

The Influence of Hoax News on Social Media on Netizens' Social Concern in the Cianjur Earthquake Disaster

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<p>Keywords: Hoax news, Social concern</p> <p>DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.22437/jssh.v9i1.23292</p> <p>Received: January 7th, 2023</p> <p>Reviewed: April 19th, 2025</p> <p>Accepted: July 14th, 2025</p>	<p><i>In the digital era, freedom of speech on social media is often misused to spread hoax news, which is inaccurate information that aims to mislead the public and trigger division. One of the cases widely discussed is the hoax related to the rejection of aid by victims of the Cianjur earthquake, which triggered misunderstandings among netizens. This study aims to analyze the influence of hoax news on social media on netizens' social concern for the disaster. The method used is quantitative, with primary and secondary data and simple linear regression analysis to measure the relationship between variable X (hoax news) and variable Y (social concern). This study involved 40 respondents from various backgrounds: students, college students, workers, and housewives. The results show that hoax news affects netizens' social concerns, with a contribution of 33.4% and a correlation of 0.578. These findings prove that hoax news can influence a person's mindset, actions, and social concerns, potentially threatening community life. Hopefully, this study will broaden horizons and encourage netizens to be more critical in receiving information.</i></p>

1. Introduction

Currently, communication in human life continues to develop. This development in communication is a form of influence from the rapid advancement of technology (Pranesti & Arifin, 2019; Juditha, 2018). However, behind this progress, unfortunately, technological progress is like a double-edged sword (Lotan, 2019; Marwan & Ahyad, 2016). It means that, on the one hand, technology makes it easier for humans to communicate; on the other hand, technology can complicate and even divide humans (Imaroh et al., 2023; Suyanto et al., 2018). If we are not good at choosing information on social media, we will become passive humans and very vulnerable to being influenced by negative content circulating on social media (Setyawan, 2020; Kaliyar et al., 2021).

Everyone has different motives for using social media (Tchakounté et al., 2022; Arisanty & Wiradharma, 2020). Some people use social media as a communication tool to connect with others (Kristiyono & Jayanti, 2017; Wahyono et al., 2020). Then, some people use social media to update and share their knowledge (Aïmeur et al., 2023; Brianna et al., 2019). In addition, some also use social media to show off romance with their partners (Arifianto et al., 2023; Wahyono et al., 2020).

Some people use social media to seek attention and validation from other social media users, such as to be called narcissistic, up-to-date, or contemporary (Virga & Andriadi, 2019; Kaliyar et al., 2021). Then, some people use social media to seek entertainment when they feel tired after work (Deddy Satria, 2023; Liu & Zhao, 2021). Moreover, some people use social media to motivate people around them (Marshall et al., 2015; Tammam et al., 2018). However, on the other hand, it is not uncommon for some people to use social media to spread incorrect information (Tchakounté et al., 2022; Arisanty et al., 2022).

The freedom to disseminate information on social media creates false information, often containing elements of SARA (Kurnia, 2022; Liu & Wu, 2023). In Indonesia, the circulation of hoax news on social media continues to increase yearly (Syaputri et al., 2021; Setyawan, 2020). According to the Ministry of Communication and Information in a press release, in November 2019, 260 hoax cases were identified from a total of 3,901 hoaxes per period from August 2018 to November 2019 (Ministry of Communication and Information, 2019; Hidayat et al., 2022). Of the total hoax information, 190 contained information related to natural disasters (Kaliyar et al., 2021; Imaroh et al., 2023).

Hoax news contains false information deliberately shared by irresponsible people (Kurnia, 2022; Arif & Miswar, 2020). Usually, the news is made as if it is happening, and the information is made as if it is part of a series of facts from an event that is happening (Marwan & Ahyad, 2016; Santoso et al., 2017). In line with the European Commission, "disinformation" or false information is inaccurate information where the information is made misleading, presented, and promoted to intentionally cause public harm (Bader & Bender, 2022; Kumar & Shah, 2018). Hoax news is usually spread through social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, and TikTok (Juditha, 2018; Setyawan, 2020). Social media seems to provide the freest possible space and opportunity for every social media user to express themselves fully and freely without limits (Suyanto et al., 2018; Aïmeur et al., 2023).

Freedom in social media forms a close bond with the internet (Aristanty & Wiradharma, 2020; Liu & Zhao, 2021). In addition, social media has eliminated the boundaries of time, space, and dimensions so that it makes it difficult for people as social media users to distinguish between factual and hoax information (Faizah, 2020; Lutfiyah, 2020). Then, the hoax news circulating in society causes concern and hatred among internet users and even between institutions (Filmon et al., 2019; Syaputri et al., 2021). Fake news can also destroy public trust in the government and damage the government's image (Ulfa et al., 2019; Widiastuti et al., 2021).

In addition, the circulation of fake news can damage society's mindset and behavior patterns, especially Generation Z, the next generation of the nation (Shinta & Daihani, 2019; Suyanto et al., 2018). Moreover, what is worse, hoax news can threaten national security (Suying, 2022; Santoso et al., 2017).

This study offers significant novelty in understanding the impact of hoax news on netizens' social concerns, especially related to natural disasters in Indonesia, such as the Cianjur earthquake. Unlike previous studies that focused more on analyzing the spread or detection of hoax news (Kurnia, 2022; Tchakounté et al., 2022), this study emphasizes the direct influence of hoax news on netizens' mindsets and social attitudes in dealing with disasters. The main focus of this study is to explore how hoax news, which often circulates on social media post-disaster, can affect the level of empathy and community participation toward disaster victims by considering factors such as perception, public opinion, and the tendency to share misinformation (Suyanto et al., 2018; Faizah, 2020).

In addition, this study fills a gap in the literature by linking the phenomenon of hoax news to social change, which has previously been more often discussed in the context of politics or public health (Kaliyar et al., 2021; Imaroh et al., 2023). This study also proposes a new approach to analyzing the impact of hoax news on social relations between groups in society, especially in sensitive situations such as natural disasters (Arifiant et al., 2023; Syaputri et al., 2021). As part of this novelty, this study combines hoax news content analysis with in-depth interviews with netizens involved in spreading or receiving hoax news to gain a more holistic perspective on its impact on the social dynamics of Indonesian society (Marwan & Ahyad, 2016; Santoso et al., 2017).

By adding this dimension, it is hoped that this study can provide deeper insights into how hoax news not only damages the image and public trust in the government (Widiastuti et al., 2021; Ulfa et al., 2019) but can also potentially reduce the level of social concern in society, which contributes to deepening social inequality and distrust between individuals (Shinta & Daihani, 2019; Suyanto et al., 2018).

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This research design uses a quantitative method with an associative quantitative approach, which is an approach that aims to determine the relationship or influence between two or more variables. This approach is used because the study analyzes the relationship between the independent variable (X), hoax news, and the dependent variable (Y), netizens' social awareness regarding the earthquake in Cianjur. The main objective is to test whether exposure to hoax news significantly influences the level of netizens' social awareness. The research process begins with the planning stage, where researchers identify the phenomena to be studied, namely the spread of hoax news during a disaster and its impact on people's social behavior, supported by factual data. Furthermore, researchers formulate the main problem: "How does hoax news affect the level of netizens' social awareness in responding to the earthquake disaster in Cianjur?" After that, a literature review was conducted to strengthen the theoretical basis, such as mass communication theory, media effect theory, and the concept of hoaxes and social awareness. This study has two main variables, independent (X) and dependent (Y), whose influence is measured using statistical analysis. Researchers develop research instruments in questionnaires or surveys to obtain data compiled based on certain indicators. Indicators for hoax news include the frequency of exposure to hoaxes, the types of hoaxes received, and the sources of information, while indicators for social awareness include netizen empathy, participation in social action, and how they verify information.

2.2 Participants

The study involved 40 respondents from diverse backgrounds, including 31 university students, one high school student, six employed individuals, and two housewives. The sampling technique utilized was non-probability sampling with accidental sampling. In this case, samples are taken with specific characteristics determined by the researcher. The characters of participants were selected based on their active presence on social media platforms and their potential exposure to hoax news.

2.3 Instruments

The primary data was collected using a questionnaire distributed through three methods:

1. Personal Chat (PC): Direct contact with respondents via social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Instagram, sharing the survey link.
2. Story WhatsApp (SW): Broadcasting the survey link through WhatsApp stories to reach a broader audience.
3. Door-to-Door: Face-to-face distribution of the survey link by visiting respondents' homes.

Secondary data was obtained from previous research, books, journals, e-books, and reliable online sources, including Google Scholar, DOAJ, and Publish or Perish. Additionally, the study analyzed photos and videos circulating on social media, ensuring the information came from trusted sites.

2.4 Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis in this study was conducted using Simple Linear Regression Analysis to test the relationship between the independent variable (hoax news) and the dependent variable (netizen social awareness). This technique was chosen because it aims to determine the extent to which the independent variable influences or contributes to changes in the dependent variable. Before the data analysis process, the instrument's validity is tested through expert judgment or expert assessments. The purpose of this test is to ensure that the questions in the questionnaire are appropriate, relevant, and able to measure the intended concept accurately and consistently. After the instrument is declared valid, the next step is to conduct a classical assumption test consisting of the normality and linearity tests.

The normality test aims to determine whether the collected data is normally distributed because simple linear regression requires that the residual data be normally distributed so that the analysis results are valid. Common methods used for normality tests include the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test or the Shapiro-Wilk test.

Next, a linearity test is performed to ensure that the relationship between the independent variable (X) and the dependent variable (Y) has a linear relationship pattern. This test is important because regression analysis can only be used if the two variables have a relationship that forms a straight line. Linearity is usually tested using the Test for Linearity method or ANOVA linearity test.

After all classical assumptions are met, a simple linear regression analysis is conducted to measure the magnitude of the influence of hoax news on netizens' social awareness. The results of this analysis include regression coefficients that indicate the direction and strength of the relationship between variables, as well as a significance test (t-test) to test whether the influence is statistically significant. If the p-value < 0.05 , it can be concluded that hoax news significantly influences netizens' social awareness regarding the earthquake in Cianjur.

3. Findings

The presence of social media in this digital era has changed human life in communicating. Through social media, everyone is facilitated in interacting with distant family, exchanging information, knowledge, and experiences, and motivating each other. In addition, social media is often used to increase friendship relations and strengthen the bonds of brotherhood between each person. However, on the other hand, social media is often misused, namely used to pit people against each other and even divide people between individuals and groups of people and even not infrequently between institutions by spreading fictitious information that is processed to resemble the original news.

As stated in the beginning, hoax news contains false information that a group of irresponsible people deliberately shares. In line with (A'yun Masfufah, 2020) explains that hoax news is an action to obscure the original news by bombarding the media with false information so that the original information is covered up. Certain individuals usually carry out this action to gain maximum profit. Social media has six main characteristics, including a connecting channel between social media customers, spreading information, as a medium for storing customer memories, the second interaction media after cyberspace, social navigation, content for customers, and distribution (Aswir & Misbah, 2018). In this case, social media has eliminated the boundaries between space and dimensions, shortening the time in accelerating information (Syaifullah, 2018).

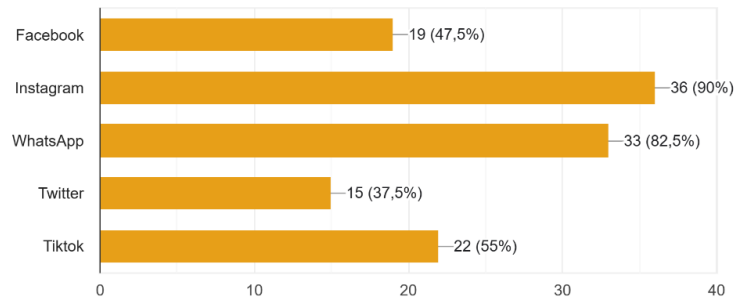


Figure 3.1 Social Media Frequently Used by Netizens

From the image above, we can see that the application often used by netizens is Instagram. Where the platform is in the first place as an application often used by netizens, namely almost 90% of netizens are active in using the application. The WhatsApp application occupies the second place at 82.5%, and almost all netizens use the platform. The TikTok application occupies third place at 55%, Facebook at 47.5% and Twitter at 37%. From this data, we can analyze that the more netizens use a platform, the greater the opportunity for irresponsible individuals to spread hoax news on the social media platform. Why is that? Because netizens enjoy the more content. The greater the benefits they get.

Then, can hoax news spread on social media affect people's social awareness?

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	470.319	1	470.319	19.062	.000 ^b
	Residual	937.581	38	24.673		
	Total	1407.900	39			

a. Dependent Variable: Kepedulian Sosial

b. Predictors: (Constant), Berita Hoax

Figure 3.2 Simple Linear Regression Test

From the data processing results through SPSS, a result was obtained where the number of squares of regression was 470.319 and the residual was 937.581. With a calculated F value of 19.062 with a significance level of 0.000. From this output, we can conclude that this simple linear regression model can be used to predict the variable of social concern (Y). It means that the independent variable, hoax news (X), influences the dependent variable, social concern (Y).

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.578 ^a	.334	.317	4.967

a. Predictors: (Constant), Berita Hoax

Figure 3.3 Correlation Value R and Determination Coefficient

Then, hoax news also has a bad effect. The influence caused by this hoax news is to shake the public's concern in helping others. In the earthquake disaster in Cianjur, hoax news influenced netizens' social concerns by 33.4%. Furthermore, based on the results obtained, hoax news has at least shaken the public where as many as 14 respondents were taken in by the circulating hoax news.

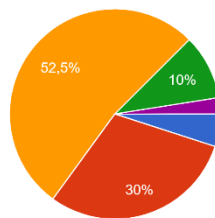


Figure 4.1 Impact of Hoax News

However, 30% of respondents stated a new concern was born after the hoax news. In this case, society becomes aware. Aware in the sense that netizens realize that their brothers and sisters who are being hit by a disaster are unlikely to create content that is not true. In addition, the existence of hoax news has also fostered motivation in every soul of internet users to help and support each other among their brothers and sisters. Furthermore, most importantly, netizens do not lose their concern for their brothers and sisters who are being hit by a disaster. This kind of expression is different from what we see in the case of conscious choice, where the mental transition to intention reflects (however imperfectly) the weight attached to the agent of practical reason that he is aware of (Rosen, 2014).

4. Discussion

The presence of social media in the digital era has brought about major changes in how humans communicate (Pranesti & Arifin, 2019; Juditha, 2018). Social media makes it easier for individuals to interact with distant families, share information, knowledge, experiences, and motivate each other (Rahmawati, 2021; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Kietzmann et al., 2011; Setyawan, 2020). Moreover, social media is also often used to expand friendships and strengthen bonds of brotherhood among its users (Putri & Kurniawan, 2020; Wahyono et al., 2020). However, on the other hand, social media is often misused to divide individuals, groups, and even institutions through the spread of false information packaged to resemble real news (Saragih, 2019; Suyanto et al., 2018; Imaroh et al., 2023).

Hoax news is false information deliberately spread by certain parties to gain certain benefits (Marwan & Ahyad, 2016; Santoso et al., 2017). Rahmawati (2021) explains that hoaxes are a strategy to obscure original information by flooding social media with fake news to cover the truth (Lazer et al., 2018; Arisanty et al., 2022). The spread of hoaxes is often carried out for political, economic, or certain purposes detrimental to the wider community (Setiawan, 2020; Bradshaw & Howard, 2018; Lazer et al., 2018).

Social media has six main characteristics, namely as a connecting channel between users, information disseminator, digital memory storage media, virtual interaction media, social navigation tools, and content for users and information distribution media (Hidayat & Pratama, 2018; Setyawan, 2020). Social media erases the boundaries of space and time, allowing information to spread instantly (Wijaya, 2020; Kaliyar et al., 2021). This speed, although useful, also creates a gap for the massive spread of hoaxes (Yusuf, 2021; Arifianto et al., 2023).

Based on social media usage data, Instagram is the most popular platform among netizens, with a usage rate of almost 90%, followed by WhatsApp at 82.5%, TikTok at 55%, Facebook at 47.5%, and Twitter at 37% (Nugroho, 2020; Setiawan, 2020; Tchakounté et al., 2022). The more users a platform has, the greater the opportunity for irresponsible individuals to spread hoaxes for personal gain (Sari & Ahmad, 2021; Brianna et al., 2019). The popularity of certain platforms increases the potential for public exposure to false information (Rizky, 2021; Wahyono et al., 2020).

The simple linear regression analysis results show that hoax news significantly affects public social awareness (Fauzan, 2020; Montgomery et al., 2018; Hair et al., 2019). The calculated F value of 19.062 with a significance level of 0.000 indicates that the hoax news variable (X) affects the social awareness variable (Y) (Fauzan, 2020; Lestari, 2019; Syaputri et al., 2021). It proves that the existence of fake news has a real impact on influencing people's social responses (Lestari, 2019; Suyanto et al., 2018; Tandoc et al., 2018).

The determination coefficient (R Square) of 33.4% indicates that hoax news influences people's social concerns by 33.4%, while the rest is influenced by other factors (Halim, 2021; Hidayat et al., 2022; Lestari, 2019). In the context of the earthquake disaster in Cianjur, as many as 14 respondents admitted to believing hoaxes circulating on social media (Susanto, 2020; Wahyono et al., 2020). It proves that hoaxes have the potential to shake people's social solidarity (Amir, 2021; Tandoc et al., 2018; Vosoughi et al., 2018).

The negative impacts of hoax news include decreasing public trust in circulating information, creating confusion, and influencing individual decisions to help others (Hartono, 2019; Arisanty et al., 2022). As a result, some individuals become hesitant to engage in social activities for fear of being deceived by false information (Yunita & Rachman, 2021; Arif et al., 2020). It hinders collective efforts to provide real assistance to those in need (Putra, 2020; Hidayat et al., 2022). However, not all effects of hoax news are negative. As many as 30% of respondents admitted that after being exposed to hoaxes, they felt compelled to care more and verify information before acting (Ismail, 2021; Arisanty & Wiradharma, 2020). This awareness arises because they realize that disaster victims rarely have time to create sensational content (Zulkarnaen, 2020; Syaputri et al., 2021). Critical netizens have become more sensitive and careful in disseminating information (Saputra, 2021; Virga & Andriadi, 2019).

From a psychological perspective, the effects of hoax news can create a new collective consciousness (Aïmeur et al., 2023; Anwar, 2021). Netizens understand the importance of sorting information and working together to help disaster victims realistically (Hendrawan, 2020; Anwar, 2021). The motivation to support each other and build social solidarity strengthens, creating unexpected positive effects (Del Vicario et al., 2016; Bessi et al., 2015; Kaliyar et al., 2021).

Although hoax news negatively impacts social awareness, it encourages some people to be more aware and critical (Lazar et al., 2018; Arisanty et al., 2020). Therefore, all social media users must improve digital literacy and verify every piece of information before believing it (Farhan, 2020; Wahyono et al., 2020). That way, social media can again strengthen brotherhood and solidarity in society (Gunawan, 2021; Park & Rim, 2020).

5. Conclusion

Overall, social media has a significant impact on the way people communicate in the digital era. On the one hand, social media facilitates interaction and strengthens social relations between individuals. However, on the other hand, the spread of hoax news can damage social solidarity and exacerbate distrust of information. Hoax news, which is often spread with a specific purpose, can affect people's social awareness, reduce trust in the information circulating, and hinder collective efforts to help others. However, not all negative impacts of hoax news are permanent because some people are encouraged to be more concerned and critical of the information they receive. Awareness to verify information before spreading it can create a positive effect that strengthens social solidarity. Therefore, it is important to increase digital literacy and critical awareness among social media users so that social media can again strengthen brotherhood and solidarity in society.

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