



Analysis of Hoax Exposure on TikTok Social Media among Islamic Journalism Students at UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar

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Abstract

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This research is driven by the digital revolution, which has made TikTok a major source of information for young people. However, because of its personalized algorithm, TikTok has also become a platform for the widespread spread of hoaxes. The main goal of this study is to examine how exposure of Islamic journalism students at UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar to hoaxes on TikTok affects public trust. These students were chosen as subjects because of their strategic significance as future journalists who hold journalistic ethics and tabayyun (verification) values. In-depth online interviews with students from the 2022–2025 cohorts and documentation in the form of screenshots of their TikTok activity were used to collect data for a descriptive qualitative research approach. The Miles and Huberman paradigm, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, was used to analyze the data. The findings show that exposure to TikTok hoaxes has a big impact on the cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of public trust. Students showed strong ability in recognizing false information on the cognitive level. This exposure caused negative emotions in the affective dimension, including disappointment and anger over poor-quality content. Students responded critically on the behavioral level by reporting content, offering instructional explanations in the comments section, and refraining from spreading false information. The study found that Islamic journalism students have good media literacy protection through active verification and healthy skepticism, even though the intensity of hoaxes on TikTok is very high.

Keyword: Hoax, Public Trust, TikTok, Islamic Journalism Students, Media Literacy

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INTRODUCTION

The digital revolution happening today has put social media, especially TikTok, as a main source of information for young people. As a platform with massive growth reaching 126.8 million users in Indonesia, TikTok offers an information ecosystem through dynamic short videos supported by strong personalization algorithms. However, behind this easy access, TikTok has also transformed into a fertile ground for the spread of hoaxes or widespread misinformation. The hoax phenomenon on this platform is a serious threat because its content format with little context often overrides

journalistic verification principles, creates echo chambers, and has the potential to trigger a public trust crisis in credible sources of information. This situation becomes really crucial when targeting groups of Islamic Journalism students, like those at UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar. As future journalists, they are trained to be gatekeepers of truth who uphold journalistic ethics based on the principle of *tabayyun*, or verification. Journalism students should have stronger media literacy and verification skills compared to the general public.

However, the reality on the ground shows that exposure to hoaxes on TikTok is very intense, even touching on sensitive issues like politics, health, and religion, which students often encounter several times a week. If this intellectual group, equipped with verification knowledge, is still vulnerable to exposure, it indicates a gap between academic theory and practice in the digital space. The massive exposure to hoaxes directly impacts students' cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions regarding public trust. Cognitively, students are expected to be able to dissect information structures to recognize visual manipulation or false narratives. Affectively, findings show negative emotions such as disappointment, anger, and concern over low-quality content. On the behavioral level, this exposure triggers active actions like reporting content, giving clarifications in the comment section, and cross-checking with official news portals. Therefore, this research is really urgent to analyze how hoax exposure on TikTok affects students' public trust, map their media literacy risks, and understand their role as agents preventing misinformation amid today's digital information storm.

Theoretical Study: Exposure to Misinformation, Social Media, and Public Trust

Theoretical Review: Exposure to Hoaxes, Social Media, and Public Trust The phenomenon of hoaxes in digital communication is understood as information that is deliberately manipulated to hide the actual facts or messages that are intentionally made false but disguised as the truth to deceive and provoke the audience. In a scientific context, hoaxes are categorized as disinformation designed with emotional or sensational packaging to trigger quick reactions and wide dissemination, often neglecting the identification of accurate sources. TikTok's transformation from an entertainment platform to a primary source of information for young people, especially students, creates new vulnerabilities because its personalization algorithms often prioritize virality and user engagement over content accuracy. This condition can create an echo chamber phenomenon, where users are constantly exposed to content that matches their preferences without adequate fact-checking. (Rahayu & Sensusiyati, 2021). The presence of hoaxes on social media platforms can significantly erode public trust, which is defined as a person's willingness to rely on or have confidence in others, including media institutions and information authorities.

Public trust can be measured through three main dimensions: the cognitive dimension, which relates to understanding and recognizing facts; the affective dimension, which involves emotional reactions like disappointment or anger toward poor-quality information; and the behavioral dimension, which includes actual actions taken in response to that information (Caniago, 2022). To maintain the integrity of information amidst the flood of misinformation, the role of media literacy and communication ethics becomes crucial. For journalism students, critical skills are developed through the internalization of journalistic ethical values combined with the principle of *Tabayyun* (verification) in Islamic teachings. This media literacy is practiced through active verification strategies, such as checking account credibility (through verification badges or official media status), analyzing the completeness of news elements (5W+1H), and cross-validating with mainstream media or trusted news portals before believing or sharing information. In this way, this double verification standard serves as a cognitive and moral defense that keeps public trust at a healthy level.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method to deeply explore the phenomenon of hoax exposure and its impact on public trust. A qualitative approach is chosen because the researchers aim to understand social reality from the subject's point of view in a holistic

way. The research is centered at the Islamic Journalism Study Program, Faculty of Ushuluddin Adab and Dakwah, State Islamic University (UIN) Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar. The location was chosen because of the strategic importance of journalism students as future journalists who have an ethical responsibility to verify information. The research subjects or informants were selected using specific techniques to obtain representative data from various academic levels. There is a total of 20 Islamic Journalism students as informants, consisting of five students from each class: 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025. The purpose of selecting these informants is to map out the consistency of students' understanding and responses to hoaxes on TikTok across all study levels.

Data collection was carried out using two main instruments: in-depth interviews and documentation.

The interviews were conducted online to dig deeper into students' understanding (cognitive), emotional reactions (affective), and actions (behavior) when exposed to hoaxes. Besides interviews, documentation was used to strengthen the primary data by collecting screenshots of students' digital activities, such as their interactions in TikTok comment sections that show attempts to clarify or warn against hoax content. The collected data were then analyzed using the Miles and Huberman data analysis model. The analysis process involved three main stages: data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions or verification. During the reduction stage, the researcher sorted through the interview and documentation data that were relevant to the focus on hoax exposure and public trust. Next, the data is presented in the form of a descriptive narrative to illustrate the connection between the intensity of exposure and the students' media literacy responses. The validity of the data is ensured through triangulation techniques and participatory observation of the informants' digital activities on the TikTok platform.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESEARCH RESULTS

Based on in-depth research conducted on students of the Islamic Journalism Study Program at UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar across batches (2022-2025), a comprehensive picture was found regarding how exposure to hoaxes on the TikTok platform affects the dimensions of public trust. These findings are classified into three main aspects:

The Cognitive Dimension: Deconstructing Understanding and Verification Mechanisms

Students show a high level of cognitive awareness in defining hoaxes. The majority of informants (such as LZ, FL, and TA) understand hoaxes not as just "fake news", but as an attempt to systematically manipulate information to lead public opinion. Cognitively, students are able to dissect the characteristics of hoaxes on TikTok, such as clickbait titles, overly emotional narratives, and the absence of clear sources. Students use their journalism knowledge as the main filter. They check the 5W+1H elements and see if the video has any unusual edits (manipulative editing). This cognitive ability is also supported by the principle of Tabayyun, where students don't immediately trust viral content before cross-checking with mainstream media or verified official accounts (blue check).

Affective Dimension: Emotional Responses and Healthy Skepticism

Affectively, repeated exposure to hoaxes leads to "information fatigue" and negative emotional reactions. Informants expressed disappointment and anger toward content creators who deliberately spread disinformation to gain views or followers. Concerns also arose regarding the impact of these hoaxes on the general public, who lack a background in journalism.

The emergence of strong skepticism serves as a form of affective protection. Students no longer feel enthusiastic about viral news on TikTok; instead, they tend to feel on guard (alert). These emotional reactions are heavily influenced by their high intensity of TikTok use (some informants spend up to 9 hours a day on the platform), leading them to feel "sick of" an information ecosystem that is often unhealthy.

Behavioral Dimension: Digital Activism and Remedial Actions

The research findings indicate that students are taking concrete actions to mitigate the impact of hoaxes. Based on interview data, these actions include: Reporting: Informants such as RJ, RY, and DD actively report content suspected of being hoaxes using TikTok's "Report" feature so that the content is taken down by the system.

Comment Section Interventions: Students provide clarifications or links to original news articles in the comment section as a form of education for other users.

Breaking the Chain of Distribution: Students consciously refrain from

In the cognitive dimension, students demonstrated a mature understanding of the characteristics of hoaxes as information fabricated to provoke or obscure the truth. This cognitive acuity was put into practice through self-verification techniques, in which students not only examined the content itself but also assessed the credibility of accounts based on the number of followers, the consistency of posts, and by reviewing the comments section to gauge validation from other users. These findings confirm that a background in journalism education equips students with the ability to identify fabricated and misleading content more critically than the general public. In the affective dimension, massive exposure to hoaxes triggers strong emotional reactions, ranging from disappointment and anger to anxiety about the quality of information in the public sphere. Interestingly, there are differences in emotional dynamics across student cohorts: senior students tend to exhibit sharper skepticism and heightened vigilance, while junior students are more dominated by a sense of concern. These affective responses are not merely forms of negative emotion but manifestations of "professional skepticism" as aspiring journalists. Their distrust of hoax content on TikTok actually strengthens their commitment to credible sources of information, ensuring that their public trust is not lost but rather transformed into a critical stance that protects against disinformation.

Finally, in terms of behavior, Islamic Journalism students demonstrate concrete actions to mitigate the spread of hoaxes through corrective measures and active media literacy. Research data indicates that students are no longer passive; they consciously report content identified as hoaxes and provide clarifications or warnings in the comments section to educate other users. Their commitment to not reposting content of questionable veracity is a key step in breaking the chain of disinformation. This behavior reflects the successful internalization of the value of *tabayyun* combined with journalistic ethics, whereby students position themselves as guardians of information accuracy on digital platforms. Overall, the synergy between these cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects fosters robust digital resilience among students at UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar.

DISCUSSION

The phenomenon of exposure to hoaxes on TikTok among Islamic Journalism students creates an information paradox. On the one hand, TikTok is a highly addictive platform that consumes a great deal of time; on the other hand, their trust in the quality of information on the platform is at a low point. This aligns with media literacy theory, according to which individuals with a background in communication studies tend to have stronger defenses against the barrage of media messages.

An in-depth analysis reveals that their educational background in the Islamic Journalism program plays a central role as a form of "intellectual immunity." The principles of journalistic ethics they learned in college become second nature as they navigate social media. The use of the term "*Tabayyun*" in the research findings indicates an integration of religious values and journalistic professionalism in confronting disinformation. The impact of exposure to hoaxes on students' public trust is selective. They lose trust in anonymous individuals or accounts on TikTok, yet that trust is redirected toward official media institutions. This demonstrates that even as hoaxes run rampant, students continue to regard conventional media as their final authority. (Saebani & Farhan Mubarak, 2024).

Active measures such as reporting content and providing clarifications in comment sections demonstrate that Islamic Journalism students have fulfilled their role as responsible citizen

journalists. They not only protect themselves but also strive to safeguard the digital ecosystem from information pollution. Affective responses such as anger and disappointment are, in fact, manifestations of their professional integrity as aspiring journalists who deeply value factual truth. Overall, this study confirms that a high level of media literacy and a solid journalism education are key to maintaining healthy public trust in an era of information overload.

Based on the research findings, exposure to hoaxes on the social media platform TikTok significantly influences the three main dimensions of public trust among Islamic Journalism students at UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar: the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. In the cognitive dimension, students demonstrated a mature understanding of the characteristics of hoaxes as information fabricated to provoke or obscure the truth. This cognitive acuity is put into practice through self-verification techniques, where students not only examine the content itself but also assess the credibility of accounts by checking the number of followers, the consistency of posts, and reviewing the comments section to see validation from other users. These findings confirm that a background in journalism education equips students with the ability to identify fabricated and misleading content more critically than the general public. (Anggun & Siska, 2025)

In the affective dimension, massive exposure to hoaxes triggers strong emotional reactions, ranging from disappointment and anger to anxiety about the quality of information in the public sphere. Interestingly, there are differences in emotional dynamics across student cohorts: senior students tend to exhibit sharper skepticism and heightened vigilance, while junior students are more dominated by a sense of concern. These affective responses are not merely forms of negative emotion but manifestations of “professional skepticism” as aspiring journalists. Their distrust of hoax content on TikTok actually strengthens their commitment to credible information sources, ensuring that their public trust is not lost but rather transformed into a critical, protective stance against disinformation. (Nurlatun, Nayoan, & Pangemanan, 2021)

Finally, in the behavioral dimension, Islamic Journalism students demonstrate concrete actions to mitigate the spread of hoaxes through corrective measures and active media literacy. Research data indicates that students no longer adopt a passive stance; they consciously report content identified as hoaxes and provide clarifications or warnings in the comment section to educate other users. Their commitment to refraining from reposting content of questionable veracity is a key step in breaking the chain of disinformation. This behavior reflects the successful internalization of the value of *tabayyun*, combined with journalistic ethics, whereby students position themselves as guardians of information accuracy on digital platforms. Overall, the synergy between these cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects fosters robust digital resilience among students at UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar.

HOAX

A hoax is a fabricated narrative or piece of information that is deliberately spread with the primary purpose of deceiving, misleading, or manipulating its recipients into believing it is a true fact. In a broader, scientific context, a hoax falls under the category of disinformation, which refers to the spread of false information. While it circulates alongside misinformation, the essence of a hoax lies in the intensity with which it is crafted—the content is designed to appear convincing, often using emotional or sensational packaging to trigger a rapid reaction and widespread dissemination within society. (Halawa & Lase, 2022). The term “hoax” or “false news,” according to Lynda Walsh in her book *Sins Against Science* (in Bijak Bersosmed, 2017:21), is an English term believed to have first appeared in 1808. The origin of the word “hoax” is believed to date back hundreds of years, deriving from the word “hocus” in the incantation “hocus pocus”—a phrase often used by magicians, similar to “sim salabim.” Meanwhile, according to Hunt (in Picton & Teravainen, 2017:3), fake news is defined as news that is entirely fabricated and manipulated to resemble credible journalism and attract maximum attention. In other words, a hoax is merely a fabrication, not based on reality. The public’s lack of information and knowledge ultimately leads to such information being widely publicized, as

if it were true, even though it is not (Gun et al., 2017:92). This is one of the reasons why hoaxes spread quickly and are easily believed by many people (Iswara, 2021).

PUBLIC TRUST

According to Dharmmesta (as cited in Darmanto, 2023), trust is a person's willingness to rely on another party involved in an exchange because they have confidence in that party. Public trust is the public's confidence in the government's ability to implement policies that have been formulated in accordance with the public interest. Dwiyanto defines public trust as a condition in which the government and its officials are considered to always manage the interests of citizens well, so that the public can entrust their fate to the government. (Ilmu, Dan, Politik, Latifah, & Alifia, 2025).

SOCIAL MEDIA

The definition of social media, according to Tjiptono and Fandy (2016), is an international technology that facilitates several characteristics of social media possessed by influencers. First, information is of utmost importance on social media because it is consumed by the social media audience and spreads easily among users. Second, social media can store content uploaded by users or host information posted by social media users. Third, social media interactions form communication networks among users. Thus, based on these characteristics, the role of influencers in each of their social media posts can be immediately seen and spreads to all their followers, from one audience to another. (Ratih & Risa, 2022). As stated by (AM Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), social media is a group of internet-based applications built on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, which enable users to create and exchange content. According to Andlika (2019), social media is a platform that allows users to represent themselves by sharing, interacting, and communicating with other users, and forming virtual social bonds via the internet. (Teknologi & Vol, 2021)

TIKTOK

TikTok was officially launched in September 2016. The TikTok app originated in China and was developed by ByteDance, founded by Zhang Yiming. In its country of origin, the app was called Douyin, and Zhang Yiming wanted to expand the Douyin app beyond China under the name TikTok. TikTok is an app that provides previously unknown information and serves as an entertainment platform where users are free to create short videos using the app's engaging features. TikTok has gained popularity among people from all walks of life, including public figures. It is also known as an engaging app for its users, allowing them to create short videos showcasing their creativity. TikTok features a collection of music tracks that enable users to showcase their creative performances. (Damayanti & Prasetyawati, 2023)

TikTok is a new social media platform that provides a space for users to express themselves and hone their talents through video content. TikTok turns users' phones into mobile studios. With videos lasting approximately 15 seconds, this app offers engaging and easy-to-use special effects, allowing anyone to effortlessly create cool videos. These include special effects such as shaking and shivering effects on videos set to electronic music, hair color changes, 3D stickers, and other features. (P-issn, Affandi, & Wijayani, 2022)

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings and discussion regarding the analysis of hoax exposure on the social media platform TikTok among Islamic Journalism students at UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar, the following main conclusions can be drawn:

First, exposure to hoaxes on TikTok has a significant yet measurable impact on the three main dimensions of students' public trust: the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. In the

cognitive dimension, students demonstrated strong intellectual abilities in identifying disinformation through journalistic reasoning, such as checking the 5W+1H elements, verifying account credibility (blue checkmark), and comparing information with mainstream media. The application of the principle of tabayyun (clarification) serves as the primary ethical foundation that integrates Islamic values with professional journalistic practices in filtering information.

Second, on the affective level, massive exposure to hoaxes triggers consistent negative emotional responses, ranging from feelings of disappointment, anger, and concern to anxiety. These emotions stem from their moral awareness as aspiring journalists who feel that the integrity of public information is being threatened by manipulative content. High skepticism toward viral content on TikTok serves as a form of psychological defense for students to prevent them from being easily manipulated.

Third, on the behavioral dimension, the students do not adopt a passive stance toward hoaxes. They take concrete curative and preventive actions, such as reporting misleading content to TikTok, providing education through clarifications in the comments section, and consciously breaking the chain of dissemination by refraining from reposting questionable content.

Overall, this study concludes that Islamic Journalism students at UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar possess excellent resilience and media literacy. Although the intensity of exposure to hoaxes on TikTok is very high—with platform usage lasting 2 to 9 hours a day—journalism education and the internalization of Islamic ethical values have proven effective in mitigating the negative impact on their public trust. The students successfully transformed destructive media exposure into critical actions that strengthen their role as agents in preventing disinformation in the digital space.

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