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The Role Of Journalism In Countering Hoaxes On Social Media For Journalism Students Of The Class Of 2022 In Bengkulu

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Abstract

The rapid development of social media has made it easier for people to access and share information. However, this condition also increases the potential spread of false information or hoaxes. Journalism students, as future journalists, have an important role in filtering and verifying information circulating on social media. This study aims to analyze the role of journalism in preventing the spread of hoaxes on social media among Journalism students of the 2022 cohort in Bengkulu. This research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. Data collection techniques were carried out through observation, interviews, and documentation. The results show that journalism students have a fairly good understanding of the definition and characteristics of hoaxes. Students are able to identify hoaxes through unclear sources, provocative headlines, and the absence of supporting data in news content. In addition, students demonstrate a critical attitude toward information on social media by conducting fact-checking before sharing information. Journalistic knowledge such as fact verification, information accuracy, and the use of credible sources also helps students filter information. However, there are still challenges such as the influence of viral information and the rapid flow of information on social media. Therefore, journalism students have an important role as agents of information literacy in educating the public about the importance of verifying information before sharing it.

Keywords: Journalism, Hoaxes, Social Media, Digital Literacy, Journalism Students.

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BACKGROUND

The development of information and communication technology in the digital era has brought about significant changes in the way people obtain and disseminate information. Social media is now one of the most widely used sources of information due to its ease of access and speed of dissemination. Various platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and TikTok allow information to spread very quickly without strict filtering. This situation allows people to easily receive and share information without knowing whether it is true or not (Nasrullah, 2021).

The ease of disseminating information through social media has also given rise to serious problems in the form of the increasing spread of fake news, or hoaxes. Hoaxes are false or misleading information spread intentionally or unintentionally to influence public opinion. The spread of hoaxes can have various negative impacts, such as misunderstandings, social conflict, and a decline in public trust in the media. Therefore, hoaxes have become a serious communication problem in the current digital era (Rahadi, 2020).

The spread of hoaxes on social media often occurs due to the public's low ability to verify information. Many social media users readily believe and share information without first verifying the source. This demonstrates the importance of digital literacy skills for understanding, evaluating, and critically using information. Digital literacy encompasses not only the ability to use technology but also the ability to think critically about information circulating on digital media (Sari & Setiawan, 2022).

In addressing these challenges, journalism plays a crucial role in maintaining the quality of information circulating in the community. Journalism emphasizes principles such as fact-checking, information accuracy, independence, and the use of credible sources. These principles form the basis for producing information that the public can trust. By applying journalistic principles, the accuracy of information conveyed to the public can be ensured, thereby minimizing the spread of hoaxes on social media (Ishwara, 2021).

In addition to professional journalists, journalism students also play a crucial role in countering the spread of hoaxes on social media. Journalism students are prospective media practitioners equipped with knowledge of news writing techniques, information verification processes, and the application of journalistic codes of ethics. This knowledge is expected to foster students' critical thinking regarding various information circulating on social media, preventing them from being easily influenced by news that is not necessarily true (Pratama & Widodo, 2023).

Students, as part of the younger generation, are a group that actively uses social media in their daily lives. This activity makes them vulnerable to exposure to various types of information

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that are not necessarily true. Therefore, understanding the principles of journalism is important for students so that they are able to sort out valid information and not spread hoaxes on social media (Putri & Kurniawan, 2022).

In Indonesia, the spread of hoaxes remains a major challenge in the world of digital communication. Unverified information often spreads quickly and is difficult to control. This situation indicates that public awareness of the importance of verifying information still needs to be improved. Therefore, journalism plays a crucial role in educating the public about the importance of filtering information before spreading it on social media (Hidayat, 2021).

Based on these issues, research on the role of journalism in countering the spread of hoaxes on social media is crucial. This study focused on journalism students from the class of 2022 in Bengkulu to determine their understanding of journalistic principles in filtering information on social media. The results are expected to provide insight into the role of journalistic knowledge in fostering students' critical thinking regarding information circulating on social media and assisting in efforts to prevent the spread of hoaxes among students.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with descriptive methods. This qualitative approach was used to gain a deeper understanding of social phenomena occurring in society, particularly regarding the role of journalism in countering the spread of hoaxes on social media. The descriptive method was chosen because this study aimed to systematically describe journalism students' understanding and attitudes toward information circulating on social media (Sugiyono, 2021).

A qualitative approach allows researchers to gain a deeper understanding of informants' experiences and perspectives on a phenomenon. In this study, researchers sought to understand how journalism students utilize their journalistic knowledge to filter information and prevent the spread of hoaxes on social media (Creswell, 2020).

This research was conducted in Bengkulu, focusing on students of the Journalism Study Program, graduating class of 2022. The selection of the research location was based on the consideration that journalism students have an understanding of journalistic principles such as information verification, news accuracy, and the use of credible sources in conveying information to the public (Nasrullah, 2021).

The subjects in this study were journalism students from the class of 2022 who actively use social media. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, a technique used to select

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informants based on specific criteria aligned with the research objectives. This technique was used to obtain data relevant to the focus of the study (Sugiyono, 2021).

Data collection techniques in this study included interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted to obtain in-depth information regarding students' understanding of hoaxes and journalistic principles in filtering information. Observations were conducted to directly observe how students use social media and respond to circulating information. Documentation was used to collect supporting data related to the research (Moleong, 2021).

The data analysis technique used in this study was descriptive qualitative analysis. The data analysis process consisted of several stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was carried out by simplifying data obtained from the field, then presenting the data in narrative form for ease of understanding. The final stage was drawing conclusions based on the results of the data analysis (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2020).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Student Understanding of Hoaxes

Based on the research findings, journalism students from the 2022 intake in Bengkulu generally have a fairly good understanding of the concept of hoaxes. Students understand hoaxes as information that is false, misleading, or lacks a clear factual basis, but is widely disseminated through social media and other digital platforms. This understanding is gained from the learning process in journalism courses and from their experience accessing various information on digital media. Knowledge about hoaxes is important because the spread of incorrect information can lead to misunderstandings and influence public opinion (Nasrullah, 2021).

In addition to understanding the concept of hoaxes, students are also able to recognize several common characteristics of information that is considered a hoax. These characteristics include unclear sources of information, provocative or sensational titles, and information lacking reliable data or evidence. Students also recognize that hoaxes are often created to attract public attention or influence public opinion on a particular issue. Students' ability to recognize the characteristics of hoaxes demonstrates a basic understanding of the importance of verifying information before believing or spreading it (Sari & Setiawan, 2022).

Students' understanding of hoaxes is inseparable from the role of journalism education, which emphasizes the importance of basic journalistic principles, such as accuracy, fact-checking, and the use of credible sources. In journalism practice, all information to be published must

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undergo a fact-checking process to ensure its accuracy is accountable to the public. The principle of verification is a crucial element in journalism, ensuring that information conveyed to the public is accurate and not misleading (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2021). Therefore, students' understanding of journalistic principles can help them recognize and avoid the spread of hoaxes on social media.

2. Students' Ability to Identify Hoaxes on Social Media

Research results show that journalism students have a fairly good ability to identify hoaxes circulating on social media. Students are generally able to recognize several characteristics of hoaxes, such as unclear sources of information, provocative headlines, and news content lacking verifiable data or facts. This ability is related to students' level of digital literacy, as digital literacy helps individuals understand, evaluate, and assess the veracity of information circulating on social media (Setiawan & Santoso, 2021).

Students also demonstrate a critical attitude when receiving information from social media. They tend to double-check the information they receive before believing it or sharing it with others. This attitude is part of the information literacy skills developed among students, especially after they received instruction on the importance of information verification in journalistic practice. Good media literacy can help students think more critically, be less easily persuaded by information with uncertain veracity, and be able to distinguish between accurate and inaccurate information (Hidayat & Rahmawati, 2022).

Furthermore, students can also recognize hoaxes through the use of sensational or provocative headlines. Exaggerated headlines are often used to attract readers' attention without considering their relevance to the news content. In professional journalism practice, headlines should objectively reflect the news content and not mislead readers. Therefore, journalism students are more cautious about news that uses overly emotional language or provokes public reaction (Pratama & Nugroho, 2023).

Students also pay attention to the presence of supporting data within a piece of information. Information that does not cite data sources, source quotes, or clear evidence is often considered a hallmark of hoax news. In journalism courses, students are taught that all information must have a strong factual basis and be accountable to the public. This demonstrates that verification skills are a crucial skill for journalism students in navigating the rapid flow of digital information (Sari & Putra, 2024).

The findings of this study indicate that students' ability to identify hoaxes is closely related to the principle of verification in journalism. Verification is a fundamental principle of journalism that aims to ensure that information conveyed to the public has been accurately fact-checked.

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With these skills, journalism students are expected to be able to become information literacy agents who can help the public filter information circulating on social media (Wibowo & Kurniawan, 2021).

3. Students' Critical Attitudes Toward Information on Social Media

Research results show that journalism students do not directly share information they find on social media. Most students first verify the accuracy of the information before deciding to share it. This verification process usually involves checking the source of the information, comparing it with news from credible media outlets, and seeking clarification from several trusted sources. This attitude indicates that students are aware of the importance of information validity in the digital age (Sari & Putra, 2023).

Furthermore, students also demonstrate a more selective attitude in receiving and sharing information on social media. They are less likely to believe news from unknown sources and tend to be wary of sensational or provocative information. This selective attitude is important because social media often allows for the rapid spread of information, including information that may not be accurate. Therefore, the ability to maintain a critical attitude is an essential skill in dealing with the ever-growing flow of information (Hidayat & Rahmawati, 2022).

Students' critical attitudes toward information are also related to their level of media literacy. Media literacy helps individuals understand how the media works, assess the credibility of information sources, and analyze the content of messages conveyed in news stories. Students with good media literacy tend to be better able to identify misleading information and are less easily influenced by hoaxes circulating on social media (Pratama & Nugroho, 2021).

In the context of journalism education, this critical attitude is also related to the application of journalistic ethics. Journalistic ethics emphasize the importance of accuracy, responsibility, and verification in conveying information to the public. Journalism students, as aspiring journalists, are required to maintain a professional attitude in managing information, including not spreading unverified information. This is part of a journalist's moral responsibility to maintain the quality of information circulating in the community (Wibowo & Kurniawan, 2024).

Thus, students' critical attitude towards information on social media demonstrates that journalism education plays a crucial role in fostering awareness of media literacy and information ethics. This attitude not only helps students avoid the spread of hoaxes but also makes them agents of information literacy who can educate the public about the importance of verifying information before sharing it on social media.

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4. The Role of Journalistic Knowledge in Countering Hoaxes

Research results show that students' journalistic knowledge plays a crucial role in helping them counter the spread of hoaxes on social media. Journalism students generally understand the basic principles of journalistic practice, such as fact verification, information accuracy, and the use of reliable sources. This knowledge makes students more cautious when receiving and disseminating information circulating on social media (Hidayat & Rahmawati, 2022).

One important aspect of journalistic knowledge is the fact verification process. Journalism students tend to check the information they find by comparing news from various credible sources. This process ensures that the information received has a clear and accountable factual basis. Fact verification is a crucial step in preventing the spread of false or misleading information in the digital space (Pratama & Nugroho, 2021).

Furthermore, the principle of information accuracy is also a key consideration for students when evaluating news stories. Accurate information is a core value in journalism, as news delivered to the public must be based on accurate facts and free from manipulation. Journalism students understand that the dissemination of inaccurate information can lead to misunderstandings in the community and potentially amplify the spread of hoaxes on social media (Sari & Putra, 2023).

Using reliable sources of information is also a crucial factor in countering hoaxes. Journalism students tend to trust information from credible media outlets and clear sources. Information that does not cite valid sources or originates from unknown sites is generally considered less trustworthy. Therefore, students are more selective in choosing information sources before deciding to share it with others (Wibowo & Kurniawan, 2024).

The findings of this study indicate that journalistic knowledge contributes significantly to shaping students' critical attitudes toward information on social media. By understanding the principles of verification, accuracy, and the use of reliable sources, journalism students are better able to filter information and avoid the spread of hoaxes. This demonstrates the crucial role journalism education plays in improving information literacy and responsible news dissemination in the digital age.

5. Student Obstacles in Filtering Information

Research results show that although journalism students possess knowledge of journalistic principles and media literacy, several obstacles remain in the process of filtering information on

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social media. One frequently encountered obstacle is the influence of viral information. Viral information typically spreads very quickly and often attracts the attention of social media users without regard for the veracity of the information. This situation can lead some students to unconsciously believe or even share information before conducting more in-depth verification (Hidayat & Rahmawati, 2022).

Furthermore, the rapid flow of information on social media also presents a challenge for students in sorting out what is true and what is false. Every day, social media users receive a variety of information from various sources, including personal accounts, chat groups, and other digital platforms. The sheer volume of information circulating makes the verification process more difficult to carry out quickly, so sometimes students do not have time to thoroughly fact-check the information before it spreads more widely (Sari & Putra, 2023).

Another obstacle is the lack of in-depth verification of the information received. Some students only perform simple checks, such as by looking at the headline or reading part of the news without investigating the source of the information in more detail. This indicates that despite possessing basic knowledge about information verification, it is still not consistently practiced by all students (Pratama & Nugroho, 2021).

This phenomenon demonstrates the rapid and widespread dissemination of information on social media. This rapid flow of information is often not matched by users' ability to verify its veracity. Therefore, digital literacy is a crucial skill for social media users to understand, analyze, and critically evaluate information before believing or sharing it with others (Wibowo & Kurniawan, 2024).

Thus, the challenges students experience in filtering information demonstrate that while journalistic knowledge can help counter hoaxes, the social media environment remains a challenge. Therefore, improving digital literacy and the habit of verifying information needs to be continuously strengthened so that students can be more discerning in dealing with the rapid flow of information in the digital era.

6. The Role of Students as Information Literacy Agents

Research results show that journalism students not only have the ability to filter information for themselves, but also act as information literacy agents in their communities. Journalism students tend to have a higher awareness of the importance of accurate information because they have learned basic journalistic principles, such as fact-checking, information accuracy, and responsibility in disseminating news. This knowledge encourages students to be

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more cautious in responding to information circulating on social media (Hidayat & Rahmawati, 2022).

Furthermore, journalism students also have the potential to educate others about the importance of verifying information before sharing it. This education can be delivered in various ways, such as reminding friends or family not to easily believe information from unknown sources, explaining the characteristics of hoax news, and sharing verified information. This role demonstrates that students can be part of efforts to raise public awareness of the dangers of the spread of hoaxes on social media (Sari & Putra, 2023).

Students' role as information literacy agents is also related to their digital literacy skills. Digital literacy enables students to understand how information is produced, disseminated, and consumed by the public in the digital space. With this understanding, students can help the public identify misleading information and encourage wiser and more responsible use of social media (Pratama & Nugroho, 2021).

In the context of journalism education, students are prepared not only as aspiring journalists but also as individuals with a social responsibility to maintain the quality of information circulating in the community. Therefore, students' ability to educate the public about the importance of verifying information is a crucial part of their role in supporting the creation of a healthy and trustworthy information ecosystem (Wibowo & Kurniawan, 2024).

Thus, journalism students have great potential as agents of information literacy in addressing the rampant spread of hoaxes on social media. Through their journalistic knowledge and media literacy skills, students can help raise public awareness to be more critical, selective, and responsible in receiving and disseminating information in the digital age.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research on the role of journalism in countering hoaxes on social media among journalism students from the class of 2022 in Bengkulu, it can be concluded that journalism students have a fairly good understanding of the concept of hoaxes and their impact on society. This understanding is gained through learning about journalistic principles such as information verification, news accuracy, and the use of credible sources in conveying information to the public. This knowledge helps students be more critical in responding to information circulating on social media.

Furthermore, the results of the study indicate that journalism students tend to check or verify information before sharing it with others. This suggests that the principles of journalism

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learned in lectures can play a role in shaping students' critical attitudes towards information on social media. However, some students sometimes lack thoroughness in filtering information, especially when the information relates to issues that are currently viral on social media.

Thus, it can be concluded that journalism plays a crucial role in helping journalism students counter the spread of hoaxes on social media. Through an understanding of the principles of verification, information accuracy, and journalistic ethics, students are expected to become wiser and more responsible social media users in disseminating information to the public. Therefore, digital literacy and journalistic understanding must be continuously developed so that students can play an active role in minimizing the spread of hoaxes in the digital space.

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