

THE INFLUENCE OF THE SPREAD OF HOAXES ON SOCIAL MEDIA ON NATIONAL UNITY

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Abstract

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The development of social media has give convenience in distribution information to society. However, the convenience This was also followed by an increase in distribution hoaxes that can cause various impact negative, including division social and disruption unity nation. Research This aim For analyze influence distribution hoaxes on social media to unity nation among students of Medan State University. Research use method qualitative with approach descriptive. Subject study consists of on active students of Medan State University using social media. Data collection techniques are carried out through observation, interviews, and documentation. Research results show that hoaxes circulating on social media can influence method view student to issue social, political, and cultural. In addition, the spread of hoax potential cause conflict, strengthening stereotypes, as well as reduce mutual feelings believe between individuals and group society. Although Thus, students who have level good digital literacy tend more capable sorting information and not easy affected by the news fake. Therefore that, the increase digital literacy is one of the effort important in guard unity nation in the digital era.

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INTRODUCTION

Development technology information and communication in the digital era has change method public acquire, access, and distribute information. Social media presence allows information circulating very quickly without limits of space and time. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, X, and WhatsApp have become means main public in communicate and share information. On the other hand, the convenience it also gives rise to various challenges, one of which is increasing distribution hoax or information hard fake verified the truth. Social media that is open allows every individual become manufacturer at a time consumer information, so that news that has not been Of course Correct can spread in a way wide in time short.



Hoax is deliberate information made or distributed For misleading society. Phenomenon hoax the more worrying Because often take advantage of issues related sensitive with politics, religion, ethnicity, race, and intergroup relations. The spread of information false No only cause misunderstanding, but also can influence opinion public as well as create anxiety social research show that hoaxes in the digital era have impact to perception society and stability social, especially when information the accepted without adequate verification process.

In context life nation and state, distribution hoax potential threaten unity nation. Information containing provocation, speech hatred, and slander can trigger conflict social both in cyberspace and in real life real. Arisanto (2023) explains that current hoaxes, hate speech, and framing on social media can cause noise public as well as potential cause division if No addressed in a way wise. Therefore that, existence hoax No can considered as problem communication only, but also as challenge in guard integration social and national.

Student as group educated and users active on social media own strategic position in face phenomenon distribution hoax. In one side, students is the most frequent group access digital information so that own opportunity big For exposed hoax. On the other hand, students are also expected capable become agent changes that play a role in spread correct information to community. Research about competence student digital literacy show that Still there is challenge in ability identify and filter information circulating on social media, so that strengthening digital literacy becomes very important needs.

Digital literacy is ability individual in access, understand, evaluate, and utilize information in a way critical through digital media. Various study in five years final show that digital literacy has close relationship with ability somebody in prevent distribution hoax. Students who have level good digital literacy tend more capable verify source information before trust or share it to other people. On the contrary, it is low digital literacy can increase risk somebody influenced by invalid information.

Based on description said, research about influence distribution hoaxes on social media to unity nation become important For conducted, especially on students at the State University of Medan (UNIMED). Students as generation young own role strategic in guard integrity nation in the middle heavy current digital information. Research This aim For analyze How distribution hoaxes on social media influence unity nation according to perspective student as well as identify efforts that can be made done For minimize impact negative hoax through strengthening digital literacy and attitudes critical in media social.

REVIEW LIBRARY

Hoax Concept

Hoax is information that is not in accordance with facts and disseminated with objective misleading, influencing opinion public, or cause confusion in society. In the digital era, the spread of hoax the more increase Because convenience internet access and extensive use of social media. Information that has not been verified can with fast spread through various digital platforms so that difficult differentiated from correct information. Hoaxes are often related with issue politics, health, religion, and social that can influence perception public to something events. Spread massive hoax can cause misinformation, anxiety social, and polarization in public.

According to Ardi et al. (2023), hoaxes be one of challenge the biggest in digital communication because information can distributed by whom just without through a strict

verification process. Therefore that, ability public in evaluate information become very important For prevent impact negative impact caused by hoaxes.

Social Media as a Means of Dissemination Information

Social media is a digital platform that allows users For create, share, and exchange information in a way interactive. The existence of social media has change pattern communication public from communication One direction become more two - way communication dynamic. Various platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, X, and WhatsApp have become source information main for society, especially generation young people and students.

Although give Lots benefits, social media also has weakness Because allows distribution information without adequate filtering process. Viral information is often received and shared returned by user without do checking to the truth. Condition This causing social media be one of means main distribution hoaxes in the digital era. The high use of social media among student make group This be one of vulnerable parties exposed information false.

Unity Nation

Unity nation is condition when society that has background behind different capable life side by side in a way harmonious based on values nationality. Unity be one of factor important in guard the integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia which has diversity ethnicity, religion, race, culture, and language. The value of unity reflected in attitude each other respect, tolerance, mutual cooperation, and willingness For prioritize interest the nation above interest personal or group.

Spread hoax can become threat for unity nation if information disseminated contain element provocation, speech hatred, or discrimination to group certain. Hoaxes can trigger conflict social, strengthening prejudice, as well as cause polarization in the middle society. Therefore that, keep quality information circulating in digital space is one of them effort important in maintain unity nation.

Digital Literacy

Digital literacy is ability somebody For access, understand, evaluate, create, and use information through digital technology in wise and responsible answer. Digital literacy is not only related with ability use device technology, but also capabilities think critical to information received. In context distribution hoax, digital literacy works as tool For help public differentiate valid information and misleading information.

Research conducted by Syurfa, Safitri, and Sujarwo (2024) shows that digital literacy has influence positive to prevention hoaxes on social media. Increasingly tall level a person's digital literacy, the more his abilities are also high in identify and avoid information fake. With Thus, the increase digital literacy is one of the main strategies in reduce impact negative hoaxes in society.

Students and the Spread of Hoaxes on Social Media

Student is active group using social media For get information, communication, and support activity academic. High intensity use of social media cause student own opportunity big For exposed various type information, including hoax. Therefore that, students sued For own ability think critical in respond to information received.

Study about Medan State University students demonstrate that student generally has use various strategies for differentiate information facts and hoaxes, such as inspect source information, reading comment users others, and do search addition through machine searcher. findings This show that ability digital literacy plays a role important in

help student face current continuous information growing on social media.

METHOD STUDY

Study This use method qualitative with approach descriptive For understand in a way deep phenomenon distribution hoaxes on social media as well as its influence to unity nation among students of Medan State University. Approach qualitative chosen Because study This focus on understanding to experience, perception, and view student about the information they receive and share through social media. Research qualitative allows researchers get more data deep related How student interpret existence hoax, its impact to life social, as well as its influence to attitude and awareness in guard unity nation. With use approach descriptive research This make an effort describe phenomena that occur in a way systematic based on the data obtained from field without do manipulation to conditions under study.

Subject study This is active students of Medan State University using social media in life everyday. Election informant done use purposive sampling technique, namely election subject based on criteria certain appropriate with objective research. The criteria used covering active students using social media such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, X, and WhatsApp as well Once accept or find indicated information as hoax. Data collection was carried out through observation, interview in-depth, and documentation. Observation done For know pattern use of social media by students and how they interact with circulating information. Interview deep done to a number of student For get more information details about experience they in receive, respond to, and disseminate information on social media. Meanwhile that, documentation used For complete research data in the form of Photo activities, notes field, as well as document relevant supporters with focus study.

Data analysis was performed in a way gradually using analysis models interactive consisting of on data reduction, data presentation, and data extraction conclusion. At this stage data reduction, researcher selecting, grouping, and simplifying the resulting data interviews, observations, and documentation in accordance with focus research. Stage next is data presentation, namely organize data in form description descriptive so that facilitate the interpretation process. Furthermore, researchers do withdrawal conclusion based on patterns, themes, and relationships found from the data that has been analyzed. For ensure data validity, research This use technique triangulation sources and triangulation technique with compare information obtained from various informant as well as results observation and documentation. Through step the data obtained expected own level high credibility so that capable give accurate depiction about influence distribution hoaxes on social media to unity nation among students of Medan State University.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Exposure to Hoaxes on Social Media among Students

Based on results observations and interviews conducted to students of Medan State University, known that social media has be one of source main information in life everyday. Most of the informant confess access social media during a few hours every day For get information, communicating, following development issue latest, and look for entertainment. The most frequently used platform used are Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp, Facebook, and X. The height intensity use of social media cause students are

very easy accept various information in fast time. However, it is not all information received own level high validity so that student potential exposed information that is not Correct or hoax. Condition This show that development digital technology besides give benefits also present challenge in the form of increasing risk distribution information fake among generation young (Ardi et al., 2023).

Interview results show that almost all over informant Once accept information that is then known as hoax. Information the generally related with issue politics, health, education, and events social media that is currently become attention society. Some student confess had time trust information the Because accompanied by photos, videos, or visible narrative convincing. In addition, there is habit share information without do checking moreover formerly participate speed up distribution hoaxes in the environment friendship students. Findings This show that height use of social media own connection with increasing possibility somebody accept and even spread information that has not been Of course true. Phenomenon the in line with study Kalakmabin et al. (2025) which states that student is one of the vulnerable groups to exposure hoax Because height digital activities that they do do every day.

Influence Spread of Hoaxes against Unity Nation

Based on results research, dissemination hoaxes on social media own influence to method student look at various issues developing in society. Information received in a way continously tend form perception certain although information the Not yet Of course in accordance with facts. Some informant state that they Once experience confusion in determine truth something information Because many sources that provide different information about same topic. Situation the show that hoax can influence method think individual as well as form less opinion appropriate if No balanced with ability think critical and verification adequate information.

More continue, some big student have an opinion that related hoaxes with issue ethnicity, religion, race and inter-group relations own potential big For cause conflict social. Information containing element provocation often triggers debate on social media and can cause misunderstanding between individuals and intergroup society. If the conditions the Keep going develops, then the feeling of mutual believe that becomes foundation life socialize can decreased. Therefore that, the spread hoax No only impact on individuals, but also has the potential threaten unity nation. Findings This support study Arisanto (2023) who explains that hoaxes and speech hate on social media can trigger division social if No handled in a way wise.

Figure 1. Socialization Poster Influence The Spread of Hoaxes on Social Media against Unity Nation



Source : Documentation Research, 2026.

Digital Literacy as an Effort to Prevent Hoaxes

Research result show that level digital literacy has significant influence to ability student in face hoax. Students who have good understanding about digital literacy tends to more be careful in accept information. They usually do checking source news, comparing information from various media, as well as look for clarification through source official before trust something information. Ability the help student reduce risk affected by the news fake circulating on social media. With Thus, digital literacy is one of the factor important in build resilience public to distribution hoax.

Besides the ability technical in using digital media, digital literacy also includes ability think critical to information received. Based on results interview, part big student realize that No all viral information on social media can trusted. Awareness the push they For more selective in consume and share information to others. Findings This show that digital literacy is not only functioning as tool For get information, but also as means For build attitude responsible answer in use of social media. Research Syurfa et al. (2024) also found that improvement digital literacy contributes to decline level distribution hoaxes among generation young.

Activity socialization carried out in study This give impact positive to understanding student about danger hoax. Students confess get knowledge new about method recognize characteristic features hoax, do inspection facts, and understand impact distribution information false to life social. Socialization also provides understanding that every social media users own not quite enough answer For ensure truth information before spread it to others. With existence continuing education, students expected capable become more social media users wise and critical in face various information circulating

in digital space.

Figure 2. Activities Socialization to Students of Medan State University



Source : Documentation Research, 2026.

Role of Students in Guard Unity Nation in the Digital Age

As group intellectual, student own not quite enough big answer in guard unity nation in the middle heavy current digital information. Research results show that part big informant understand importance filter information before share it to others. Students realize that action simple like verify information can help reduce distribution hoaxes in the environment society. Awareness the become important capital in build healthy and responsible digital culture answer.

In addition, students also have potential For become agent change through various activity education and campaigns digital literacy. Some informant state that they often give clarification to Friend or member family when find information that is not true. The effort show that student can play a role as distributor accurate information at a time become pioneer in fighting hoaxes in the environment social. Active role students are very necessary remember generation young is the closest group with development digital technology and media.

Improvement digital literacy possessed students in the end No only impact on ability they in recognize hoax, but also contribute to strengthening unity nation. Students who are capable think critical tend No easy provoked by information containing element hatred, discrimination, or provocation. With Thus, the ability filter information be one of form contribution real student in guard harmony social and strengthening values unity in the middle diversity Indonesian society. Therefore that, strengthening digital literacy is necessary Keep going done as effort create generation intelligent, critical, and committed young people guard integrity nation in the digital era.

Figure 3. Group Photo of Students Participant Socialization



Source : Documentation Research, 2026.

CONCLUSION

Based on results research, can concluded that social media has become source information main for students of Medan State University in get various related information with life social, education, and current issues developing in society. The height intensity use of social media give convenience in access information in a way fast and wide. However, the conditions it also increases possibility student exposed information that is not Correct or hoax. Research results show that part big student Once find even accept information that is then known No in accordance with fact. This is show that development digital technology does not only bring benefits, but also brings challenge in the form of increasing distribution information fake that can influence method thinking and behavior social media users.

Study this also found that distribution hoaxes on social media own influence to unity nation. Information containing element provocation, speech hatred, discrimination, and issues related sensitive with ethnicity, religion, race and inter-group relations potential cause misunderstanding as well as conflict in the middle society. If information the Keep going trusted and spread without verification, then can weaken the sense of mutual believe, improve polarization social, and disturbing values unity that becomes base life nation and state. Therefore that, the spread hoax need viewed as problems that are not only related with digital communication, but also related with effort guard wholeness and harmony Indonesian society.

Research result show that digital literacy has a very important role in reduce impact negative hoax. Students who have ability good digital literacy tend more critical in accept information, able do verification to source news, and No easy influenced by information that has not been proven the truth. Digital literacy helps student understand importance think critical, checking facts, and using social media in a way responsible answer. In addition, the activities socialization carried out in study This proven capable increase understanding student about danger hoax as well as steps that can be taken done For prevent its spread. With Thus, digital literacy is an effective strategy. in build resilience public to current invalid information.

As generation young and groups intellectual, student own role strategic in guard unity nation in the digital era. Students No only functioning as social media users, but

also as agent changes that can be made spread correct information, educate society, as well as push creation healthy digital culture. Through improvement awareness, ability think critical, and sustainable digital literacy, students expected capable contribute in pressing distribution hoaxes and strengthen values unity nation. Therefore that, work The same between college high, government and society are very necessary For increase digital literacy so that created a more digital environment safe, smart and supportive realization unity nation in the middle development technology increasing information rapidly.

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