

# THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATICS OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA'S INITIATIVES TO ADDRESS HOAXES AND HATE SPEECH IN THE CYBER WORLD: PROMOTING PEACEFUL DEMOCRACY IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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## Abstract

In order to establish a peaceful democracy in the digital age, it is necessary to understand the map of democracy in that environment as well as the different difficulties that must be overcome. This research was carried out using a qualitative methodology. Case studies are the methodology employed, and participant observation and library research, which includes systematic identification and analysis of documents that contain data relevant to the study problem, are the data gathering tools. The study's findings demonstrate that spreading hoaxes and hate speech is the greatest obstacle to establishing digital democracy in Indonesia because they pose a threat to the system and can cause the country to fall apart. Three initiatives are being carried out by the Indonesian government through the Ministry of Communication and Informatics: 1) Upstream by carrying out the Digital Literacy National Movement, which aims to reach 17 million Indonesians; 2) Middle Stream by using digital parole, which is based on 800,000 websites that report hate speech and hoaxes; and 3) Downstream by using existing laws that punish those who commit crimes like spreading hoaxes.

**Keywords:** *Digital Literacy, Hoax, Hate speech, Indonesia*

## 1.0 Introduction

Modern technical advancements have a significant impact on human behaviour. One of them is how people communicate or share information. People used to engage and share knowledge face-to-face when they visited, met on the street, or in other ways. Through social media and the internet, information may now be easily shared by anyone, anytime. The need for communication and knowledge at all social levels motivates more people to use the internet. 73.7% of Indonesia's population, or 204.7 million people, will be online in February 2022, according to research from We are Social Hootsuite. This number increased by 1 percent (2.1 million) over the prior year [9]. The length of time that Indonesians spend online, 8 hours and 36 minutes each day on average [1], is another factor that is highly fascinating. This indicates that 37.5% of a person's lifetime is spent on the internet. According to data from the Ministry of Communication and Informatics of the Republic of Indonesia, Indonesia's Digital Literacy Index currently stands at 3.49 on a scale of 1 to 5, which indicates that it is still at the "medium" level. As a result, increasing Indonesia's level of digital media literacy will require the cooperation of many parties. The propagation of fake news, also referred to as hoaxes, is one of the major obstacles to raising the digital literacy index.

Some people have taken advantage of the large growth in internet users, whether it be for amusement, to cater to those with interests, or for personal gain. Numerous instances of propagating fake news had a

significant influence and the capacity to engender slander, enmity, defamation, and other offences against race and religion [3]. Another startling statistic, according to the Indonesian Anti-Defamation Society or Mafindo [4], was that in just three months, there were over 230 pieces of hoax content making the rounds on social media. Considering Mafindo's observations, this assertion is limited to an Indonesian context.

According to a 2017 survey by Mastel (Telecommunications Society), out of 1,146 respondents, 44.3% reported receiving fake news every day, and 17.2% reported receiving it more than once a day. The mainstream media, specifically radio with 1.20%, print with 5%, and television with 8.70%, became a conduit for the dissemination of false information/news. The most popular social media platforms for spreading hoaxes are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Path, which account for 92.40% of all usage; the remaining channels include chat services like WhatsApp, Line, and Telegram as well as websites [7]. Suharjo Nugroho, chairman of the Association of Indonesian Public Relations Companies (APRI), believes that the prevalence of hoaxes in Indonesia is related to the poor interest in reading among Indonesians. According to UNESCO figures, only one person out of every thousand Indonesians reads books, or 0.001. Additionally, Indonesia has the fifth-largest population of gadget users in the world, which makes it simpler to access online media where hoaxes are present [8].

As hoaxes have grown in popularity, more people are concerned about them and aware of the need to act quickly to stop them. According to data from the Kemenkeminfo hoax [8], 773,339 bad sites had been removed as of December 2016. Law Number 11 of 2008 on Amendments to Law Number 19 of 2016 Concerning Information and Electronic Transactions, which has been in effect in society to this point, was also created in an effort to prohibit illegal acts through the means of information [10].

## 2.0 Literature Review

### *Hoax*

Hoaxes are associated with deceit or lying. The Big Indonesian Dictionary [11] describes lying as saying something that is untrue. Usually, one does this to better himself or others [12]. Three traits of lying were formulated by Coleman and Kay [13]. First, the speaker makes a false statement. Second, the speaker thinks what he said was incorrect. Third, the speaker wants to deceive the listener. According to Gani's theory [14], lying is "an activity (expression/word/action) without prior notification that seeks to shift a person's position to believe," which is in line with the third attribute.

According to Baryadi [15], there are seven different types of lies. The first involves lying by substituting an untrue object for the actual one. Second, deception that weakens or minimises the truth, as committing partial plagiarism. Third, make something false by combining it with other items to make it extravagant, like marking up the budget. Fourth, make up a story that isn't based on actual occurrences, such as making up a story, to tell a lie. Fifth, breaking promises while lying. Sixth, pretending to have a position or career that he doesn't actually have, such saying he's single when he's already married. Seventh, lying by refusing to acknowledge his error.

The types of false information and hoaxes that circulate online are fairly varied. starting with the sectors related to politics, health, social services, or law and order. This might potentially lead to public misinformation or confusion. According to a constructivist viewpoint, social reality and the creation of idea are inextricably linked [25]. In this manner, false information that keeps exposing the current community will be taken as reality or truth. Additionally, there were worries that false information might undermine Indonesia's national peace and unity. According to Muhtadiah [16], countries with more advanced democratic foundations than Indonesia experienced this first. The United States Presidential Election at the end of 2016 is frequently referred to as having a negative impact due to false information and lies. False information spread widely on social media prior to the November 2016 election is said to have contributed to Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton's defeat. The implication is that the

US people are still divided until less than a week before US President-elect Donald Trump's inauguration. The schism has also exacerbated a verbal war between Trump supporters and those who oppose him.

### *Hate speech*

Hate speech is defined as language used to express hatred toward groups in order to humiliate, humiliate, or humiliate group members [17]. According to the Chief of Police Circular Letter Number: SE/6/X/2015 [18] concerning Hate Speech Handling, which includes: 1) insults, 2) defamation, 3) defamation, 4) unpleasant acts, 5) provoking, 6) inciting, and 7) spreading fake news. Hate speech, in a legal sense, is a speech, behaviour, writing, or performance that is prohibited because it can incite acts of violence and prejudice on the part of either the perpetrator or the victim of the said action. Hate sites are websites that use or implement hate speech. Most of these sites use Internet forums and news to reinforce a particular point of view.

### *Role of the Indonesian Police*

A study conducted in the context of Batam, Indonesia, also highlights the relationships or importance of Indonesian Police in managing hate speech or hoax in the cyberworld, which has an indirect impact on Indonesian society. Thus, the Indonesian Police (Polri) role is explained in Providing statistical data to support the significance of the role. Referring to the cases reported by the Barelang Police in the last three years, the graph of the number of hate speech cases received shows a decrease [27]. The proliferation of hate speech is due to the inexperience of social media users.

## **3.0 Methodology**

The present study employed a qualitative study using case study approach. A case can be about a phenomenon or about a population. Cases in the first scenario are representative of a phenomenon and are chosen based on empirical evidence. According to the research design, the process highlights different aspects of cases while obscuring others, allowing the complexity, specificity, and context of the phenomenon to be explored [28]. In the alternative population-focused scenario, case selection comes before research. In investigating a phenomenon, both positive and negative cases are considered, with the set of cases defined by theory and the central goal of constructing generalisations. In the present study, researchers have made observations and actively participated in the Digital Literacy National Movement program implemented by the Ministry of Communication and Information of the Republic of Indonesia. In addition, for data collection, researchers also used interview techniques and systematic documentation or literature studies, analysis of documents containing information related to the study problem.

## **4.0 Findings**

### *Hoaxes, Challenges to Democracy in the Millennial Era*

Hoaxes that occur in Indonesia are generally spread using text or images that lead readers to believe something. Events that happened are often fuelled by fake news using images or videos that are completely unrelated to the context. Or a recording of an event that happened a long time ago wrapped in narration as if it had just happened. The motivations for spreading hoaxes also vary, ranging from just fad for the sake of jokes to spreading concern or provoking political agendas. Circulating through social media and messaging services installed as applications on gadgets, hoaxes cannot be separated from most Indonesian people who are already familiar with devices such as smartphones.

Septiaji Eko Nurgoroho [19] stated that low literacy awareness was one of the factors driving the massive circulation of hoaxes. With a low reading culture, people swallow information instantly without trying to digest it whole. The Indonesian nation, for him, is not a nation of readers but a nation of chatters. Information received is immediately believed to be true, then attempts to share this information with

others. This is relevant to UNESCO records (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). The reading index of the Indonesian nation according to UNESCO (2012) is only 0.001. That is, out of 1,000 people, only one person reads seriously. Likewise, the survey record of the Most Literate Nation in the World (2015) places Indonesia in 60th place out of 61 countries. However, a Philosophy lecturer at the University of Indonesia, Tommy F Awuy [20], clarified that the spread of fake news is sometimes not always relevant to the level of literacy. A certain number of social media groups are also inhabited by people with an adequate level of literacy. This hoax information can threaten a person's popularity. Because of hoaxes, a person's good name and self-esteem can be tarnished in society and will trigger conflicts of interest and make people's lives uneasy.

### *Hate Speech Online*

Hate speech is prevalent not only in the physical world, but also in cyberspace. According to data from the Ministry of Communication and Informatics, there were 13,829 instances of hate speech on social media in 2017, 6,973 instances of fake news, and 13,120 instances of pornographic content. Furthermore, up until September 18, 2017, the government had blocked 782,316 websites. Because it can cause social divisions, this endangers the stability of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. As a result, the crime is punishable. Almost every country in the world has laws that prohibit hate speech. An example is the United Kingdom, when the Public Order Act 1986 appeared, which stated that an act is categorised as a criminal act is when a person commits an act of "threatening, insulting, and harassing both in word and deed" against "skin colour, race, nationality, or ethnicity". The state of Brazil has a constitution that prohibits the emergence or development of negative propaganda against religion, race, or class suspicion, among other things. In Turkey, a person will be sentenced to prison for one to three years if he incites someone who creates hatred and enmity based on class, religion, race, sect, or region. As for Canada, the "Canadian Charter" for rights and freedoms (Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms) guarantees freedom of expression but with certain conditions to prevent sedition [21].

### *Efforts of the Ministry of Communication and Information of the Republic of Indonesia in Dealing with Hoaxes and Hate Speech*

The Republic of Indonesia's Ministry of Communication and Information is attempting to combat hoaxes and hate speech in three ways: upstream, middle stream, and downstream. On the upstream side, the Republic of Indonesia's Ministry of Communication and Information has been carrying out the National Digital Literacy Movement since 2021. The National Digital Literacy Movement, which was carried out online, succeeded in reaching 12 million Indonesians by 2021. This increased Indonesia's Digital Literacy Index, which was 3.46 (on a scale of 1 to 5) in 2021 and then increased to 3.49 in 2022.

Then on the middle stream side, the Ministry of Communication and Information of the Republic of Indonesia is working with the State Intelligence Agency (BIN) and the Indonesian National Police to carry out digital patrols, to block sites that indicate hoaxes and hate speech. Throughout 2016 the Ministry of Communication and Information [22] has blocked nearly 800 thousand online sites related to negative content, some of which are categorized as slander and hoax content. And at the end of February 2017, the State Intelligence Agency (BIN) recommended closing 760 thousand sites and social media accounts containing hoaxes and other negative content. In addition, it is predicted that the 2024 Presidential Election will still be coloured by the spread of fake news or hoaxes on social media. The National Police [23] detected that up to now there are at least 3,500 hoax content spread on social media.

The Indonesian government already has regulations governing sanctions for the spread of hoaxes and hate speech, because hoaxes are categorised as crimes punishable by Law No.19/2016 concerning Information and Electronic Transactions, which includes hoax acts as a crime category. cyber. The law emphasises that anyone who sends fake news (hoaxes) or simply distributes it for fun (forwards) faces a six-year prison sentence and a fine of IDR 1 billion [24]. Meanwhile, legal instruments to entrap perpetrators of hate speech can be found in article 28 paragraph 2 of Law No. 11/2018 concerning

information and electronic transactions, articles 4 and 16 of Law No. 40/2008 concerning the Elimination of Racial and Ethnic Discrimination, and articles 156, 157, 310, and 311 of the Criminal Code. These rules govern behaviour that is detrimental to one's honour or good name (defamation) and causes hostility or hatred toward individuals or groups of people (SARA). If proven guilty, perpetrators of hate speech face imprisonment for 6 to 4 years and a maximum fine of Rp. 1 billion.

## 5.0 Conclusion

The results of the study show that the spread of hoaxes and hate speech is the main challenge faced in creating digital democracy in Indonesia because it can threaten democracy and lead to national disintegration. The efforts made by the Indonesian government through the Ministry of Communication and Informatics are with three events, namely: 1) Upstream by carrying out the Digital Literacy National Movement which targets 17 million Indonesians; 2) Middle Stream is carried out by way of digital parole, according to 800 thousand internet sites that indicate hoaxes and hate speech; 3) Downstream, Indonesia already has regulations that punish perpetrators of crimes of spreading hoaxes and hate speech, which are stipulated in the Information and Electronic Transactions (ITE) Law with a minimum sentence of up to 6 years in prison and a fine of up to IDR 1 billion. thematically. The dissemination of false information to the general public is a repercussion of diversity. The problem was solved. News is disseminated in a manner and according to interests. Lies repeated will become the truth. The media has served its purpose as well as it could. Changing into a tool of provocation and hatred for something other than himself and his group. The spread of the hoax cannot be separated from the political momentum. However, providing facts to people who have been exposed to a genuine hoax is a difficult task. If the ideology that is part of a person's identity is challenged, his survival instincts will ensure that he survives. Even the evidence presented could strengthen his conviction. To say that there is a portion of information received by someone will create an empty mental space in his mind [26].

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