

SARA Hoax: Phenomena, Meaning, and Conflict Management

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Abstract

The SARA (Ethnic, Religion, Race, and Intergroup) hoax is one of the disquieting hoaxes as it has the potential to cause conflict. Some Indonesians might not know that the SARA information they get is factual or hoaxes, which can lead to prejudice. Conflict in Tanjung Balai and Depok shows that exposure to SARA hoaxes can affect individual behavior. This study aims to describe individual experiences in interacting with SARA information and performing conflict management. This study uses phenomenological methods and in-depth interview instruments, allowing researchers to interact with the world of the informants' conscious experiences. The results indicate that the informants access various information related to the main activities. The internet has become the preferred media gratification. From the information-seeking activities, some SARA information was found, and some SARA information were hoaxes. SARA hoax has three meanings and has the potential to cause conflict. Hence, informants applied different conflict management styles in dealing with conflicts that arose.

Keywords: SARA Hoax; Conflict Management

Abstrak

Hoaks SARA (Suku, Agama, Ras, dan Antargolongan) menjadi salah satu hoaks yang diperhatikan, karena berpotensi menciptakan konflik. Sebagian masyarakat Indonesia tidak dapat mengetahui secara langsung bahwa informasi SARA yang diperolehnya merupakan berita faktual atau hoaks, sehingga dapat memunculkan prasangka. Konflik di Tanjung Balai dan Depok, memperlihatkan bahwa terpapar hoaks SARA dapat mempengaruhi perilaku individu. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mendeskripsikan pengalaman individu dalam berinteraksi dengan informasi SARA dan melakukan manajemen konflik. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode fenomenologi dan instrumen wawancara mendalam, sehingga memungkinkan peneliti untuk berinteraksi dengan dunia pengalaman sadar informan. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa informan mengakses beragam informasi yang berkaitan dengan aktivitas utama. Internet menjadi media gratifications yang lebih diutamakan. Dari aktivitas mencari informasi, ditemukan sejumlah informasi SARA. Sebagian informasi SARA merupakan hoaks. Hoaks SARA memiliki tiga makna dan memiliki potensi untuk menciptakan konflik, sehingga para informan menerapkan gaya manajemen konflik yang berbeda-beda ketika menghadapi konflik yang muncul.

Kata Kunci: Hoaks SARA; Manajemen Konflik

Introduction

The issue of hoaxes has become a national public concern. Based on data from the Indonesian Telematics Society (Mastel) survey in 2019, there are three types of hoaxes that are often accepted by the Indonesian people, namely hoaxes with socio-political content (93.2%), SARA (Ethnicity, Religion, Race, and Intergroup) (76.2%), and government (61.7%) (Mastel, 2019). This study focuses on the phenomenon of SARA hoaxes specifically, which are present in the daily activities of individuals accessing various information from the media. In addition, the phenomenon of SARA hoaxes can create inter-group conflicts that lead to the nation's disintegration because SARA issues tend to be one of the most sensitive issues for the Indonesian people. On the other hand, research on SARA hoaxes also tends to have not been widely studied.

Joel A. DiGirolamo explains that conflict is a process that begins when an individual or group perceives differences and contradictions between themselves and other individuals or groups regarding interests and resources, beliefs, values, or practices that are important to them (Wirawan, 2010). SARA conflicts in the dimension of violence that often occur in Indonesia tend to predominantly lead to clashes between ethnic and religious groups. Therefore, the circulation of SARA hoaxes that have the potential to create inter-group conflict has become a prominent problem for the community in their daily social interactions.

At first, some individuals who interact with various information from a number of media tend not to know that the SARA information they access is factual or hoax news, thus placing them in an uncertain situation for a while. Based on the results of a survey conducted by Tempo Magazine in 2016, around 19% of respondents claimed to be unable to distinguish between factual news or fake news on social media (Editorial Tempo, 2017a). The 2019 Mastel survey also found that 56.40% of respondents said they could not always identify information, including hoaxes or factual news, 20.30% said they were doubtful, and 7.10% said they could not find information as a hoax. Research conducted by Suraya Mansur, Nurhayani Saragih, Rajab Ritonga, and Novita Damayanti found that most millennial respondents (95%) gave the wrong answers regarding hoaxes (Mansur et al., 2021). Therefore, the presence of SARA hoaxes tends to be a public challenge.

Individuals exposed to information containing SARA experience cognitive dissonance, which is an unpleasant emotional state felt by individuals when there is a logical inconsistency between aspects of their cognitive system (Mowen & Minor, 2002). This condition of public ignorance also has the potential to encourage the emergence of prejudice. It is defined as a negative attitude towards a certain person or group, as it is related to their membership in a group (Sarwono, 2002). It is usually expressed through destructive behavior in the lives of various people.

The conflict occurred through the burning of the Vihara and Temple in Tanjung Balai, North Sumatra, in July 2016, by a group of youths, as well as clashes between groups of residents in Depok, West Java, in December 2016, which left two people dead and one seriously injured (Editorial Tempo, 2017b), shows the effect of exposure to SARA content hoaxes, which can provoke and encourage groups of individuals to take destructive actions against others. This phenomenon shows that exposure to hoaxes can affect the level of behavior of individuals who access them.

The emergence of the internet as a new media tends to bring positive and negative effects for its users. New media can be a bridge between several previous media. In fact, new media can also be a bridge in the context of interpersonal and public

communication (Widiastuti, 2017). However, on the other hand, new internet-based media tend to be the channels for SARA hoaxes.

Hoax channels are divided into two, namely internet-based media or new media and conventional media. A number of internet-based hoax media channels are social media (87.5%), chat applications (67%), websites (28%), and email (2.6%). In addition, conventional media, such as television or radio (8.1%) and print media (6.4%), are also hoax channels (Mastel, 2019). Social media, chat applications, and websites that are part of the new internet-based media have become the most prominent channels for spreading hoaxes.

Hoax or fake news is a term that has been used since the industrial era in 1808. Hoax comes from the word 'hocus' (hocus pocus mantra), a term used by magicians, or *sim salabim* or *abracadabra*, which intends to trick (Walsh, 2006). Hoaxes are commonly used to convey several purposes, such as to joke, embarrass others, or encourage social change (Conner, 2011).

SARA, which is known as an abbreviation of Tribe, Religion, Race, and Intergroup, is not only a description of the pluralistic socio-cultural reality in society. On a different side, from a historical perspective, SARA is a concept that was "introduced" and "socialized" to the Indonesian people by the New Order Government because the government was concerned about the potential or vulnerability to conflicts of ethnicity, religion, race, and class, so that people were filled with anxiety to be in a pluralistic social environment (Liliweri, 2009). However, Turnomo Rahardjo has a different view. According to him, limiting the debate on the topic of SARA in an open public discussion space triggers the emergence of knowledge distortion (Rahardjo, 2005). Therefore, people tend to be faced with unaware situations in understanding the concrete reality of SARA diversity, thereby growing the potential for hidden conflicts that can turn into open conflicts. From historical records, Indonesia has a history of open conflict with SARA nuances. These conflicts are religious conflicts and ethnic (tribal) conflicts.

Table 1. Table of Open Conflict with SARA Nuances in Indonesia

No.	Year	Conflict Type	Location	Involved Group
1	1946	Ethnicity	Tangerang	Chinese with native
2	1946	Ethnicity	Fire-Ready Chart	Chinese with native
3	1996-1997	Ethnicity	Sambas	Dayak with Madura
4	1998	Ethnicity	Multiple Cities	Chinese with native
5	1998	Religion	Poso	Islam with Christianity
6	1998	Religion	Ambon	Islam with Christianity
7	2001	Ethnicity	Sampit	Dayak with Madura
8	2008	Religion	Jakarta	Ahmadiyah with FPI

Source: Wirawan, 2010

In 2012, in South Lampung, there was a conflict between ethnic Lampung and ethnic Balinese, which caused 12 casualties and burned many residences and places of worship (Arazie, 2012). Several examples of cases of social conflict involving some individual groups show that intolerance is still a dominant phenomenon in the problematic area of society.

In 2020, SETARA Institute compiled the Tolerant City Index (IKT) and provided an assessment for 94 cities throughout Indonesia. There are ten cities that fall into the category of having a high tolerance, namely, Salatiga, Singkawang, Manado, Tomohon,

Kupang, Surabaya, Ambon, Kediri, Sukabumi, and Bekasi. Meanwhile, ten cities that have a low tolerance level are Pekanbaru, Langsa, Cilegon, Sabang, Medan, Pangkal Pinang, Makassar, Depok, Padang, and Banda Aceh (SETARA Institute, 2020).

This research is entitled “SARA Hoax: Phenomena, Meaning, and Conflict Management”, and uses the Interpretive Paradigm as the basis or theoretical basis for researchers to understand the construction of individual experiences (social actors) who become research informants in interpreting various phenomena that are present in their lives. The researchers are actively involved in the communication process being researched and become “friends” of members of the community being studied. Interpretive research focuses on understanding phenomena subjectively from within a particular cultural community and is more interested in explaining the cultural behavior of individuals within a community rather than cross-cultural comparisons (Martin & Nakayama, 2010). The interpretive flow explains the process of understanding and distinguishes between understanding and scientific explanation (Littlejohn, 1999). Therefore, the development of theoretical ideas can be obtained from the research findings.

The theoretical ideas of Cybernetics of Knowing and Phenomenology Tradition are also used as a theoretical basis for communication to explain individual experiences when interacting and managing SARA hoaxes that potentially create social conflict in the community. Cybernetics of Knowing is a branch of Cybernetics thinking which assumes that researchers will always be connected to the system (communication) under study (Littlejohn & Foss, 2008). In comparison, phenomenology is a human way of trying to understand the world through direct experience (Littlejohn et al., 2017). Individuals interacting with various SARA information are assumed to process some of the information obtained into their cognitive system, thus forming a cognitive structure regarding the SARA hoax phenomenon.

Previous studies related to this research have also analyzed the hoax phenomenon. The findings from this study show that hoaxes have been misused by various parties, causing various kinds of losses, one of which is excessive awareness of strangers and negative thoughts towards new people, especially if the person embraces a certain group (Abner et al., 2017). Hoaxes are also spread through various social media and affect the cognition of teenagers (Mansur et al., 2021) to adults.

Other research findings also explain that hoax news is generally spread when Indonesia experiences certain events, such as the enactment of the Omnibus Law. (Febriansyah & Muksin, 2021) and the 2019 presidential election (Mansur et al., 2021). The hoax news caused misunderstandings among people in Indonesia, thus triggering hate speech (Juliswara, 2017), demonstrations (Widianingrum & Isnaini, 2021), and disconnection between individuals (Andu, 2018). The forms of hoaxes also vary, such as writing, images, a combination of text and images, and videos (Rahadi, 2017). The spread of these hoaxes is increasingly supported by the interest of the Indonesian people. People tend to discuss aspects of violence, sensuality, drama, intrigue, and mystery, including all aspects of political news related to SARA (Juditha, 2018).

Generally, individuals will believe hoaxes and spread hoaxes if the individual interprets the hoax quickly without going through a careful cognitive process. For instance, several groups in the United States believe that news about Covid-19 is a hoax (Stanley et al., 2021) even though news about Covid-19 has been published in verified media. Research on Covid-19 was also conducted on Indonesian migrant workers in Macao, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. 38.7% of respondents admitted to receiving hoaxes,

fake news, or untrue information from unknown or unverified sources (Liem et al., 2021). In addition, the existence of inaccurate information during the Covid-19 pandemic has also fostered the confidence of some people across countries that the existence of the Covid-19 virus is part of a conspiracy theory, thereby potentially reducing public compliance with government efforts to control Covid-19 (Kantorowicz-Reznichenko et al., 2022). Yelena Mejova researched disinformation, hoaxes, and propaganda spread through media and online networks. Even verified social media accounts, such as artists, are also involved in spreading false claims (Mejova et al., 2021). Changes in the democratic system that use the internet (e-democracy) tend to create disinformation or fake news, using bots and astroturfing techniques, which aim to promote the interests of the people behind a political campaign (García-Orosa, 2021). Similar research to this study was conducted by Concetta Papapicco, Isabella Lamanna, and Francesca D'Errico, who studied racial hoaxes that were directed at immigrants. The sample of the study was teenagers aged 13 to 16 years, which resulted in two groups who believed in the existence of racial hoaxes and groups who did not know about racial hoaxes (Papapicco et al., 2022).

A number of previous studies examined the phenomenon of hoaxes in general, which used several different terms such as fake news, disinformation, or inaccurate information. Research that discusses the phenomenon of hoaxes specifically, focuses on Political (Government) hoaxes, hoaxes related to the Covid-19 pandemic, and Racial hoaxes. On the other hand, research on SARA hoaxes that have the potential to cause social conflict has not been carried out. This study, therefore, aims to describe the experience of communicators in interacting and processing SARA information so that communicators can understand various information that contains hoaxes. In addition, this study is also intended to describe the conflict management efforts carried out by communicators in daily interactions and relationships, as SARA hoaxes could trigger conflicts.

Method

This research is qualitative with phenomenology approach; it focuses on direct human conscious experience. In Edmund Husserl's view, phenomenology emphasizes aspects of *Noesis* and *Noema*. *Noesis* is intentional awareness, while *Noema* is the content of that consciousness (Kuswarno, 2009). Phenomenology researchers argue that authentic evidence is obtained from direct first-person reports about their life experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Therefore, the primary data in this study is in the form of individual experiences obtained through in-depth interview instruments, thus enabling researchers to connect directly with the world of construction of social actors who interact with SARA information and hoaxes.

There were five individuals in this study, consisting of three women and two men. They are individuals who have experience interacting with SARA hoaxes, live in Padang (3 people) and Bekasi (2 people), and have various identity backgrounds (ethnic and religion). The city of Padang was chosen because it has a history of SARA nuanced events and is an area with a low category in the 2020 Tolerant City Index assessment. Meanwhile, Bekasi was chosen because it is included in an area with a high Tolerant City Index value. In particular, Bekasi has a geographical area close to the City of Jakarta, which has a history of SARA events.

In the initial stage, the researchers conducted non-participant observations and trial interviews with some individuals to obtain individuals who were relevant to the

research problem. The interview stage was conducted in January 2022. Next, the researcher compiled the thematic portrayal derived from the interview transcripts of the informants. The preparation of textural and structural descriptions is the next step taken by researchers in carrying out the phenomenological research process. Structural descriptions are structured to describe “the how” and will explain “the what” of an individual experience (Moustakas, 1994). Then the essential stage carried out by the researcher is compiling a meaning and structural synthesis so that a unified statement is formed about the essence of the experience of the phenomenon as a whole (Moustakas, 1994).

Results and Discussion

Individual Interaction with Information and Daily Use of Media

Various information is accessed by the informants in their daily life activities. In general, information such as actual political, economic, social, sports, and entertainment news is the type of information accessed by the informants. However, in particular, information such as the development of the financial industry (mutual funds and stocks), gender justice, reproductive health, educational curricula, vaccines, and the development of creative designs, are dominant types of information that are preferred for daily consumption via the internet.

A number of sites or applications accessed by the informants are kemendikbud.go.id, kemenkumham.go.id, idx.co.id (Indonesian Stock Exchange), cnnindonesia.com (CNN Indonesia), kumparan.com, tempo.co, Kompas.tv (Kompas TV), detik.com, *Bibit*, and Ayo Investasi Reksadana. Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Wattpadd, LinkedIN, Youtube, WhatsApp, Line, and Tinder have also become the preferred information medium for daily use. Generally, they use mobile phones and laptops to access various information from the internet with a minimum duration of two hours a day.

Other media used by informants is television, by accessing KompasTV, NetTV, TvOne, MetroTV, HBO, National Geographic channels, and word of mouth (WOM) media. Usually, they access information from television after completing routine activities. This phenomenon shows that in carrying out daily routine activities such as work and studying, informants perform information seeking and are exposed to a variety of information at reasonably high intensity. Conceptually, the idea of Information Seeking Theory explains that information users can use various communication media to seek and obtain the desired information (Yusup & Subekti, 2010). The informants dominantly access various information that is actual-domestic (development of the financial industry, gender justice, reproductive health, educational curriculum, vaccines, and development of creative design). They do selective exposure actively because it is related to daily routine activities (work and studies).

By using the internet in their daily activities, the informants access a number of up-to-date information related to the availability of personal “infrastructure”, namely mobile phones and laptops. Research on audience behavior in choosing certain media conducted by Wilbur Schramm found that individuals tend to apply the principle of convenience and expect a reward when choosing certain types of mass media (Rivers et al., 2003). Therefore, the internet tends to be a media gratification preferred over television or other media to support the mobility of the informants’ main activities. In addition, the internet has a special nature, namely *universal-archive*, so informants can access various information from the internet at any time.

Individual Cognitive System in Processing and Evaluating SARA Information

In the activities of the informants accessing various information related to work and continuing their studies, the informants also claimed to have found a number of information containing SARA, which is predominantly related to ethnicity and religion. A number of SARA information found and remembered by the informants, namely the case of ethnic Madurese in Jakarta, ethnic Rohingya Myanmar, Christianization through work uniforms, Jokowi preference for Chinese workers, China's incoming attack on Indonesia, Ahok case, Ahok's remarks about building a mosque, government blocking Ahok demonstrations in Jakarta, Jokowi's permission for Chinese citizens to control Kalimantan, Christmas greetings, Jokowi is not Muslim, Chinese infidel, China is haram, Chinese products are haram, China landed in Minangkabau, and vaccines are haram. SARA information is transmitted via Twitter, Facebook, Youtube, WOM, television, and WhatsApp applications. However, for the informants, the information channels that tend to be easier to find SARA information are WhatsApp, Twitter, and Facebook.

The existence of various SARA information found by the informants encourages the emergence of involuntary attention, namely something new (information) that exposes the individual, then gives a surprising, threatening, or unexpected effect so that the individual responds and directs attention to the stimulus (Mowen & Minor, 2002). At first, four informants were faced with uninformed situations because most of the SARA information they received did not become daily informational goals, so an information grouping was formed consisting of main, additional, and SARA information.

In the view of cognitive psychology scientists, it is explained that individuals are exposed to various types of information daily. However, the collection of information is filtered so that only a small part of it attracts attention, is processed in the conscious mind, and stored in the individual's long-term memory (Baran & Davis, 2010). Some of the SARA information obtained by the informants attracted their attention and encouraged them to follow its development so that SARA information processing occurred in the individual's cognitive system. Cognitive is part of the human soul that processes information, knowledge, experience, encouragement, and feelings, which arise from outside and within the individual, to shape behavior (Sarwono, 1999).

Richard Petty and John Cacioppo developed a concept called Elaboration Likelihood Theory, which assumes that individuals will attempt to process persuasive messages (information) in their way (Littlejohn et al., 2017). Information on SARA followed by the informant included cases of Rohingya ethnicity, ethnic Madurese, Christianization through work uniforms, Ahok case, China landing in Minangkabau, illegal Chinese products, infidel Chinese, and illegal vaccines. Informants tend to pay more attention to SARA information related to Ahok's case because it raises various other SARA information and is transmitted through several information channels that are not only internet-based.

From the activity of following the development of a number of SARA information that attracts attention and processes it in the individual's cognitive system, the informants can provide qualifications that the SARA information they get is factual news or hoaxes. However, they concluded that most of the SARA information they obtained could not be directly identified as hoaxes or factual news. Informants need to look at the news carefully in several ways, such as by reading or repeatedly listening,

thinking from different points of view, and comparing information from competent sources. A female informant who lives in Padang expressed her experience like this:

“Usually, I find out first whether the information has facts on the ground or not. Where, when, and other supporting information.”

Theoretical Buildings of Communication: Interpreting the SARA Hoax Phenomenon

SARA information exposure received by an individual and processed through the individual's cognitive system encourages the formation of a cognitive structure regarding the SARA hoax phenomenon. The cognitive structure is a set of properties collected and used by individuals to identify and distinguish an object (Sarwono, 2013). In this context, the cognitive structure is obtained through the stage of individual understanding of a number of SARA information received and processed. Understanding refers to the way individuals collect and interpret information (Mowen & Minor, 2002), resulting in a change in attitude. Attitude is a general feeling (positive or negative) that continues towards an object (Shimp, 2000). In this study, changes in individual attitudes are reflected through expressions of disappointment and sadness, which tend to be calm, counter-opinion, and certain communication behaviors when informants interact with SARA hoaxes.

In the understanding of informants, SARA hoaxes have a number of characteristics. The hoaxes have no clear source (spread by buzzers), do not meet the 5W+1H elements for a news story, and tend to use sensational title language. SARA hoaxes that appear in the daily activities of informants are transmitted through Blogs, WOM, Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, and WhatsApp Groups. Most fake news is received through social media platforms (Blanco-Herrero et al., 2021). A study states that about 24% of the information shared via Twitter is fake events (Velichety & Shrivastava, 2022). Youtube is also used by certain parties to spread disinformation about the Covid-19 vaccine (Calvo et al., 2022). Explicitly, an informant claimed to have obtained a SARA hoax related to the Ahok case from an official news portal, detik.com. The phenomenon that stands out in the context of the information channel for spreading SARA hoaxes is the highest found through WhatsApp groups, especially from family groups or the closest environment, for informants who live in Padang. The WhatsApp application is relatively often used to spread hoaxes (Moreno-Castro et al., 2021). An informant conveyed his observations like this:

“So my father's family has a group, and I join in it. Very active in spreading SARA hoaxes. It is either uncles or aunts who spread hoaxes.”

Conceptually, hoaxes can be created with true statements but using terminology in different contexts (Conner, 2011). In the understanding of the informants, the SARA hoax has three meanings. First, news that is the cause of events is not necessarily based on facts, which contains content about ethnicity, religion, and race. There are even attempts to shift the facts from the occurrence of an event. The issue of the Madurese and Rohingya ethnic cases, which is considered a problem of the failure of adaptation of the Madurese and Rohingya overseas, has been shifted to a religious issue by using the terms Madurese Muslim and Rohingya Muslim and the issue of human rights violations.

The case of Christianization through work uniforms is a problem that is in the perspective of the basic design of convection products. However, the information disseminated is an attempt by company management to force employees to convert to

Christianity as the uniform design almost resembles the symbol of a cross. Regarding this case, the informant who is domiciled in Bekasi said this:

“There are vertical and horizontal lines on the front of the uniform. It is considered as a symbol of the cross by an office friend. Actually, it is just the basic design. Companies are only looking for practical ones, so that employees can use them to work directly. Why is such an issue considered Christianization?! It’s ridiculous.”

In addition, news of Jokowi allowing Chinese citizens to control Kalimantan, news of the government blocking Ahok’s demonstration in Jakarta, Ahok’s case, Ahok’s remarks about the construction of a mosque, sayings on Christmas Day, Jokowi is not Muslim, and illegal vaccines, are also considered by informants as an attempt by certain parties to shift facts. The phenomenon that emerged in the context of the illicit vaccine case was told by an informant who works as a medical worker in a hospital. He admitted that he immediately knew that the information was a hoax. However, on the other hand, he felt disappointed and hurt by the circulation of news or hoaxes about the Covid-19 vaccine containing Pig DNA in a family’s WhatsApp group dominated by Muslims because the vaccine was considered to ‘take down’ Muslims. Informants know that the Covid-19 vaccine from England and China (China) does not contain pork DNA because it has been clinically tested.

Second, the news was to create discord and discrimination against certain parties. The news that China will attack Indonesia and Jokowi prefers Chinese workers is considered by an informant from the city of Padang as a hoax created to create hatred among Indonesians towards immigrants from China, including ethnic Chinese Indonesians. Racial hoaxes create discriminatory attitudes towards minority groups (Papapicco et al., 2022). *Third*, news or information that does not have supporting or ongoing information. News about the government’s efforts to block Ahok’s demonstration in Jakarta was also assessed by another informant from Padang City as an unsustainable hoax. In addition, news about infidel China, haram China, haram Chinese products, and Chinese landing in Minangkabau, in the understanding of the informants, are included in this qualification. The most prominent phenomenon in the issue of SARA hoaxes is in the context of the case involving Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok) because it arose various information and other SARA hoaxes and was transmitted through various information channels (WOM, Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, and WhatsApp Groups) and online official news portal (detik.com). In fact, this case also led to demonstrations by a number of Muslims in Jakarta, because Ahok was considered to have committed blasphemy.

Regarding the relationship between informants and individuals with different identities (religion and ethnicity), all informants admitted that they have a diverse social environment because their immediate environment (work and study) tends to be heterogeneous, thus encouraging intercultural interactions. In fact, an informant had a partner (girlfriend) with different identities and discussed various SARA hoaxes with other individuals, which was done through face-to-face interactions and online discussions (WhatsApp groups). The SARA hoaxes that the informant discussed with other people were the Ahok case, the haram vaccine, the non-Islamic Jokowi, and Christianization through work uniforms. There are differences between the discussions conducted by the informants in Padang and Bekasi. Prominently, the discussions conducted by the informants in Padang tended to lead to a competitive symmetric relationship. Steven A. Beebe explained that a competitive symmetric relationship is a relationship that exists between two partners who compete with each other to dominate

others (Beebe et al., 2005). The Ahok case, the haram vaccine, and the non-Islamic Jokowi, which three informants considered as SARA hoaxes, on the other hand, were judged as factual news by their interaction partners so that the relationship between the two parties was disrupted. Even a family member (parent) of the informant expressed his anger towards the informant for several days. Elders and boomers are a demographic group vulnerable to hoaxes, especially the online version of fake news (Moore & Hancock, 2022). Meanwhile, another informant decided not to have a relationship (friend) with his interaction partner. The spread of hoaxes or fake news has a negative impact on interpersonal relationships (Papapicco et al., 2022).

In a different situation, the discussion that took place with informants in Bekasi was more directed to a symmetric relationship. Symmetric relationship, in Steven A. Beebe's view, is a relationship that describes that both partners have the same behavior (Beebe et al., 2005). The discussion of the Ahok case as a SARA hoax was carried out very carefully because of concerns from each party to disappoint or offend the other party. Meanwhile, discussions of the Christianization case through work uniforms did not occur openly. Discussions tend to be closed and unsustainable for a long time.

In the context of SARA hoaxes creating conflict, all informants agreed that exposure to SARA hoaxes could lead to potential conflict, even though they were already in a social environment with various identities. From a historical perspective, Indonesia has a history of conflicts between religious and ethnic adherents, thus creating unstable conditions for the country. Therefore, the government enforces policies related to SARA to reduce certain conflicts in the future (Maryani et al., 2019). In the context of this research, a prominent factor considered as the main factor in the creation of conflict caused by SARA hoaxes is the lack of adequate knowledge about hoaxes for some Indonesian people. Four informants experienced interpersonal conflicts with other individuals in different situations, such as with friends, family, relatives, and work partners.

In dealing with conflict, each individual applies various conflict management styles. Thomas and Kilmann describe five types of conflict management styles: competition, collaboration, compromise, avoidance, and accommodation (Wirawan, 2010). However, in the context of this study, the conflict management styles that all research informants tend to use prominently are competition, avoidance, and accommodation.

First, the competition style was carried out by two informants living in Padang in the context of the SARA hoax regarding the Ahok case and illegal vaccines. They admit that they are involved in sharp differences of opinion with their family, relatives, and people around where they live. The informants tried to explain that the information related to the Ahok case, and the illicit vaccine contained various SARA hoaxes for certain parties' benefit.

Second, the avoidance style was used by three informants who live in Padang and Bekasi in the conflict caused by the SARA hoax regarding the Ahok case and Christianization through work uniforms. The three informants remained silent and did not respond to disputes that lasted for several days. In fact, an informant who lives in Padang admitted that he was discriminated against (*openly called a kafir*) by his childhood friend. In Zastrow's view (1989), discrimination is a factor that can damage cooperation between humans or communication activities among communicators (Liliweri, 2009). Therefore, the relationship between the two parties tends to change or not be the same as the previous relationship.

In a study conducted by Nikolaus Ageng Prathama on “Identity Negotiation in Reconciliation of Interethnic Conflicts”, it is explained that in collectivistic cultures such as in Indonesia, communicators (Dayak and Madurese ethnic individuals) tend to want recognition of each other’s cultural identity through communication behavior or attitudes, namely through the use of the Dayak and Madurese languages, which are symbols and cultural pride of both parties (Prathama, 2017). Therefore, in communication activities between individuals who have different backgrounds of identity (ethnic, religious, racial) in the context of collectivistic culture, there is a need for mutual respect regarding each other’s personal identity.

Third, the accommodating style was used by an informant in Padang who works as a health worker in the case of the SARA hoax about illegal vaccines. Although he admitted that he had had unpleasant experiences and felt disappointed when he gave outreach regarding the Covid-19 vaccine, he tried to continue receiving and providing health services for some neighbors who opposed him.

Conclusion

Individuals who daily access a variety of information find a number of SARA information about religion, ethnicity, and certain groups or groups. From some of the SARA information that is considered, there is SARA information that contains hoaxes because it does not have several qualifications such as clear sources, complete 5W+1H elements, and sensational language use. SARA hoaxes are transmitted through blogs, WOM, Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, and WhatsApp. In addition, an online news portal is also considered to have spread SARA hoaxes.

SARA hoaxes are understood to have three varied meanings: news that causes events that are not based on facts, news intended to create disputes or discrimination, and news that does not have supporting information or has news continuation. The informants discussed the SARA hoax they received with other people, thus forming a different atmosphere of discussion. Discussions with informants who live in Padang lead to a *Competitive Symmetric Relationship*, while the discussion atmosphere in Bekasi is more focused on a Symmetric Relationship. The potential for conflict contained in the SARA hoax encourages informants to use a competitive, avoid, or accommodate conflict management style when they face interpersonal conflict situations.

Based on the results of this study, there are individual psychological aspects such as attention and motivation in interacting with information and SARA hoaxes. For the development of the theoretical scope in the Elaboration Likelihood Theory, the addition of attention and motivation aspects needs to be considered to obtain new variations on the theoretical assumptions. Further studies on SARA hoaxes can be carried out on more specific mediums or channels such as WhatsApp. The results of this study show that WhatsApp (group) is one of the prominent channels for spreading hoaxes. Thus, further research that examines the spread of the SARA hoax phenomenon through WhatsApp can provide varied contributions to research at the communicator level.

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