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The Phenomenon of Fake News (Hoax) in Mass Communication: Causes, Impacts, and Solutions

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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of fake news or hoax in mass communication is a serious challenge faced in the digital era. The spread of fake news can have detrimental effects, such as disrupting public opinion, influencing democratic processes, creating social chaos, and damaging the reputation of individuals or organizations. The main causes for the emergence of fake news include technological factors, political motivation, economic gain, ignorance or lack of media literacy, and psychological factors such as the need for validation or sensation. Advances in technology and social media have accelerated the spread of fake news and complicated efforts to contain it. It is important to tackle the fake news phenomenon with a holistic approach. This involves the active role of individuals, news organizations, journalists, social media platforms, government agencies, and society as a whole. Increasing media literacy, accurate verification of facts, ethical journalism, cooperation with social media platforms, proper regulation, and prompt response to fake news are important steps in dealing with this phenomenon. The impact of fake news is very detrimental and can disrupt social stability, public trust, and information integrity. Therefore, collective efforts and awareness of the importance of fighting fake news are very important in building a healthy and trustworthy mass communication environment.

1. Introduction

In the increasingly connected digital era, mass communication has a very important role in disseminating information to a wide audience. However, in the midst of technological advances and changes in the media landscape, the phenomenon of fake news or hoaxes has emerged as a serious challenge in mass communication (Acerbi, 2019). Fake news refers to the spread of false information or disinformation that is presented as if it were factual news, with the aim of confusing, manipulating, or influencing public opinion (Amalliah, 2018). The reasons for the emergence of fake news in mass communication are very complex and varied. One of

the main causes is political motivation. Fake news is often used as a tool to manipulate public perception, influence election results, or discredit political opponents. In addition, economic factors are also a driver, where fake news can be used to generate revenue through clicks or the spread of sensational information (Arisanty et al., 2020).

Advances in technology and the development of social media platforms have also played an important role in the spread of fake news. In an era where every individual can become a "publisher" of information through social media, filter bubbles and algorithms that encourage sensational content can strengthen the spread of fake news (Andhika, 2019). In addition, the



changing media landscape with the decline in the role of traditional media and the rise of citizen journalism has also provided an opening for the spread of misinformation. The impact of the fake news phenomenon on mass communication is very detrimental. Fake news can destroy public trust in the media and news institutions and influence political decisions and elections. Society becomes vulnerable to the manipulation of information, which can trigger social tensions, undermine interpersonal relationships, and threaten democratic stability. The impact can also extend to the economic sector, disrupting market stability and harming companies or individuals who are the target of fake news.

To overcome the phenomenon of fake news in mass communication, joint efforts from various parties are needed. Holistic solutions include technological approaches, media literacy education, proper regulations, and greater responsibility from social media platforms and news agencies (Candraningrum et al., 2018). Governments, civil society, and industry players need to work together to develop robust fact verification mechanisms, improve media literacy education and promote ethical journalism practices. This review examines more deeply the causes of fake news in mass communication, its impact on individuals, society, and democracy, as well as solutions and strategies that can be adopted to overcome this phenomenon. By understanding the root causes and implications of fake news, it is hoped that we can take appropriate steps to maintain the integrity of mass communication and protect the public from the manipulation of misinformation.

Definition and types of fake news

Fake news, also known as a hoax, refers to the dissemination of false or untrue information with the aim of deceiving, manipulating, or deceiving the audience. Fake news is often presented in a format that resembles factual news, making it difficult to distinguish it from legitimate information. This can

cause confusion and result in people believing information that is actually not true (Bandura, 2017).

Political hoax news often appears during the period of elections or political campaigns. The aim is to sway public opinion, discredit political competitors, or manipulate election results. Political hoax news often spreads quickly because people tend to be more open to information that supports their political beliefs. Fake news related to health can often have a serious impact on society (Baran et al., 2011; Basarah, 2018). This type of hoax includes false claims about alternative treatments or methods of treatment that are not proven to be effective, misinformation about vaccinations, or the spread of false rumors related to a disease or pandemic. Fake health news can threaten people's lives and welfare.

Sensational fake news is a type of fake news that aims to grab attention with shocking or provocative content. This kind of fake news is often aimed at getting clicks and online traffic by relying on sensation and controversy. Typically, sensational fake news presents stories that are exaggerated or not based on valid facts. Social and Cultural Fake News related to social and cultural issues is often intended to reinforce stereotypes, create conflicts between groups, or provoke divisions in society. This type of fake news can cause social anxiety, racial tension, or increase polarization within society.

Financial and economic hoaxes focus on false information relating to financial markets, investments, or companies. Financial and economic hoaxes are often intended to manipulate stock prices, harm business competitors, or deceive investors. The spread of fake news like this can have a negative impact on market stability and public trust in financial institutions (Febyani, 2015; Ferdiawan et al., 2019). Scientific hoax includes spreading false claims or findings in scientific fields, such as revolutionary scientific discoveries or research that is not supported by strong scientific evidence. This type of fake news



can mislead society and undermine the integrity of science.

Fake news history perspective

The phenomenon of fake news or hoaxes is not new in the history of mass communication. Since ancient times, humans have used various strategies to influence public opinion or spread false information for political, social, or economic interests (Frederick, 2005). History records that fake news has often been used in the context of war and conflict. Parties to the conflict often spread false propaganda to manipulate public perception, arouse patriotic fervor, or undermine enemy morale. A famous historical example is the use of propaganda by the German Nazi dictatorship during World War II.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, there was a wave of sensationalist newspapers and tabloids, which often spread fake news to attract readers and increase sales. Sensation and controversy became a common strategy to attract public attention and gain financial gain. Competition between these newspapers has sometimes resulted in the dissemination of inaccurate or manipulative information. Under totalitarian regimes such as Stalin in the Soviet Union or Hitler in Nazi Germany, propaganda became an important tool for maintaining power and controlling public opinion. The government uses its powerful propaganda machine to spread fake news, change history and manipulate people's perceptions. Fake news has become an important tool in building narratives that support the government's ideology. With the rise of the internet and social media, the spread of fake news has reached unprecedented levels. In the digital era, fake news can easily be shared and spread quickly to various levels of society (Gumgum et al., 2017; Herlina et al., 2018). Social media platforms and technological capabilities to edit or create false content have provided greater opportunities for the spread of misinformation.

Characteristics and elements of fake news

Fake news or hoaxes have special characteristics that distinguish them from factual and accurate news. Understanding these characteristics is important in identifying and avoiding the spread of fake news. One of the main characteristics of fake news is that it is not based on valid facts or legitimate information (Harchekar, 2017). Fake news often presents claims or statements that cannot be factually justified, and often there is no evidence to support them. Fake news often does not include clear sources or relies on sources that are unknown or unreliable. Information that cannot be verified or comes from anonymous sources is often a feature of fake news (Kaplan et al., 2010). Fake news often uses sensational and provocative elements to attract the attention of readers or viewers. Catchy titles, extreme claims, or dramatic stories are often used to amplify emotional effects and get public attention (Kaplan et al., 2018).

Fake news often contains inconsistent or contradictory content. This can include conflicting statements in the same news, unreasonable claims, or data that is inconsistent with previously known facts (Kholisoh, 2018). Fake news often has a specific purpose or motivation behind its spread. This goal can be various, such as influencing public opinion, manipulating elections, or gaining financial gain. Fake news is often used as a tool to achieve certain goals. In the digital and social media era, fake news can spread quickly and widely. The ability to share information instantly through social media platforms allows fake news to reach audiences in a short time, especially if the story goes viral or gains support from accounts that have a wide reach (Kotler et al., 2017).

Psychological factors influencing the spread of fake news

The spread of fake news is influenced by various psychological factors that influence individual behavior and mindset. Understanding these factors is important for understanding why fake news can



quickly spread and be accepted by large sections of society. Confirmation bias refers to our tendency to seek, interpret, and remember information that supports beliefs or views we already hold. In the context of fake news, individuals tend to receive and disseminate information that is in accordance with their previous beliefs, even if the information is not factual (Febyani, 2015).

The overconfidence effect occurs when individuals overly trust the information they receive without carrying out adequate verification. Strong belief in certain sources or information can make individuals less critical and more likely to spread fake news without considering the truth. Affordability bias causes us to be more inclined to trust and share information that is easily accessible or that we have heard repeatedly. In the context of fake news, information that is widely and quickly spread through social media can be more easily accepted and trusted without adequate consideration (Basarah, 2018).

Fake news often uses a strong emotional element to attract attention and spread quickly. Content that triggers emotions such as anger, fear or joy tends to attract more attention and elicit strong emotional reactions from the public. Strong emotions can reduce critical reasoning and make individuals more vulnerable to spreading fake news. Belief in the closest people or social groups that we follow can influence the spread of fake news. If someone we trust or a member of our group spreads fake news, we are more likely to accept and spread it without further verification (Bandura, 2017). Fake news related to issues that are personally relevant or important to individuals is more likely to be accepted. This effect of personal involvement can affect the spread of fake news, as individuals may be more easily swayed by information that supports their personal views or interests.

Causes and drivers of fake news

The causes and drivers of fake news are complex and can vary depending on the prevailing social, political, and technological context. One of the main causes of the spread of fake news is political motives and economic gain. Parties with certain political interests can use fake news as a tool to influence public opinion, create polarization, or manipulate election results (Bandura, 2001). On the other hand, economic motivation can encourage individuals or groups to create and spread fake news for financial gains, such as through income-generating advertisements.

Fake news often attracts public attention because of its sensationalistic elements. Extreme, provocative, or shocking claims or stories tend to attract more attention and have the potential to go viral on social media (Arisanty et al., 2020). These factors may motivate the spread of fake news in an effort to gain attention, popularity or increase followers. When people face uncertainty, worry, or fear about certain issues, fake news often spreads quickly. The spread of fake news can take advantage of public anxiety and concern to influence their views and actions. An example is the spread of fake news related to health, natural disasters, or sensitive social issues.

Fake news can deepen social polarization and conflict. In polarizing political or social contexts, fake news is often used to reinforce the views and beliefs of certain groups and at the same time, create distrust and conflict with other groups. The spread of fake news can exacerbate social divisions and reinforce misperceptions between groups. Technological advances, especially social media and digital platforms, have played an important role in the spread of fake news. The ease with which information can be shared on social media, the lack of filtering or strict verification, and algorithms that amplify provocative or attention-grabbing content all facilitate the rapid and widespread spread of fake news. The lack of media literacy and criticism among the public is also a



driving factor for the spread of fake news. The inability or distrust of individuals to verify information, identify untrusted sources or understand information manipulation techniques makes them more vulnerable to the spread of fake news (Andhika, 2019).

The impact of fake news

The impact of spreading fake news or hoax in mass communication can be very detrimental to individuals, communities, and institutions. These impacts cover various aspects of life, including political, social, economic, and psychological. Fake news can damage the reputation of the targeted individual, organization, or institution. False or slanderous information in fake news can damage the image and public trust of affected parties, be it individuals, companies, or governments (Candraningrum et al., 2018). Recovering a reputation affected by fake news can take a great deal of time and effort (Andhika 2019).

The spread of fake news can influence the formation of wrong or inaccurate public opinion. Invalid or manipulative information in fake news can change people's views on important issues, generate polarization, or undermine social harmony. This can have a negative impact on political stability, social cohesion, and the decisions taken by communities. Fake news can influence the democratic process by manipulating elections or creating distrust in democratic institutions. The spread of fake news aimed at influencing political views or creating chaos can threaten the integrity of elections and the democratic system as a whole.

The spread of fake news can trigger social conflict, hatred, and disharmony between groups or individuals. False or provocative information in fake news can exacerbate social divisions, create fear, and damage relationships between individuals. In addition, the continuous consumption of fake news can cause anxiety, stress, and psychological instability in individuals. The spread of fake news can impact the economic sector by damaging company reputations or

manipulating markets. False information about companies, products, or policies can influence stock prices, investment decisions, and consumer confidence. This can result in financial loss for the company and investors. The spread of fake news can reduce public trust in the media and the information conveyed by them when fake news spreads fast and wide.

Fake news and the changing media landscape

The spread of fake news or hoaxes has a significant impact on changing the media landscape. The spread of fake news has led to a decline in public trust in traditional media. When fake news spreads easily, traditional media is sometimes also a source of inaccurate news, and people are becoming more skeptical of the information they receive from the media. This causes a decrease in trust in media institutions and the influence they have (Baran et al., 2011).

The spread of fake news has pushed people to look for alternative sources of news beyond the traditional media. Some people turn to social media, blogs, or video-sharing platforms as their source of information. This can create a fragmented information ecosystem, where individuals are more likely to be exposed to narrow and less verifiable viewpoints. Social media plays an important role in spreading fake news. In a changing media landscape, social media platforms have become the main channel for the spread of fake news. The speed and easy access offered by social media allow fake news to spread quickly and widely. This has a major influence on public views and opinions (Frederick, 2005).

The changing media landscape also involves the active role of users in news dissemination. In the era of social media, every individual can easily become a "publisher" and "spreader" of news through their uploads. This allows for the uncontrolled spread of fake news by individuals who may not be aware of or do not check the veracity of information before



spreading it. Technological developments also play a role in responding to the fake news phenomenon. Algorithms and fake news detection technologies are continuously being developed to identify and combat the spread of fake news. Social media platforms and technology companies are also taking steps to remove or warn against content that could be misleading. However, challenges remain in effectively tackling the spread of fake news. The phenomenon of fake news has increased the importance of media literacy and critical thinking in society. Communities need to be equipped with the skills to identify, evaluate and verify the information they receive. Media literacy and critical education are important to fight the spread of fake news and build a society that is smarter in consuming information (Harchekar, 2017).

Freedom of speech and the spread of misinformation

There is a dilemma between freedom of speech and the spread of misinformation, including fake news. Freedom of speech is a fundamental right recognized in many democratic countries, which involves the freedom of individuals to express opinions, share information, and express their ideas without interference or censorship from the government or other institutions. However, the dissemination of misinformation, including fake news, can have significant negative consequences (Kholisoh, 2018).

While freedom of speech protects the individual's right to express opinions, each individual has a responsibility to ensure that the information they submit is accurate and accountable. Journalists and news writers have an ethical responsibility to present carefully verified facts and to distinguish between facts and opinions. While freedom of speech is respected, the law also protects individuals from slander and defamation. If someone intentionally spreads false information that harms the reputation of a person or institution, they can be prosecuted. This reflects the importance of a balance between freedom of speech

and protection against the spread of misinformation (Herlina et al., 2018).

Traditional media and digital platforms have a responsibility to verify and deliver accurate information to the public. While digital platforms play a role in providing broad access to information, they must also take steps to stop the spread of fake news and promote trusted content. Media literacy and critical education are very important in dealing with the spread of fake news. Communities must be equipped with the skills to recognize, analyze and verify the information they receive. Strong education about media literacy helps individuals become more skeptical and critical of the information they encounter.

Responsibilities of news platforms and organizations

The responsibility of news platforms and organizations in overcoming the spread of fake news is very important in maintaining the integrity of the information conveyed to the public. News platforms and organizations must have strong mechanisms in place to verify the veracity of information before disseminating it to the public. They need to adopt journalism practices that adhere to high ethical and professional standards. This includes thorough research and fact-checking prior to publication to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the information (Harchekar, 2017).

News platforms and organizations should be transparent about the information sources they use. They must provide clear information regarding news sources and information-gathering methods. By providing a trusted source, the public can more easily verify and evaluate the truth of the information conveyed (Kaplan et al., 2010).

News platforms and organizations can play an active role in identifying and separating fake news from legitimate news. They can label the content they consider fake news or unverified. This step helps users



distinguish between reliable and untrusted information and minimizes the spread of fake news. News platforms and organizations must contribute to increasing media literacy among the public. They can provide resources, guides, or educational programs that help people understand how to recognize fake news, analyze information, and carry out verification. This helps individuals become more critical in consuming information (Kaplan et al., 2018).

News platforms and organizations must have effective mechanisms in place to deal with violations and user reports regarding fake news. They must respond quickly to remove or warn inaccurate or misleading content. This helps minimize the impact of widely spreading fake news. News platforms and organizations can work together with experts, academics, and the community to tackle the spread of fake news. By leveraging expertise and involving the public in efforts to prevent and combat fake news, they can come up with more effective and comprehensive solutions.

Challenges in regulating fake news

Regulating fake news or hoax is a complex challenge and requires a careful approach. One of the biggest challenges is striking a balance between freedom of expression and protecting against the spread of fake news. While it is important to protect free speech, too much censorship can hinder individual freedom. This challenge demands a careful approach to regulating fake news without violating human rights. The internet and social media have made it possible for fake news to spread quickly and widely. Fake news can easily go viral in a short time, creating challenges in containing and limiting its spread. This viral strength requires a fast and effective response to minimize adverse effects (Gumgum et al., 2017).

Identification and verification of fake news stories can be difficult because they are often packaged in a way that resembles legitimate news. Verifying the

veracity of information and identifying reliable sources can be a tricky task. It requires a collaborative effort of factors such as journalists, news organizations, government agencies, and the public to accurately identify and verify fake news.

Implementing laws against the spread of fake news is also a challenge. Several jurisdictions have tried to regulate the spread of fake news with laws that involve sanctions and penalties. However, challenges arise in setting clear boundaries and maintaining fairness and freedom of expression. The spread of fake news often involves the use of technology and the manipulation of audio, video, or images. It requires high technical expertise to identify and combat such manipulation. Technological developments that continue to evolve, such as deep fake, also complicate the fight against fake news. The spread of fake news depends not only on news platforms and organizations but also on user behavior. Users often unintentionally or intentionally spread fake news via social media or private messages. Changing user behavior and increasing media and critical literacy is a challenge in itself (Ferdianwan et al., 2019).

Ethical journalism in the digital age

Ethical journalism remains an important tenet in the digital age, where the dissemination of information and access to content is becoming wider and faster. Ethical journalism emphasizes the importance of the accuracy of information. In the digital age, where news can spread quickly, journalists need to carry out careful verification before publishing information. They must rely on trusted sources, cross-check, and ensure the accuracy of information before disseminating it to the public. Ethical journalism demands transparency in disclosing sources of information and methods of gathering news. In the digital era, journalists must be honest and open about the origin of information, conflicts of interest that may exist, and the process of writing news. This



transparency builds public trust and allows readers to verify the truth of information (Ferdiawan et al., 2019).

Ethical journalism encourages journalists to avoid sensationalism and clickbait practices that can manipulate titles or content to attract readers' attention without considering the truth or relevance of the information. Journalists must focus on the substance of the news and provide the right context. Ethical journalism in the digital age respects individual privacy and information security. Journalists must consider the possible impact on news subjects and protect their privacy in accordance with applicable ethics and laws. They must use technology and tools that ensure the security of the information disclosed.

Ethical journalism involves responding responsibly to comments and user interactions on digital platforms. Journalists should monitor comments that appear under news articles and address the use of inappropriate language, harassment, or discrimination. They also need to interact with users in a balanced and professional manner. In the digital age, fake news or hoax can easily spread. Ethical journalism demands responsibility in identifying, fighting, and providing clarifications against fake news. Journalists must play an active role in checking the correctness of the information and providing accurate and reliable information to the public (Gumgum et al., 2017).

Overcoming fake news

Tackling the spread of fake news is a complex challenge. Increasing media literacy among the public is an important step in overcoming fake news. Education on how to recognize fake news, analyze information, and perform verification can help individuals become more critical and aware of the manipulation of information. Thoroughly verifying the facts before spreading information is an important step in stopping the spread of fake news. Journalists, news organizations, and even social media users can

check the accuracy of information by finding reliable sources, cross-checking, and using available fact-verification tools (Amalliah, 2018).

Journalists have an important role to play in fighting fake news by producing and disseminating accurate and trustworthy news. They must comply with ethical journalism standards, conduct in-depth research, interview competent sources, and provide the right context in the news. Social media platforms have a significant role in spreading fake news. Collaboration between news organizations, journalists, and social media platforms is needed to identify, label and limit the spread of fake news. These platforms should strengthen their policies and algorithms to reduce the spread of unverified or misleading content. Forming alliances and partnerships between news organizations, government agencies, academia, and civil society can lead to more effective approaches to tackling fake news. Through this collaboration, research, technology development, educational campaigns, and information exchange can be carried out to fight fake news (Acerby, 2019).

A quick response to fake news is critical. News organizations and journalists must provide alternative content that is accurate and trustworthy to offset the spread of fake news. This can be done through fact-Quick checking, clear explanations, and content that provides a balanced perspective. Discreet and appropriate regulations can provide the legal basis needed to tackle fake news. Regulations must consider the balance between freedom of expression and public protection from the dissemination of misleading or harmful information (Arisanty et al., 2020).

2. Conclusion

It is important to tackle the fake news phenomenon with a holistic approach. This involves the active role of individuals, news organizations, journalists, social media platforms, government agencies, and society as a whole. Increasing media literacy, accurate verification of facts, ethical journalism, collaboration



with social media platforms, proper regulation, and prompt response to fake news are important steps in dealing with this phenomenon.

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