources, this study offers valuable insights into the cognitive biases, social identity processes, and the role of misinformation that contribute to the entrenchment of partisan positions within these homogeneous digital networks. Ultimately, this review aims to provide a holistic understanding of how social media echo chambers shape political opinions, undermine meaningful dialogue, and erode the foundations of deliberative democracy. This report offers a comprehensive analysis of the role of social media echo chambers in shaping political persuasion, based on a rigorous systematic literature review of Scopus Database research (Table 1). Relying solely on the Scopus database for a systematic literature review offers advantages such as comprehensive coverage of high-quality, peer-reviewed journals across many disciplines and efficient search functionality. However, this approach also has limitations. Scopus may not include critical studies published in regional databases such as CNKI for China, CiNii for Japan, or KCI for Korea, which are essential for capturing locally relevant research and diverse perspectives. Note: For details on the methodology and complete findings of each study reviewed, see Appendix 1.

### **The mechanisms of echo chambers in social media and their influence on political opinions**

The dynamics of echo chambers in social media significantly influence political opinions and are shaped by various mechanisms that foster ideological isolation and polarisation. Echo chambers, characterised by individuals engaging predominantly with like-minded peers, create environments where dissenting viewpoints are marginalised, leading to a heightened sense of group identity and partisanship. Studies indicate that the phenomenon of selective exposure, a tendency of users to engage with information that confirms pre-existing beliefs plays a critical role in reinforcing these chambers (Enjolras & Salway, 2023; Harel et al., 2020; Neely, 2021). This selective exposure is facilitated by algorithms employed by platforms like Facebook and Twitter, which prioritise content that aligns with the users' personal interests and ideological leanings, further entrenching political biases (GREEN et al., 2025; Januškevičiūtė, 2022). The mechanisms of echo chambers are notably underscored in political discussions and engagement patterns observed in digital environments. Political memes have emerged as a particular tool for amplifying ideological positions, effectively shaping public discourse (AlAfnan, 2025). Research indicates that these memes often circulate within homogenous networks, promoting a specific political narrative while sidelining contradictory viewpoints, thereby intensifying polarisation among users (Ackland et al., 2024; Macdonald et al., 2023). Similarly, studies on politically motivated avoidance behaviours, such as unfriending or unfollowing dissenting voices, reveal a deliberate strategy among users to maintain ideological purity within their social media interactions (Chan et al., 2023; Elder, 2020; Neely, 2021). This engineering of one's digital social environment reinforces a collective identity and solidarity against perceived external threats to their political beliefs.

The role of homophily, the principle that individuals are more likely to interact with those who share similar characteristics serves as a foundational mechanism of echo chambers (Enjolras & Salway, 2023; Esteve Del Valle et al., 2022; Israel-Turim et al., 2022). In politically charged environments, this leads to not only the reinforcement of existing beliefs but creates a feedback loop whereby extreme views gain traction as users are increasingly exposed to radicalised perspectives without encountering counterarguments (Boulianne et al., 2020; GREEN et al., 2025). Such phenomena are evidenced in the analyses of social media interactions among political influencers, where the amplification of conformity leads to pronounced extremities in political expression (Elder, 2020; Rose & Rohlinger, 2024). The content generation on social media also perpetuates echo chambers through polarised discussions, where emotions play a crucial role. Studies have highlighted that interactions within these echo chambers often escalate emotional responses, such as anger, which further galvanizes user engagement not only within but also across platforms (Cheng et al., 2024; Ruiz-Dodobara et al., 2024). This emotional feedback mechanism enhances the tribal mentality of echo chamber participants and escalates the impact of negative sentiment in political discourse, thus fortifying the ideological divides (Jiang et al., 2024; Macdonald et al., 2023; Shamir et al., 2024). The aggregation effect of emotionally charged political content results in a collective mentality that discourages dialogues across ideological lines, contributing to an increasingly fragmented societal landscape.

Despite some studies suggesting social media could foster cross-cutting discussions, the overarching landscape is fraught with polarizing tendencies. Notably, platforms like Twitter can facilitate both homogeneous and diverse interactions contingent on the socio-political context (Esteve Del Valle et al., 2022; Steinfeld & Lev-on, 2024). However, empirical evidence often tilts towards the affirmation of echo chambers as spaces that stifle productive debate rather than promote it (Boulianne & Koc-Michalska, 2022; Erickson et al., 2023; Harel et al., 2020). For instance, interactions among lawmakers and political candidates often reflect echo chamber effects, wherein discussions predominantly occur within ideological confines, reducing opportunities for bipartisan dialogue (Esteve Del Valle et al., 2022; Rose & Rohlinger, 2024). Alongside user behaviour, the algorithms underpinning social media platforms further exacerbate echo chamber dynamics. These algorithms operate on engagement metrics that prioritise sensational or polarizing content, which inherently attracts user interaction but also promotes disinformation and confirmation bias (Ackland et al., 2024; Dubois et al., 2020). By curating information that aligns with user preferences, social media creates a curated reality that fans the flames of partisanship, making it crucial to reconsider their effects on society's political landscape (Adlung et al., 2021; GREEN et al., 2025). This prioritization of engagement over balanced discourse contributes to the disconnection of users from broader political discussions and perspectives.

Theoretical implications drawn from the literature review underscore the necessity of integrating cognitive biases and social identity theories to explain how political persuasion within social media echo chambers is driven more by identity affirmation and emotional resonance than rational deliberation. The structural role of algorithmic curation extends individual biases by actively shaping information environments to favour ideologically congruent and emotionally charged content, institutionalising polarisation. Echo chambers function as dynamic feedback loops where selective exposure, emotional arousal, algorithmic amplification, and homophily intensify affective polarisation and enable misinformation to flourish, thereby challenging traditional linear media effects models. This complexity calls for a re-examination of deliberative democracy frameworks, as fragmented and polarised publics undermine classical assumptions of rational-critical debate. Additionally, political persuasion theories need to shift emphasis towards affective processes, recognising how emotional content fosters dehumanisation and receptivity to falsehoods. Finally, acknowledging that some individuals seek diverse views suggests more nuanced information behaviour models that account for heterogeneity in media consumption. Overall, these implications point to the need for interdisciplinary theoretical approaches combining cognitive psychology, social identity, algorithmic mediation, emotion research, and democratic theory to capture the multifaceted impact of echo chambers on political persuasion and discourse.

In the context of major political events like elections or significant legislative discussions echo chambers become even more pronounced. Analysing trends from various electoral cycles indicates a clear pattern where users' political engagement, facilitated by informational social

networks, is influenced by these echo chambers (Ackermann & Stadelmann-Steffen, 2022; Rose & Rohlinger, 2024; Wazzan & Aldamen, 2023). Such phenomena suggest a feedback mechanism where political opinions are not just influenced but actively shaped and reshaped by the digital environments individuals inhabit. This interconnectedness highlights the critical need to evaluate interventions that could mitigate the polarisation effects cultivated by echo chambers (Ecker-Ehrhardt, 2023; GREEN et al., 2025). The implications of echo chambers extend into the realms of civic engagement and political participation. Notably, research has shown that these echo chambers can lead to disengagement from the political process among certain demographics, particularly when interactions with dissenting views are discouraged (Jiang et al., 2024; Ruiz-Dodobara et al., 2024). This disengagement can perpetuate a cycle where political apathy becomes prevalent, further entrenching the ideologies within echo chambers. The cycle of reinforcement means that strategies promoting diverse engagements and encouraging cross-ideological discussions remain vital for enhancing civic discourse and fostering a more informed electorate (Adlung et al., 2021; Castro et al., 2021).

Echo chambers create self-reinforcing environments that can significantly impact political opinions. These echo chambers, often fuelled by algorithmic curation and selective exposure, limit users' exposure to diverse perspectives, thereby solidifying existing beliefs and potentially exacerbating political polarisation. The constant repetition of similar viewpoints within these closed networks can lead to an overestimation of their prevalence in the broader public, fostering a false sense of consensus and hindering constructive dialogue. This dynamic is further complicated by the spread of disinformation, which thrives unchecked within echo chambers due to the absence of contradicting evidence and critical voices. Affective polarisation also plays a significant role, as emotionally charged content and dehumanising rhetoric intensify partisan hostility and make users more susceptible to accepting false or exaggerated claims. The convergence of these factors creates a digital ecosystem where echo chambers and disinformation are deeply intertwined, posing a significant challenge to informed political engagement.

### **The cognitive biases and social identity in political persuasion within echo chambers**

Echo chambers constitute digital environments where cognitive biases, particularly confirmation bias, intersect with social identity dynamics to shape political persuasion (Neely, 2021). Politically motivated avoidance on social media platforms reinforces users' predispositions by filtering out dissenting views, strengthening in-group bonds that define one's political identity (Enjolras & Salway, 2023; Neely, 2021). Identity processes, as explained by social identity theory, further accentuate these biases by prioritizing specific information that aligns with preexisting ideological stances (Bene, 2020). Moreover, the design of social media algorithms compounds this effect by curating content that validates users' self-perceptions, thereby transforming echo chambers into potent sites of political persuasion (Chan et al., 2023). Digital echo chambers are complex information ecosystems where selective exposure to like-minded opinions limits contact with heterogeneous viewpoints (Januškevičiūtė, 2022). The structural mechanisms of content personalisation and algorithmic curation ensure that users repeatedly encounter information that confirms their cognitive biases and enhances affective polarisation. In these settings, political messaging is actively reinforced through the circulation of content that resonates with collective social identities (Erickson et al., 2023). Consequently, the reinforcement process within echo chambers operates through both technological mediation and users' cognitive predispositions (Januškevičiūtė, 2022).

Empirical evidence has demonstrated that negative sentiment in digital communication can heighten political persuasion by privileging emotionally charged narratives in echo chambers (Ackland et al., 2024; Steinfeld & Lev-on, 2024). Reciprocal communication patterns on platforms like Twitter further amplify these effects, as emotionally laden content tends to generate higher engagement and mobilise partisan sentiments (Ackland et al., 2024). The interdependence of affective responses and communication structures indicates that political persuasion in echo chambers is deeply intertwined with users' cognitive biases (Steinfeld & Lev-on, 2024). Such dynamics underscore the importance of considering both emotional and rational dimensions of political messaging in digital contexts (Ackland et al., 2024). Social identity theory offers a robust framework for understanding how group membership and in-group favouritism drive political persuasion within echo chambers (Esteve Del Valle et al., 2022).

Affective polarisation contributes to the process, as the perception of political opponents becomes intertwined with dehumanisation and identity-based hostility (Harel et al., 2020). Online interactions among politically aligned groups illustrate how homogeneous clusters reinforce self-identification and marginalise alternative viewpoints (Esteve Del Valle et al., 2022). This process creates an environment where individual and collective identities facilitate the selective dissemination of persuasive messages (Harel et al., 2020).

Incidental exposure to non-like-minded information remains marginal within these digitally mediated political spaces, reinforcing the insularity of echo chambers (Masip et al., 2020). Investigations into voting behaviour within such environments reveal that the fragmentation of discourse can result in reduced deliberation and a diminished willingness to engage across ideological lines (Ackermann & Stadelmann-Steffen, 2022). This phenomenon highlights how selective exposure ingrains cognitive biases and solidifies the borders of social identity groups (Masip et al., 2020). Additionally, the compartmentalization of information further restricts the possibility of cross-ideological dialogue and mutual persuasion (Ackermann & Stadelmann-Steffen, 2022). Emotional arousal and homophilic communication networks on social media are critical factors underlying the reinforcement of cognitive biases, as they contribute to the formation and maintenance of polarizing group identities. Social media users navigating these environments often exhibit increased partisan anger, which strengthens the impulse to interact solely with ideologically compatible peers (Cheng et al., 2024). Deliberate behaviours, such as unfriending or curating one's digital network, serve as practical mechanisms to preserve ideological purity and fortify the echo chamber effect. These strategies perpetuate a cyclical dynamic in which both emotional intensity and identity affirmation feed into political persuasion (Elder, 2020).

The experiences of younger demographics, including university students, reveal that digital platforms often replicate offline political orientations and cognitive biases through selective engagement (Hall, 2023). Research indicates that students perceive social media as a double-edged sword, where mechanisms that promote political mobilization also reinforce echo chamber formation and social identity homogeneity (Wazzan & Aldamen, 2023). The intersection of algorithm-driven curation and user-driven network formation results in environments that mirror existing societal cleavages (Hall, 2023). Such contexts further solidify the entrenchment of selective exposure, reinforcing the social identity boundaries central to political persuasion (Wazzan & Aldamen, 2023). Political actors and digital content curators increasingly tailor messages to the cognitive predispositions and social identities of their audiences (Franch & Micó, 2021; GREEN et al., 2025). These curated interactions minimise exposure to conflicting viewpoints, thus strengthening in-group cohesion and perpetuating cognitive biases (GREEN et al., 2025). The framing strategies employed by media professionals ensure that persuasive political content resonates with users by aligning with their preexisting ideological identities (Franch & Micó, 2021). In tandem, the mediating role of network curation in public advocacy networks limits the dispersal of counter-persuasive messages, reinforcing the echo chamber dynamic within politically charged digital spaces (Tsai et al., 2020).

In summary, echo chambers can be understood as environments where cognitive biases and social identity processes reinforce political opinions. Confirmation bias leads individuals to selectively seek out and interpret information that aligns with their pre-existing beliefs, while discounting contradictory evidence. This is compounded by social identity theory, where individuals are motivated to maintain a positive self-image by aligning with their in-group and distancing themselves from out-groups. Within echo chambers, this manifests as a preference for information that supports the in-group's views and a rejection of information that challenges them. Affective polarisation further intensifies this dynamic by using emotionally charged content to dehumanise political opponents, making users more receptive to accepting false or exaggerated claims. The combination of cognitive biases and social identity processes creates a powerful feedback loop that reinforces existing political opinions and makes individuals resistant to persuasion from outside the echo chamber.

### **The role of misinformation and disinformation in echo chambers and political discourse**

The rise of misinformation and disinformation on digital communication platforms has significantly contributed to the formation and reinforcement of echo chambers, where users gravitate toward content that confirms their existing beliefs. Politically motivated avoidance behaviors, as observed in user interactions on social media, restrict exposure to alternative viewpoints, thus fostering environments conducive to disinformation (Neely, 2021). Disinformation campaigns are designed to exploit these echo chambers, amplifying polarised political narratives and exacerbating partisan divides. This resulting information ecosystem not only disrupts balanced public discourse but also undermines the democratic potential of digital media by prioritising ideological consistency over factual accuracy. These dynamics become particularly evident during politically charged events, where the stakes of accurate information are extremely high (Macdonald et al., 2023). Consequently, such mechanisms distorting the democratic debate led to cycles of misinformation and partisan entrenchment (Neely, 2021).

Memes and creative digital content have emerged as dual-purpose tools in political discourse, acting both as mobilizers of political engagement and vehicles for misleading information. The viral nature of such content within echo chambers allows for rapid dissemination of disinformation, enhancing the impact of partisan narratives (Alafnan, 2025). Social media users often share humorous political memes, which blur the line between satire and misinformation, complicating the discernment of credible content from manipulated agendas (Dubois et al., 2020). In these environments, the entertainment value of memes can obscure the spread of misrepresentative information (Alafnan, 2025). This intermingling of humour and disinformation highlights the need for robust media literacy and verification practices among users (Dubois et al., 2020). As boundaries between factual reporting and satirical or manipulated content become less clear, echo chambers increasingly serve as conduits for both mobilization and misinformation (Alafnan, 2025).

Algorithm-driven personalisation and selective exposure mechanisms heighten the spread of disinformation by structurally isolating users into echo chambers. The sophisticated filtering systems utilized by digital platforms create personalized 'bubbles' that continuously present information aligned with users' established beliefs, often at the expense of diverse perspectives (Januškevičiūtė, 2022). Additionally, studies have indicated that hate-sharing behaviours within these networks amplify polarisation and reinforce echo chambers by creating negative reinforcement among like-minded users. The combination of algorithmic curation and affective content sharing systematically limits exposure to contradicting evidence, allowing disinformation to thrive unchecked (Weigel & Gitomer, 2024). These dynamics reveal the technical and social structures that enable disinformation to consolidate within insular communities (Januškevičiūtė, 2022). Thus, the fragmentation of the public discourse into homogeneous groups is intertwined with the proliferation of misinformation (Weigel & Gitomer, 2024).

Research indicates that political discourse is increasingly shaped by echo chamber effects that facilitate the spread of disinformation during critical moments of political mobilisation and electoral cycles. Offline interactions, which often reflect online biases, further amplify these effects by reinforcing the insular circulation of manipulated information (Boulianne et al., 2020). Moreover, the transformation of the public sphere into a digital environment has led to a crisis in credible communication, as trust in traditional media erodes due to rampant online disinformation. Political actors capitalise on these vulnerabilities, employing targeted campaigns that saturate echo chambers with misleading narratives (Palau-Sampio & López-García, 2022). The intertwining of partisan rhetoric and disinformation within these spheres undermines efforts to foster informed and deliberative political engagement (Boulianne et al., 2020). This convergence of factors highlights the multifaceted challenges associated with countering disinformation in a digitally fragmented public space (Palau-Sampio & López-García, 2022).

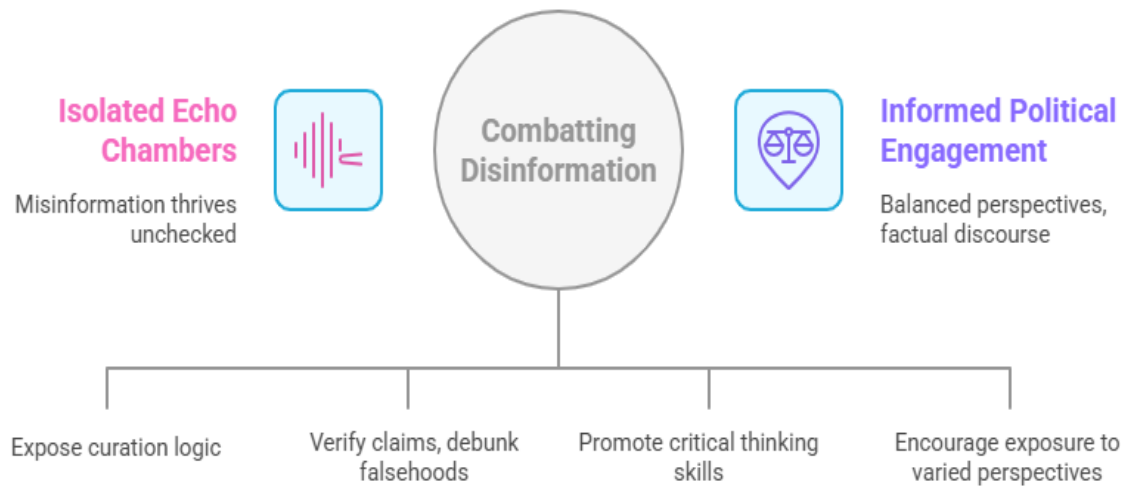
Coordinated disinformation operations, including astroturfing campaigns, are documented as deliberate strategies that inject false narratives into political discourse and further entrench echo chamber dynamics. These orchestrated initiatives create the illusion of grassroots support while simultaneously undermining the legitimacy of genuine political dialogue (Arce-García et al., 2023). Additionally, the fragmentation of media authority intensified by both state and non-state actors augments public scepticism toward traditional information

sources, facilitating the proliferation of disinformation within well-defined echo chambers. Such engineered manipulation of digital discourse distorts the informational landscape and marginalises critical voices that seek to present alternative viewpoints (Aydin et al., 2021). The strategic design of these disinformation tactics underscores the complex interplay between state-sponsored and independent efforts to manipulate public opinion (Arce-García et al., 2023). Consequently, echo chambers are systematically fortified against external fact-checking and counter-discourse (Aydin et al., 2021).

Affective polarisation exacerbates the tendency of digital echo chambers to harbour disinformation by utilising emotionally charged content to dehumanise political opponents and intensify partisan hostility. The normalisation of vitriolic language and hostile rhetoric, through repeated exposure in echo chambers, renders users more receptive to accepting false or exaggerated claims (Harel et al., 2020). Furthermore, disinformation tactics increasingly exploit affective cues and cultural symbols to manipulate political emotions and amplify group identities. Such strategies not only promote homogeneity in opinion but also actively deter constructive cross-party communication by embedding negative sentiments within digital discourse (Adlung et al., 2021). This interaction between affective polarisation and disinformation fosters feedback loops that deepen partisan divisions and obscure objective political analysis (Harel et al., 2020). By exploiting emotional currents within public sentiment, disinformation exacerbates the binary divisions characteristic of echo chamber dynamics (Adlung et al., 2021).

Digital curation mechanisms, especially algorithmically customised feeds, significantly contribute to the persistence of echo chambers by filtering content that aligns with users' preexisting beliefs. These personalised systems often restrict exposure to a diverse range of perspectives, reinforcing ideological silos that facilitate the unchecked spread of disinformation (Shamir et al., 2024). Concurrently, the strategic use of bots and coordinated networks plays a crucial role in amplifying false narratives and extending the reach and impact of disinformation campaigns (García-Orosa, 2021). The real-world effects of such strategies are evidenced by the emergence of misinformation that influences public health decisions, including vaccine hesitancy, widely observed on social media platforms (Thelwall et al., 2021). Together, these digital strategies emphasise how meticulously engineered content curation and dissemination contribute to the cyclical reinforcement of echo chamber environments (García-Orosa, 2021). The resulting landscape is one where disinformation circulates rapidly and is deeply entrenched within frameworks that influence users' political engagement (Thelwall et al., 2021).

Video-sharing platforms and multimedia outlets further exacerbate the echo chamber phenomenon by employing recommendation algorithms that present politically congruent content, often undermining balanced exposure to information. These platforms typically showcase content that aligns with users' ideological preferences, perpetuating cycles of selective exposure and misinformation (Lai et al., 2024). Research into public advocacy networks has demonstrated that the role of social mediators can either challenge or enhance these echoic structures, depending on their framing and dissemination of information (Tsai et al., 2020). The rise of algorithmically personalised information bubbles has led to what some scholars refer to as 'information wars', where disinformation spreads rampantly within insulated communities (Santos-D'Amorim & Macedo Dos Santos, 2022). Furthermore, widespread belief in conspiracy theories and orchestrated false narratives has heightened societal polarisation (See Figure 2), contributing to a segmented public sphere that is increasingly divided along partisan lines (Gunnar Ólafsson & Jóhannsdóttir, 2024). Case studies, including research on political expression during Brexit, illustrate how echo chambers facilitate the spread of disinformation while simultaneously hindering cross-partisan dialogue (Bossetta et al., 2023). The interrelation of algorithmic curation, strategic mediation, and user interactions forms a complex digital ecosystem where echo chambers and disinformation remain deeply intertwined (Tsai et al., 2020).



**Figure 2.** Breaking free from echo chambers.  
Source: Processed by Author (2025)

Echo chambers amplify the impact of misinformation and disinformation on political discourse. The algorithmic curation characteristic of social media platforms, combined with the sharing of emotionally charged content, systematically limits exposure to contradicting evidence, allowing disinformation to thrive unchecked within insular communities. This dynamic is further exacerbated by coordinated disinformation operations, including astroturfing campaigns, which inject false narratives into political discourse and undermine genuine political dialogue. Affective polarisation exacerbates the tendency of digital echo chambers to harbour disinformation by utilising emotionally charged content to dehumanise political opponents and intensify partisan hostility, making users more receptive to accepting false or exaggerated claims. This convergence of factors creates a digital ecosystem where echo chambers and disinformation are deeply intertwined, presenting a significant challenge to informed political engagement.

## CONCLUSION

This systematic review highlights the significant role of social media echo chambers in shaping political persuasion and influencing public discourse. The findings confirm that algorithmic curation, user behaviours, and platform design features collectively foster insular communities where partisan beliefs are reinforced, and cross-ideological dialogue is limited. While previous studies acknowledged the existence of echo chambers and their potential to deepen polarisation, they often overlooked the nuanced mechanisms through which incidental exposure and platform features could facilitate or hinder exposure to diverse viewpoints. Many earlier works emphasised the deterministic view of social media as primarily reinforcing insularity, thus failing to account for instances where cross-cutting exposure occurs or could be promoted through specific platform interventions.

This review contributes to the literature by synthesising evidence that underscores the complex interaction between platform design, user agency, and social identity processes. It reveals that although echo chambers often reinforce belief systems and limit democratic deliberation, there are elements within social media ecosystems such as hashtags, trending content, and recommendation algorithms, that have the potential to expose users to diverse perspectives. These insights challenge the somewhat deterministic narrative of digital insularity and highlight the importance of considering technological and behavioural nuances. Furthermore, this work directly addresses existing gaps by emphasising how misinformation and disinformation are amplified within these insular environments, reinforcing partisan and

polarised attitudes. It aligns with prior research suggesting that homogeneous networks facilitate the spread of false information but extends the understanding by illustrating how platform features might serve as gateways to cross-ideological engagement. By doing so, this review advances our comprehension of the multifaceted nature of echo chambers and provides a more balanced perspective on their role in political persuasion. The contributions made herein help bridge the gap between acknowledging digital polarisation and considering actionable insights for promoting more informed and diverse online interactions.

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**Appendix**

available at:

