

Exploring Covid-19 Hoaxes in the Post Pandemic Society

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Abstract. The world is currently being affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, which has caused major changes in societies. To lessen the woes of the global pandemic, a change is required for the survival of life. The post-pandemic period of society 5.0 has resulted in everything being totally digital and it has become increasingly dependent on the internet especially in the term of communication and discovering information. In this pandemic situation, there is a lot of information gained from social media that raises the topic of Covid-19 which leads to hoaxing. The problem formulations of this study are, first what are the structure and categories of Covid-19 hoaxes on the internet? Second, how are those hoaxes countered? The researcher uses qualitative methods. To get the data, the researcher took several posts in social media especially Twitter and Facebook, the post leads to Covid-19 hoaxes in order to analyze the structure and category of hoaxes. Using Rahadi's theory, this study revealed 3 out of 7 types of hoaxes, which were: Hoax containing fake news, 2) Hoax containing misinformation, 3) Hoax containing Post-truth. This study aims to raise people's awareness in order to interpret the rampant hoaxes in daily life.

1 Introduction

The world is currently being attacked by a pandemic called coronavirus, known as Covid-19. Coronavirus is an infectious disease that is caused by the SARs-Cov-2 virus [1]. The pandemic has sent shock waves throughout all aspects of life, especially in societies. The effects of the disease affect the development of many things in the past, present, and future. There have been a lot of significant changes due to this outbreak, one of which is limited activities that have resulted in everything being completely online. According to the Council of Europe [2], every human living faced many difficulties in maintaining communication with the public throughout the pandemic; digital adaptation has been the most challenging issue, along with post-pandemic recovery.

To lessen the woes of the global pandemic, a change is required for the survival of life. Many changes have happened in this post-pandemic era, one of which is the digital transformation and technology to be the most prominent. Big data analytics, artificial intelligence, and the internet of things are examples of research and development products that have become common in daily lives [3].

According to Wood and Smith [4], Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) is an integration of computer technology with everyday life; there are often vague boundaries between mediated forms of communication and immediate forms of communication. Computer Mediated Communication refers to computer technology that facilitates human communication and it

refers to computer programs that promote human-to-human communication.

Narvaez Rojas et al. [5] mentioned that the Japanese Government released details on the Fifth Basic Plan for Science and technology in January 2016. The vision of society described in Society 5.0 discusses two important kinds of relationships between technology and society and the technology-mediated relationship between individuals and society. The existence of a new era of Society 5.0 is indeed very beneficial for the continuation of life, but there is also a negative side to the presence of this all-digital life. Since life has been faced with various online things, as well as the appearance of the COVID-19 pandemic, everything has become increasingly dependent on the internet especially in the term of communication and discovering information. As implemented, a media for all communication and information on the internet comes from social media. Social media, also known as social network sites (SNS) allow users to create and share contents to actively participate and potentially influence the spread of information. As a consequence, social media platforms are increasingly being used to distribute frauds and hoaxes, i.e. intentionally designed false information.

Hoaxing is a social phenomenon that is spreading rapidly in today's society. Many people may create and spread hoaxes in both verbal and written forms by hiding behind the freedom of expression. Unfortunately, the spread of hoaxes has increased with the rise of social media especially during this COVID-19 pandemic hoaxes keep existing and increase rapidly. Because of its online feature, social media is more commonly used

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to spread hoaxes than the offline world. According to Rapp [6], when information is available online, people tend to think they can rely on it. Even if people have learned the truth, their brain will frequently depend on false or misleading information to make future decisions. The internet of things era makes it simpler for everyone to gain information, yet many people are too lazy in finding out the accuracy of the information. This study aims to raise people's awareness in order to interpret the rampant hoaxes in daily life and to educate people on the importance of understanding any news that circulates, whether through social media or word of mouth. Because of the world conditions that are presently rife with the Covid-19 pandemic, most of the news in the community pertains to fake news concerning Covid-19.

1.1 Objectives

The rampant spread of hoaxes during the coronavirus pandemic caught the researcher's interest to conduct research on COVID-19 related hoaxes. This paper will categorize the type of Covid-19 hoaxes contained in social media and rebuttals in the form of facts. There are two research questions that are going to undertake this study. These are: What are the structure and categories of C0 hoaxes on the internet? How are those hoaxes countered?

2 Literature Review

Post-pandemic transformation also entails tolerating uncertainty and fostering often unpredictable, diverse options that allow the economic, social, and political system to evolve toward more equitable and sustainable development paths [7].

Society 5.0 is a relatively new concept as a guide to social evolution that has the potential to have a significant influence on societies at all levels, by suggesting the development of the individual-technology relationship's potential in supporting the improvement of all people's quality of life in a sustainable environment through a super smart society, digital technology is becoming more common in modern societies [8].

According to Dollahide [9], the word 'social media' refers to a computer-based technology which allows people to share ideas, opinions, and information via virtual networks and communities. Unfortunately, social media has also become a place for false information about a variety of topics. According to Rustan [10], hoaxes can be easily spread through social media. Due to the obvious nature of social media, where anybody may create information on anything without regard for its validity, hoax information emerges increasingly frequently on social media [11].

The phenomenon of hoaxing has been acknowledged for a long time, since the tabloid period at the beginning of the twentieth century [12]. According to Juditha [13],

Hoaxes are news or information that are not verified or that are not factual. Fardiah et al. [14] said the term hoax refers to fake news or an attempt to fool or manipulate readers into believing anything that is not based on reality or truth for a specific aim. Hoax can be interpreted as fraud, false news or rumor.

According to Rahadi [15], hoaxes can be classified into seven types, which are: 1) Fake news, the falsification of original news. The news article attempts to falsify or add untruths. Fake news writers frequently include untruths and conspiracy ideas, the weirder the better. Fake news is not a humorous comment on the news, 2) Click bait, a link strategically placed on a website with the aim of directing people to other websites. Although the material in the link is correct, the headline is inflated or contains an interesting graphic to attract the reader, 3) Confirmation bias, a tendency to interpret a new event in order to support an existing belief, 4) Misinformation, inaccurate information, specifically designed to cheat, 5) Satire, a piece of writing in which comedy, irony, and exaggeration are used to remark on a recent occurrence. Satire is also described as a news report with purposely misleading content, is commercially driven, and is not meant to fool readers by its creator, 6) Post-truth, the incident in which emotions were used to shape public perception rather than facts, 7) Propaganda, spread any information, facts, arguments, gossip, half-truths, or even falsehoods in order to influence public opinion. Propaganda is intended by the reader to deceive the readers [16].

3 Methods

The research method used for this study is qualitative methodology. The definition of qualitative research is the study of the nature of phenomena, which includes their quality, various manifestations, the context in which they appear, or the perspectives from which they can be perceived, but excludes their range, frequency, and place in an objectively determined chain of cause and effect [17]. This study will discuss and categorize the type of Covid-19 hoaxes contained in social media and rebuttals in the form of facts using the hoaxes theory by Rahadi. Therefore, the writer chose the qualitative technique because it is suitable for observing the problem of this study.

4 Data Collection

To get the data, the researcher took 8 posts about Covid-19 hoaxes from social media, especially Facebook and Twitter. The posts were randomly chosen based on the indication that the contents of the posts contain false information. In analysing the data, the researcher first examined the format of the post, whether they contained text, photo, and video. Next the researcher classified the type of hoax contained in the post by using the theory of Rahadi [15] to fulfil the research purposes. Then the researcher tried to prove whether the posts were hoax or not by finding the source of news, photos and videos.

5 Results and Discussion

With the Covid-19 pandemic spreading worldwide, public interest in the virus increases to determine suitable prevention and treatment strategies. However, some people seem to believe that they are still not receiving educational socialization regarding rules for preventing Covid-19 in compliance with government standards. As a result, most individuals choose to get all of their information on Covid-19 from social media since it might make it simpler for them to obtain all of the information they want swiftly and promptly. However, much information regarding the coronavirus is still unknown. There is much misleading information spreading because people believe it and choose to distribute it without first reviewing the Covid-19 hoax news. According to Johnny G. Plate, the Minister of Communication and Information, as cited by Rosana [18], most Covid-19 hoaxes spread on Facebook and Twitter platforms. Therefore, the data for this research were taken from these two platforms.

The result will be presented as follows. Each content is examined based on its type of hoax and the structure of the post content, for example it contains texts, videos, or photos. From 8 data that has been collected, the researcher only found 3 categories of hoaxes, which are: 1) Hoax containing fake news, 2) Hoax containing misinformation, 3) Hoax containing Post-truth. The samples of hoaxes for each category are explained below:

Hoax Containing Fake News:

People are generally bad at detecting fake news, it is because fake news commonly mirrors actual news and we believe we recognize a pattern. According to Nyilasy [19], Fake news also has advantages in terms of sharing information. People try to give some oversight while sharing information online, and then attempt to be more likely to spread bad news, particularly COVID-19-related bad news. Here is an example of a post containing fake news.

This post consists of text and video and it was posted on February 5, 2022 by Facebook which contains a video with a duration of 1 minute 55 seconds of a woman who is continuously trying to break the glass at the entrance of a place. The narrative in the posts states “This is what happens when people take one to many sights and boosters of Covid-19. People are acting like zombies, physically and mentally losing the plot”. This post regards a woman suspected of being a zombie due the Covid-19 vaccine and booster. It is categorized as fake news because the shared post of video and narrative written in the post have been manipulated. According to Martina Chapman, as cited by McGarrigle [20], there are three elements to fake news; 1) Mistrust, 2) Misinformation, 3) Manipulation. The person who posted this tried to create mistrust against vaccines, misinformation of the effect of vaccines, and manipulation of the content. The researcher found out that the original video on the 92.9 The Lake website with the title “Zombie Karen tries to break into a Louisiana

Bar”. The word “zombie” that appeared in the title of the original video led to the drunk woman, but the writer of this hoax news took advantage to create false news that linked “zombies” to the present situation of the Covid-19 pandemic. Whereas the actual footage of the video shows a drunk woman in Louisiana breaking down a glass door trying to get into a bar at night.

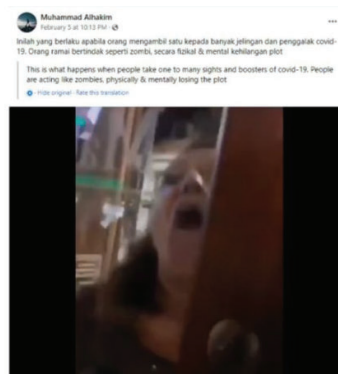


Fig. 1. Sample of Hoaxes for Fake News in Social Media

The spread of this message has led to numerous public opinions that believe the usage of government-mandated vaccinations is the reason for someone losing control of himself and acting weirdly like a zombie. As a result, many people are hesitant to provide immunizations, which are necessary to reduce the spread of Covid-19 in the community.

Hoax Containing Misinformation:

Misinformation is a general concept for inaccurate or false information. The evidence on Covid-19 related misinformation on social media is required to give direction and help in the evaluation of social media guidelines [21].

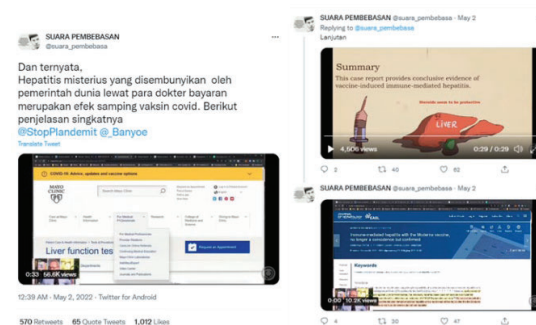


Fig. 2. Sample of Hoaxes for Misinformation in Social Media

This post consists of text and video and it was posted on May 2, 2022 by Twitter user @suara_pembebasan. The narrative in the post states “Mysterious hepatitis hidden by the world government through paid doctors is a side effect of the Covid Vaccine”. The footage of the video, which lasts about two minutes, claims an explanation about the research data that strengthen his argument about vaccine side effects of hepatitis.

This post regarding hepatitis related to Covid-19 vaccine is categorized as Misinformation because the shared post of video and narrative written in the post

serves inaccurate information. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, misinformation refers to the wrong information. Debunking the hoax, The UK Health Safety Board (UKHSA) claimed that there is no relation between the mysterious acute hepatitis epidemic with the Covid-19 vaccine.

This hoax news has resulted in many public opinions on the dangers of vaccines. People are again concerned about the risks of vaccination as reported by irresponsible individuals. The information above says that the government is concealing a vaccination suspected of being the source of mysterious hepatitis.

Hoax Containing Post-truth:

COVID-19 is not the first pandemic to cause rumours and hoaxes, one of which is post-truth. Post-truth is more concerned with recognizing that the definition or concept of truth is being called into question [22].



Fig. 3. Sample of Hoaxes for Post-truth in Social Media

This post consists of text and video, it was posted on January 18, 2022 by twitter user @maskeench explaining that a reputed health expert named Dr. Zarir Udwardia suggests people use ginger powder to cure infection with the virus that causes Covid-19, the Omicron variant. The footage, which lasts about two minutes, claims that the corona virus infection may be cured by just inhaling a small amount of ginger powder from the tip of the finger since ginger powder has alkaline properties and a high pH.

Although this post regards the use of ginger powder effective for health and to cure infection Covid-19 virus, this post is categorized as Post-truth. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, post-truth refers to a situation in which individuals are more likely to accept an argument based on personal feelings and opinions than on facts. Chairman of the Executive Council of the World Health Organization (WHO) Patrick Amoth, posted on twitter about the fact that ginger powder is effective for immunity, but not for healing covid-19 virus infection, rather for boosting the immune system (Twitter.com). Moreover, the writer of this post uses a video of

someone other than the name written in the text of the post. By tracing the digital footage of the related posts, the researcher found the fact, according to antaranews.com, that the man in the video on Twitter was not a health expert named Dr. Zarir Udwardia. The real Dr. Zarir Udwardia clarified that he had never claimed that inhaling ginger powder could cure COVID-19 and also urged the public not to follow this advice. There is also a statement given by the National Academies, saying that consuming ginger cannot prevent or cure Covid-19.

The spread of this message has led to numerous public opinions that taking the ginger powder is one way to cure the Covid-19 virus. Consuming ginger powder is generally beneficial for health, and however, the claim that it may heal the Covid-19 virus is false. Although ginger powder is helpful to health, there is no credible evidence that it can cure the Covid-19 Virus.

6 Conclusion

As can be seen from the results and discussion, the findings of this study show that Covid-19 hoaxes appear in the form of text and videos. The text can be narrative written by the status writers, while the narrative is usually supported with other evidence such as videos, pictures, or news links. The videos or pictures given can contain manipulation or edited to fulfil the writers' intention of spreading hoaxes. These narratives might represent the writers' comments or opinions on a certain topic. The researcher found 3 categories in social media hoaxes post, which are, hoax containing fake news, hoax containing misinformation and hoax containing post-truth.

In this Society 5.0 era, where everything seems to be all digital and it can be easily traced, whether it is factual information or hoaxes. The spread of hoaxes on social media may be highly disturbing and cause public uproar, especially on Facebook and Twitter platforms. However, hoaxes are easily uncovered by looking for original news, images, or videos on the internet. Unfortunately, many individuals are still not receiving educational socialization regarding hoax news. Thus, they easily believe in hoax news, especially during this Covid-19 pandemic.

As a result, there are a lot of bad impacts from the spread of hoax news about Covid-19. People do not seem to believe in the instructions that the government has given, there are various alternative treatments for Covid-19 that have appeared, and the terrible impact is that some people are not responsible for spreading the news, which leads to public opinion that Covid-19 is the government's manipulation for society.

The emergence of hoax analysis in an era where things is more digital is expected that people are able to analyzing and selecting news that comes on various social media platforms. The current study has certain limitations in that it employed just a small number of

data. As we all know, hoaxes are common and may spread through any social media site. As a result, researcher will employ more data from more social media sites in future studies. Furthermore, people's reactions to hoaxes will be analyzed in depth, not only those who fall for hoaxes but also those who are wary of information received.

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