

Undergraduate Students' Perspectives on Digital Literacy in Minimizing the Spread of Hoax

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Abstract. Hoaxes have been rampant on various social media platforms. A lack of digital literacy skills causes the ongoing hoaxes to spread. This study aims to analyse undergraduate students' perspectives on good digital literacy skills that can minimize the spread of hoaxes. The current study uses a survey research method to gain insights into the perspective of undergraduate students. Respondents in this study were 21 undergraduate students of the Islamic State University of Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten in the English Education Department. The instrument used is the close-ended questionnaires with 20 questions. To collect the data, the researcher used close-ended questionnaires created in Google form. Data of questionnaires is analyzed by using percentage analyses. The result of this study indicates that most students can handle the hoax news, even though some are still spreading it. Besides that, the type of hoax often accepted by students is social politics, which spreads through Facebook applications.

Introduction

It is well known that digital literacy is described as interconnected abilities or competencies essential for success in the digital world, such as understanding, processing, and processing digital-based information. (Gunduzalp, 2021; Mandasari et al., 2021). Individuals' digital literacy is their awareness, manner, and proficiency in using digital technology. Additionally, it offers sufficient tools for locating, retrieving, organizing, integrating, assessing, analyzing, and synthesizing digital data, as well as for establishing communication channels and generating artistic expression. In short, having a digital literacy skill in the digital era is important.

Regarding the digital era, Information sharing, especially in the form of hoaxes, dominates digital communication and information. Based on the previous work, the hoaxes spread more than 92,4 percent in 2017 and were reduced to 87.50% in 2019 (Krisdyan et al., 2019; Wahida & Syahputra, 2020). Hoaxes can spread on various social media platforms due to a lack of digital literacy skills (Nisa & Setyawati, 2019; Yuliani et al., 2019; Susilo et al., 2020; Marlina et al., 2021; Muliono et al., 2022; Astuti, 2021). Surely, it has become impactful for society. It mentioned in Silvhiany et al., (2021), she said the misleading information becomes dangerous among people who follow the advice. Al-Fatih & Aditya (2019) Highlighted that hoaxes caused separation, political instability, and security disturbances. Also supported by Habibi (2020), he mentioned that hoaxes can trigger prolonged horizontal conflict. To summarize, due to the spread of hoaxes, people must have strong digital literacy.

In the case of a hoax, ordinary people and academics have begun to be widely discussed. Both the general public and scholars are starting to talk extensively about hoaxes.

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Because it might not be wholly vocal or written, it is a distinct theoretical event. Hoax is frequently used to imply fake information on social media (Nadzir et al., 2019), particularly WhatsApp (Jenny Ratna Seminar & Hadisiwi, 2021). Meanwhile, the media is a way of understanding the truth of how the subject is portrayed (Tiffani, n.d.). According to the Indonesian Association of Internet Network Operators, 143 million Indonesian internet users out of 262 million have a high potential for hoax contamination (Tulung & Kalampung, 2019). In comparison, in 2020, there was an increase in internet users by up to 17% because those aged 20 to 44 years old had at least one account for each social media account (Nisa & Setiyawati, 2019; Yanti Dwi Astuti, 2021). The number of internet users always increases daily, so it has a massive impact on the community, and they should remain concerned. The more hoax news successfully spread by the public without hesitation, the more victims will be involved in hoax news instances. Social media platforms include Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp as a source for spreading hoaxes.

Individuals who have Internet access are likelier accepting the hoaxes news than those who do not have (Nadzir et al., 2019). The more social users understand digital literacy, the more we can minimize the spread of hoax news. Thus, the activeness of the audience in seeking information can be appropriate or on target. To minimize the spread of hoaxes, digital literacy skills can be used to anticipate it through Focus Group Discussion (FGD), simulation. (Virga & Andriadi, 2019), checking the validity through Mafindo, using the Fact Check app (Marlina et al., 2021). In addition, the characteristics of hoaxes can be identified in four ways. According to Yuliani et al., (2019), they are; 1) Hoax information sometimes involves chain letters, such as "Spread this to everyone you know; otherwise, something unpleasant will happen. 2) Hoax information often lacks a date, real-time and verifiability, such as "yesterday" or "issued by..." assertions without clarity. 3) Hoax information sometimes needs an expiry date, which can be misleading and have a long-lasting impact. 4) no identifying entity is acknowledged as a source of information, and the organization is typically not associated with data. Therefore, it is necessary to increase digital literacy for social media users so that no more hoaxes are spreading on social media.

Few researchers have addressed the problem of digital literacy from various perspective levels. Susilo & Yustitia, et al., (2020) mentioned social media users in Indonesia have inadequate digital literacy capabilities. In this context, the informants used were the influencers who have 100.000 followers and more. In addition, Harisanty et al., (2021) Conducted a socialization about hoaxes and digital literacy skills for society. The result was a positive impact, the society understand how to find the right news, and how they can compare the true or false information. Meanwhile, high school students digital literacy improved through the implementation of a blended learning model (Patmanthara & Hidayat 2018). Fauziyah et al., (2019) Conducted a digital literacy study and approved that high school students must have a strong digital literacy. In conclusion, most studies in the field of Digital Literacy have only focused on the perspective of teachers and or lecturers, junior or senior high school students, and the general public. The previous studies have not yet dealt with the undergraduate student's point of view. For this reason, this research is needed to determine digital literacy skills from undergraduate students' perspectives as agents of change and minimize the spread of hoaxes around them.

Based on the description of digital literacy and hoaxes above, this study attempts to fill this gap by analyzing the students' perspectives on digital literacy skills to minimize the spread of hoaxes and the kinds of hoaxes often received by social media users. The study results are, therefore, meant to assess digital literacy, identify the hoaxes that are most frequently received and disseminated by social media users, and evaluate the amount of disinformation or hoaxes that have been carried out. This study will advance knowledge of the significance of digital literacy abilities held by social media users.

Theoretical Framework

Digital Literacy

In the literature, digital literacy usually refers to the ability to use and understand the various information in digital devices (Nisa & Setiyawati, 2019,). It also includes technological, attitudinal, and cognitive components, linked to the need of humans (as individuals and as groups) to express, explore, question, communicate, and understand ideas (Marín & Castañeda, 2023). According to Silvhiany et al., (2021), she mentioned in her research that students need to improve their digital literacy to be productive users in the digital age. Otherwise, kids won't be able to adapt to and survive the digital age (Reddy et al., 2023). To put it briefly, digital literacy is the capability to use digital devices to obtain, access, and generate information through digital devices according to the context.

Hoax

According to Boese, a hoax is an act of deception that elicits a response from the public; it is a type of "lie" that is successful in grabbing "the attention (and ideally the imagination) of the public" (Secor & Walsh, 2004).

As argued by Charlie Backett (2017):

"Hoax (fake news) is a real problem in all its forms: the viral hoaxes created for profit or political disruption, the hyper-partisan distortion, and malicious misinformation. Deliberately created false information is not new, but it is more extensive and harder to identify or counter than before. Digital technologies and the Internet make it easier to create and spread. It misleads citizens, misrepresents reality, and causes damage to the information system itself." (Salma, 2019)

Hoaxes are produced through fake text, which is likened to the original. Hoaxes are also usually revealed gradually; it is a temporary event. After anything was published, people made judgments, but the text was later removed, raising suspicions before they learned they had been duped. That is the fundamental way that hoaxes propagate. It can be concluded that a hoax is a piece of information that is not true but is justified as if it happened. Like what is circulating on Instagram and WhatsApp, some hoax info is circulating quickly in the following chat applications. This phenomenon impacts public decisions and beliefs regarding health information, education, and politics. Regarding the relationship between digital literacy and hoaxes, digital literacy skills possessed by social media users can be one of the roles that can minimize the spread of hoaxes. (Virga & Andriadi, 2019). However, we must have a firm stance to stop the spread of hoaxes so that they do not become more rampant. Thus far, the researcher argues that digital literacy skills are essential for all social media users because they can be used to prevent the spread of hoaxes, which will be seen from the undergraduate students' perspective.

Students Perspective

The term 'perspective' is an internal process that has been recognized by individuals when selected and regulated stimuli that come from outside. (Sujarwo et al., 2020) And it is a way of looking at a problem that occurs or a particular point of view used in seeing a phenomenon. (Martono, 2010). In comparison, a student's perspective is a student's attitude or point of view about seeing a phenomenon.

Material and Method

This study used a survey research method which collected the data from the undergraduate students of the English Department in the State Islamic University of Sultan Maulana Hasanudin Banten. This method was chosen because it is one of the most practical ways to describe a student's perspective. In this study, the survey research method discovers undergraduate students' perspectives on digital literacy in minimizing the spread of hoaxes. According to Creswell (2012), survey research designs are methods used in quantitative research. Researchers use a survey to characterize a population's attitudes, opinions, behaviors, or features to a sample or the total population.

The participants in this study were 21 undergraduate students (11 male and 10 female) from Sultan Maulana Hasanudin Banten's State Islamic University's English Language Education Department. The first step in selecting the participant begins by asking for a recommendation from the English lecturer at the university. Next, the researcher selected 52 undergraduate students from different classes. Last, the researcher only selected 21 undergraduate students as the participants. The instrument used in this study was a closed-ended questionnaire.

At the beginning of data collection, the researcher distributed questionnaires about digital literacy to social media users in undergraduate students in English Language Education. The close-ended questionnaires are created using a Google form, which will be distributed to undergraduate students by personally contacting respondents via the WhatsApp application and distributing it through WhatsApp groups. A questionnaire was utilized to collect data from the sample to describe their perspective on digital literacy skills in minimizing the spread of hoaxes. Data analysis was obtained by Google Forms by analyzing participants' respondents by to know their digital perspective literacy, which can minimize hoaxes' spread to obtain the needed data. Data were analyzed and described to obtain answers to questions by using percentage analysis.

Results and Discussion

Results

The total number of responses for this close-ended questionnaire was 21 respondents, consisting of 11 male and 10 female respondents. Almost 71,4% or 15 respondents accessed the social media platform more than 10 times daily, while 9,5% or three respondents mainly accessed it 5-10 times. Very few respondents, 14,3%, indicated they accessed social media platforms in 1-5 minutes. Of the 20 respondents who completed the questions, just one respondent did not access social media in a day. This respondent's response will be looked into further; if it turns out to be false, they should not have participated in the study as a respondent.

We will turn to the following question: How can they access social media? Most respondents use their internet quota/data package to access the Internet rather than Wi-Fi. Very few respondents use both to access the Internet. It can be found in the table below:

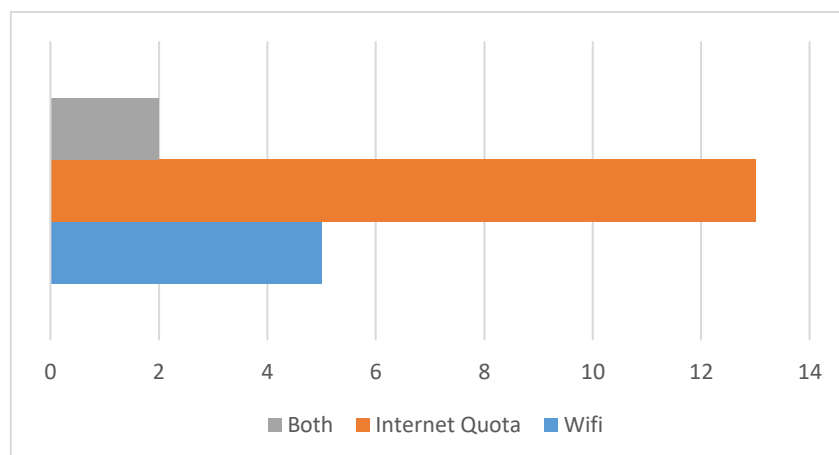


Figure 1.

Students' response on how long they use the Internet Access

When asked about the reason why they use social media, the respondents were unanimous in their view that they use social media for social interaction, to get information, and to kill their boredom. Some respondents also stated they use social media to get knowledge. Most of the respondents accessed their social media at night; 14 out of 21 respondents were active at night.

The next section of the question was concerned with hoaxes. Most respondents know the definition of hoax as the percentage result is 90,5% or 19 respondents. Meanwhile, the other two stated that they only knew a little bit about the definition of the hoax. The significant respondents stated they received hoaxes once a week. When the respondents were asked about the intensity of hoaxes. Almost 33,3% of the respondents were getting hoax news every day, and only 19% got it once a month. Surprisingly, three respondents have yet to get the hoax news. These answers will be investigated further.

Regarding social media applications, from several social media applications mentioned by the respondent, WhatsApp and Instagram are the two most popular, unlike Facebook and Twitter. In the same way, every single social media contains a hoax. However, these results show that social media has become the trusted media for the respondents, as 66,7% chose it. Meanwhile, the application that is full of hoaxes is Facebook. As shown in Figure 2 below, 47,6% of respondents chose that Facebook is the fullest of hoaxes social media. In this instance, the respondents preferred social media platforms: Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp.

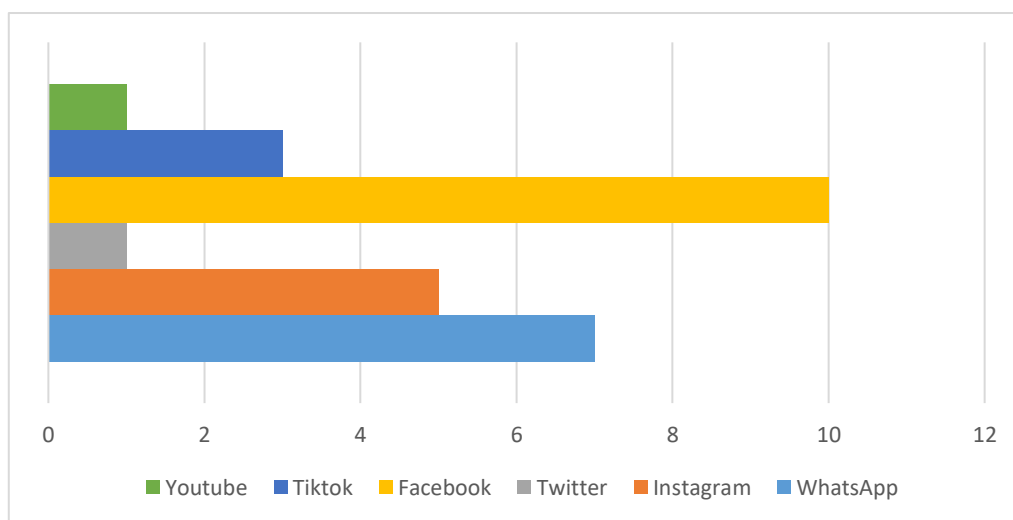


Figure 2.

Student response to the spread of hoaxes on social media platforms

Regarding hoaxes, almost 47,6% of respondents received hoax news at least once a week, and 33,3% got hoax news daily. Of interest here is that 19% of respondents only got the hoax news once a month. The answer from these respondents is to be investigated further. How was their action when they received the hoax news? Of 57,1% of respondents were checking the truth and no comment. Some of the two respondents were reminded of the sender about the hoax news. At the same time, the two others were forward to the other. When the researcher asks why they forwarded the hoax news, it was received from a trusted person who thought it was accurate and valuable information. The respondents most frequently encountered the following categories of hoaxes: traffic accidents, health, career information, and social-political.

Further analysis shows the respondent's capability for digital literacy. When the respondents were asked for their capability for using a search engine, 66,7% stated they were very capable of using it, 28,6% stated very capable, but 4,8% responded that they could not use the search engine. Next, uploading and downloading photos, videos, and documents. 48% of those respondents are very capable of uploading and downloading photos, videos, and documents. Over 19% stated they were less capable of doing it.

Similarly, the respondents were capable of editing photos, videos, and documents; 48% were very capable of editing photos, videos, and documents. Over 19% stated they were less capable of doing it. Since hoaxes are fast spreading, the respondents were curious about something up to date in social media. As shown in Figure 3, 57,1% stated that they are curious

about something up to date on social media. Overall, this chapter's result indicates that most respondents can handle hoax news.

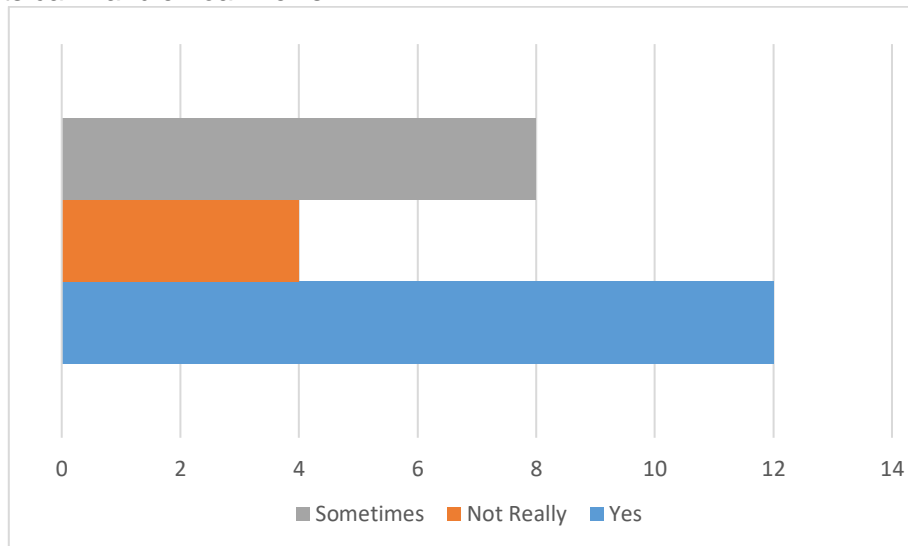


Figure 3.
Students curious about something up to date with social media

Discussion

As mentioned in the literature review, digital literacy is described as interconnected abilities or competencies essential for success in the digital world, such as the ability to understand, process, and process digital-based information. (Gunduzalp, 2021)(Gunduzalp, 2021; Mandasari et al., 2021)Mandasari et al., 2021). It also refers to the skills and knowledge needed to effectively use digital tools and platforms for communication, information access, and problem-solving. As the Internet and social media have become primary sources of information, digital literacy helps users critically assess the credibility and accuracy of the content they consume. This study found that respondents were able to understand and use information in the right way. They cannot immediately believe the information but will quickly check whether it is accurate or hoax news.

Regarding digital literacy, most respondents agreed that those who use social media should be able to use digital literacy. This is because digital literacy can solve our problem of spreading hoaxes. The most surprising aspect of the data is the respondents' trusted media. The respondents are more trusted with social media information than television, government, or radio. Overall, these results indicate that digital literacy skills can minimize the spread of hoaxes.

The Spread of Hoax in the Digital Age

It has been said in the literature review that WhatsApp is the frequent media in facing and spreading hoaxes. (Jenny Ratna Suminar & Hadisiwi, 2021)(Jenny Ratna Suminar & Hadisiwi, 2021), it often appears in the form of fake news, rumors, or conspiracy theories. It differs from the finding presented here; Facebook is the fullest of hoaxes on social media. As mentioned before, a hoax is a piece of information that is not true but is justified as if it happened. A person or group makes hoaxes for various purposes. Hoaxes usually appear when an issue sticks to the surface, but many things have not been revealed or become question marks. As frequent users of social media and digital platforms, university students are often exposed to various forms of online content. They often recognize the importance of digital literacy in navigating the online world, but they may overestimate their ability to identify hoaxes. When it comes to solving today's issues, digital literacy can assist us in thinking critically, creatively, and innovatively.

Additionally, digital literacy facilitates problem-solving, improves communication, and expands teamwork. This study's first set of questions aims to analyze the students' perspective

on digital literacy skills in minimizing the spread of hoaxes. Based on the questionnaire results, social media has become essential for students majoring in English Education at Sultan Maulana Hasanudin Banten State Islamic University because they use it more for social interaction, information gathering, and killing boredom.

As for their knowledge of hoax news spread on social media, they are already capable. They argue that hoaxes are fake news that does not know where the source is. Of course, this has the effect of chaos and disturbs the peace and stability of the Indonesian nation and state. When receiving hoax news, most respondents checked the truth through search engines or similar applications. When they get hoax news, some will spread it to other users. It is because they were sent by people they trusted. According to several sources, news containing hoaxes has very provocative headlines.

Meanwhile, the steps to check hoax news can be started by looking at the news source. Is it reliable? Then, look at the quality of the images and photos, which are usually possible edits that can occur. Confirming with friends regarding news that is considered unclear and confusing, some observe whether the site is trusted because most genuine and popular websites are doubtful about providing hoax information like that because there will be rules and punishments related to institutions.

Apart from that, there are some tips to recognize a piece of hoax news based on Nick Robins-Early (Grandmaison & Leonardi, 22 C.E.). They include looking past the headline, seeing which news outlet published it, seeing the date and time of publication, finding out who wrote it, examining the links and sources used, watching for dubious quotes and images, avoiding confirmation bias, seeing if other news outlets are covering it, and consider sharing before doing so.

The Types of Hoaxes Most Received

The next section of the survey concerned the second set of questions that aimed to spill the types of hoaxes that social media users often receive. When the respondents were asked about the question, the majority commented that social politics is the most hoax-type spread on social media. This finding is unlike previous studies, which have suggested that WhatsApp is the most popular app that consists of hoaxes. (Suminar & Hadisiwi, 2021)(Suminar & Hadisiwi, 2021)(Suminar & Hadisiwi, 2021). Another significant discovery was that the Facebook app is one of the social media platforms that hoaxes most frequently spread. Once a week, the majority of them receive fake news.

Further research should be undertaken to investigate the steps that social media users must take when receiving various kinds of hoax news. It might be possible to conduct different methods in digital literacy and hoax. Also, digital literacy should be integrated into language education.

Conclusion

This study set out to analyze the students' perspective on digital literacy in minimizing the spread of hoaxes and what the students received most hoaxes. This study has shown that most students can handle hoax news, even though some are still spreading this hoax news. After we know that digital literacy skills are needed for social media users, this is to overcome the further spread of hoaxes. The result of this study can be used as a reference for future researchers and inspire them to minimize hoax news.

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