
Checking the Fact-Checkers: Analyzing the Content of Fact-Checking Organizations as Initiatives for Hoax Eradication in Indonesia

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Abstract

Fact-checking practices are one of the initiatives to combat the spread of hoaxes. An organization called MAFINDO is one of Indonesia's pioneers of fact-checking initiatives. Using content analysis, this research was conducted to examine fact-checked articles published by MAFINDO. We classified the results based on themes, platform, and type of content from July 2015 to July 2020, during the first five years where MAFINDO has been operating. Our study found that the number of hoaxes being checked increased every year during the period of analysis. Secondly, political themes dominate the entire fact-checking articles verified by MAFINDO. Furthermore, the majority of hoaxes circulated and verified by MAFINDO were predominantly found on Facebook. Finally, hoax mostly found in the form of non-video images and text. This study can be seen as part of the illustrations of the spread of hoaxes in Indonesia and used as a basis for various hoax prevention movements.

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Introduction

In various democracies, including the United States, the UK, and several European countries, the proliferation of hoaxes has prompted the establishment of fact-checking initiatives (Mantzaris, 2018) and as of 2021, there are 349 fact-checking organizations (Duke Reporters Lab, 2021) with 102 institutions verified by the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN) (The Poynter Institute, n.d.). The IFCN serves as an international body responsible for validating organizations and media seeking verification as fact-checkers. They set standards that must be met, including non-partisanship, transparent news sources, funding transparency, methodological transparency, and commitment to openness regarding corrections. Several fact-checking initiatives have also flourished in developing countries, such as Brazil (Wardle et al., 2019), the Philippines (Tantuco & Tuquero, 2020), and also in Indonesia (Nurlatifah & Irwansyah, 2019; Thorn & Curnow, 2021). Over the

years, the rise in political tensions in these countries has been linked to the emergence of “information wars” characterized by the rapid spread of hoaxes, and black campaigns related to populist figures (Moore, 2018; Ong & Tapsell, 2020).

In Indonesia, fact-checking initiatives have been implemented to address the widespread circulation of hoaxes, especially on social media. The issue of hoaxes garnered significant attention and public concern throughout the 2014 presidential election, the 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election, and the 2019 presidential election (Ong & Tapsell, 2020; Tyson & Purnomo, 2016). Hoaxes are often used as part of political propaganda, for example in the 2017 DKI Jakarta Gubernatorial Election. Hoaxes are deliberately created through sites designed to resemble news released by mainstream media and are spread as propaganda through social media such as Facebook and Twitter, as well as popular instant messaging services, such as WhatsApp (M. Lim, 2017). In the Indonesian context, the term Hoax is also often used as a broad “umbrella term” that refers to fake news, misinformation, to disinformation (Kaur et al., 2018).

Since February 2018, online media Tirto.id has become the first media to be verified by IFCN, and as of December 2021, there are six fact-checking organizations in the country: “Cek Fakta-Liputan 6”, “Cek Fakta-Suara.com,” “Tirto.id”, “KOMPAS.com,” “Tempo.co”, and “MAFINDO”. Historically, it can be said that the Indonesian Anti-Slander Society (Masyarakat Anti Fitnah Indonesia/MAFINDO), Anti Slander and Hoax Forum (Forum Anti Fitnah Hasut dan Hoax/FAFHH), the Indonesian Hoax Buster (IHB) community, and several other communities in 2015 were initiated as the first fact-checking initiatives in Indonesia. Of those communities, the Indonesian Anti-Slander Society (Masyarakat Anti Fitnah Indonesia/MAFINDO) formally established itself as an organization on November 19, 2016 (Turnbackhoax.id, n.d.). Subsequently, MAFINDO continued its activities through a Facebook group by Anti Slander and Hoax Forum (Forum Anti Fitnah Hasut dan Hoax/FAFHH) and also created a dedicated website (turnbackhoax.id) to publish their fact-checked articles (Astuti, 2017). MAFINDO works with several communities and volunteers from different backgrounds and cities (Agustina, 2019). MAFINDO received IFCN certification in 2018 and its volunteers have been highly diligent, as evidenced by the substantial number of fact-check articles they have produced compared to the other six organizations (Jumrana & Wastutiningsih, 2020; Sasmito, 2018). MAFINDO is heavily involved in hoax eradication initiatives with the government, platforms such as Google News Initiative, Indonesian News Media, and also with The Alliance of Independent Journalists (Aliansi Jurnalis Independen) (AJI) (Mafindo, n.d.).

In 2019, Google granted funding to MAFINDO to develop and launch a media literacy program in collaboration with The Ministry of Communication and Informatics (KOMINFO) (Google Indonesia, 2019). Then in the same year, on April 16 and 17, the Indonesian Cyber Media Association (Asosiasi Media Siber Indonesia/AMSI), The Alliance of Independent Journalists (Aliansi Jurnalis Independen/AJI), and MAFINDO also organized a fact-checking program for the 2019 Indonesia Presidential Election as well as during the local elections in 2020 (Oxtora, 2019). In 2020, the collaboration between Maarif Institute, MAFINDO, and the agency Love Frenkie, also were awarded grants aimed at providing digital literacy education to more than 26,700 lecturers, teachers, and students. The objective was to enhance their resilience to misinformation and disinformation. They design training programs and online classes on critical thinking under a program called “TULAR NALAR” (<https://www.mafindo.or.id/tular-nalar/>). The program focuses on providing learning materials to sharpen critical thinking for lecturers, teachers, and students (Sasmito, 2020). These achievements demonstrate the significant role that MAFINDO plays in the fact-checking landscape in Indonesia.

Two models exist for managing fact-check organizations: the Newsroom Model, which involves fact-checking conducted by the media, and the NGO Model, which involves fact-checking carried out by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (Graves, 2016; Graves & Cherubini, 2016a). The practice of fact-checking carried out by the media is not an exclusive practice solely emerged in response to the proliferation of hoaxes. In the journalistic tradition, the practice of fact-checking has long been carried out for example by an editor who serves as a gatekeeper who edits, and sorts articles before publication. However, fact-checking practices today extend beyond the responsibilities of editors (Fardiah et al., 2022). Thus, there are also fact-checking practices carried out by non-media institutions such as Non-Governmental Organizations, where fact-checking activities are more independent and rely on collaborative work. Each of these models presents its own set of challenges and opportunities including in terms of resource management, work structure, and the issues of independence.

Within the context of the Fact-Check landscape in Indonesia, it can be observed that MAFINDO is an example of a Fact-Check organization that implements the NGO model. However, it is important to note that there have been allegations of a close relationship between MAFINDO and the government. Several public officials from both central and local governments have attended MAFINDO's event. For example, the former Minister of Communication and Informatics Rudiantara was present at MAFINDO's National Work Meeting 2018 (KOMINFO, 2018), and there was several cooperation between MAFINDO and stakeholders in the local government, such as in their collaboration with the Regional Government in West Java (Pemerintah Daerah Provinsi Jawa Barat, 2019) and Magelang's (Central Java) regional government (Dhaniswara, 2021). During the Covid-19 pandemic since early 2020, Mafindo has also partnered with the government in conducting "Hoax Buster" (<https://covid19.go.id/p/hoax-buster>) to address hoaxes related to the coronavirus (Rahayu, 2021). Such collaborations indicate that the government recognizes MAFINDO as a trusted fact-checking organization and shows the goodwill of the government to support the existence of fact-checking organizations both at the central and regional levels as part of the efforts to combat the spread of hoaxes. However, questions may arise regarding the independence of MAFINDO as a fact-checking organization. For example, whether their fact-checking activities can still be free from the influence of government or pro-government political parties.

Although MAFINDO can be regarded as the most influential fact-checking organization in Indonesia, few studies (see Dilla & Candraningrum, 2019; Maqruf, 202 C.E.; Nurhadi et al., 2020; Satyawati et al., 2019) explore MAFINDO as a case study within the movement to eradicate the spread of hoaxes in Indonesia. These studies examine how MAFINDO provides educational materials and conducts socialization, both online and offline related to public understanding of the fact-checking practices, the impact and dangers of hoaxes, as well as the importance of digital literacy. Most of these studies are qualitative in nature and rely on interview data. So far, studies which specifically try to map and analyze fact-check content or articles published by MAFINDO are still limited. Such studies are important not only to investigate in detail the various types of hoaxes that are spread and successfully verified in Indonesia but also as a database that can be used to evaluate fact-checking practices in the country. Our study aims to complement previous research, such as the mapping of MAFINDO's fact-checked content in 2018 (Kusumarani & Zo, 2018), hoax mapping related to the 2019 general election (Safitri et al., 2022), exploration of hoax content through MAFINDO's fact-checking articles in 2020 (Gamesia, 2021) and mapping of hoax content related to Covid-19 in Indonesia (Angeline et al., 2020; Bafadhhal & Santoso, 2020). Specifically, our study also aims to "checking how fact-checkers check" (C.

Lim, 2018) and aimed at reflecting the work of fact-checking organizations as the initiatives on hoax eradication in Indonesia (Rahmawan et al., 2022).

Methodology

This study uses content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004) to examine the articles that have been fact-checked by MAFINDO and published on the page turnbackhoax.id. To gather the total population of published articles over five years, we combined manual web scrapping with automatic web scrapping using R to obtain the first published articles from turnbackhoax.id (July 2015) until July 2020. In total, we collected 5847 articles which were later cleaned and coded. We found that the fact-checked articles on turnbackhoax.id have various tagging or categorizations, namely: "benar" (truth), "berita" (news), "campuran" (miscellaneous), "disinformasi" (disinformation), "misinformasi" (misinformation), "salah" (false), "edukasi" (education), "fakta" (fact), "fitnah" (slander), "hasut" (incitement), "hoaks" (hoax), "isu" (issues), "klarifikasi" (clarification), and "lainnya" (others). For the data reduction and sampling process, and to avoid confusion related to the categorization system carried out by turnbackhoax.id, we opted for purposive sampling by exclusively selecting articles that explicitly related to or categorized as a hoax. Therefore, we selected articles categorized as "disinformation", "misinformation", "slander", "incitement", "hoax", and "false". Our decision to merge these categories aligns with a study that conclude that in Indonesia, the term "hoax" is used as an "umbrella term" for all the phenomena of fake news, malinformation, misinformation, and disinformation. (Kaur et al., 2018). After the data cleaning process, the final number of articles available for coding and analysis was 3658 articles (n=3658). From our sample, we then determined three main units of analysis, namely the hoax's theme, types of Channels, and types of content. For the hoax's theme, channels, and content types, we referred to one of the very first surveys on Hoax in Indonesia, which has been done by The Indonesian Telematics Society (Masyarakat Telematika Indonesia/MASTEL) (MASTEL, 2017). MASTEL is a non-profit organization in Indonesia that serves as "a forum for all stakeholders in the field of information technology, communication, and broadcasting consisting of business actors, organizations, associations, and professionals" (MASTEL, n.d.).

In 2017, MASTEL conducted an online survey of 1116 respondents in Indonesia and found that the top five frequently encountered hoax themes were socio-political hoaxes, hoaxes related to "SARA" (Suku, Agama, Ras, Antar-Golongan or Ethnicity, Religion, Race, Inter-Group Relations), hoaxes related to health, hoaxes related to food and beverages, and hoaxes on financial fraud (MASTEL, 2017). We adopted MASTEL's categorization and expanded it as follows: politics, religion, economy, health, health-covid, crime, and miscellaneous. Similarly, for the types of channels, we also adopted MASTEL's categorization, but we slightly modified it to be focused on popular social media and other online media such as news websites or blogs. Hence, our categorization includes Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Website or Blog, Unspecific, and others. Regarding the hoax's types of contents, we classified hoaxes into the following categories: still image and text, video and text, text only, and unclear. The coding process was carried out by two members of the research team, where each unit of analysis has been checked through the process of intercoder reliability assessment, in which two coders were checking a randomly selected set of articles to obtain an approval percentage above 75% and the Krippendorff Alpha values above 0.7 in the range of 0 (unreliable) and 1 (perfect reliability) (Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007). The intercoder reliability calculation was performed using ReCal OIR (Freelon, 2013) and any discrepancies that arose and any discrepancies that arose were resolved through discussion until a consensus was reached between the coders.

A similar study that analyzed hoaxes debunked by MAFINDO in 2018 using content analysis was conducted by Safitri et al., (2022). However, our study covers a longer period and utilizes a larger sample size. While this study does not claim to be a representative depiction of the spread of hoaxes in Indonesia, we believed that the results serve as an important illustration regarding the type of hoaxes that were widely spread and deemed “worthy” to be verified and debunked by MAFINDO as one of the most trusted fact-check organizations in Indonesia.

Results and Discussion

During the data collection period (July 2015 to July 2020) we found that generally, the number of fact-check articles continues to increase every year, suggesting a corresponding rise in the spread of hoaxes in Indonesia during those five years. It can also be seen from the data illustrated in Figure 1 below that from 2015 to 2016, there was more than a three-fold increase in the number of articles, from 53 articles to 254 articles. Out of the 3,658 articles published by MAFINDO from 2015 to 2020, the most prevalent theme was political hoaxes with 1926 articles (52.6%) or more than half of our sample. Examples of hoaxes with political themes include titles such as “Kadrun (a derogatory term for the government opposition fundamentalist groups) Cargo Ship Sinks in the South China Sea”, “Megawati (former president) was adopted by Soekarno” or “The Palace confirmed that PKI (Partai Komunis Indonesia or Indonesian Communist Party) Is Allowed in Indonesia”.

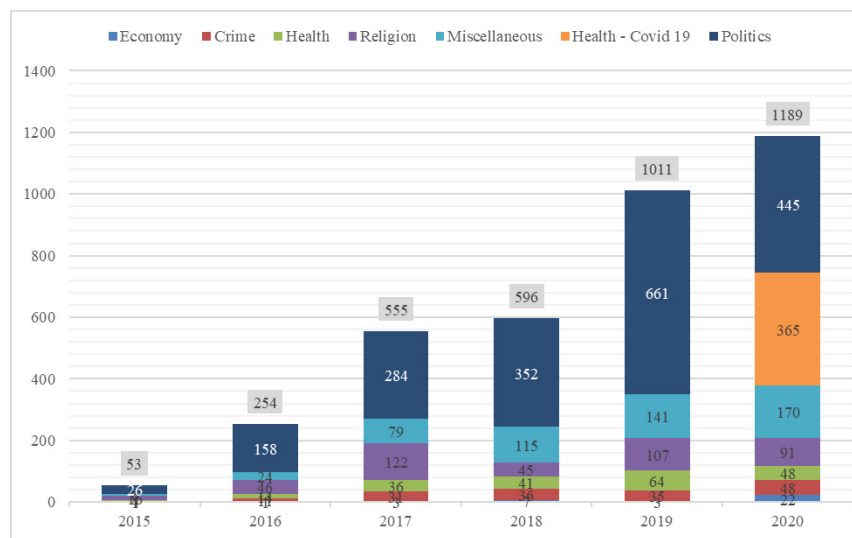


Figure 1: Number of Fact-Check articles by Themes per Year

We found that political-themed hoaxes were closely related to several political events that occurs in Indonesia. For example, in 2017 our analysis revealed that many hoaxes verified by MAFINDO were related to political feuds during the Jakarta gubernatorial election, specifically between Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok) and his opponent who eventually won the election, Anies Baswedan. Meanwhile, in 2018 and 2019, MAFINDO primarily debunked political hoaxes surrounding Indonesia’s presidential election, involving Joko Widodo-Ma’ruf Amin and Prabowo Subianto-Sandiaga Uno. The number of political hoaxes increased significantly in 2019, reaching 661 articles in one year.

Apart from domestic politicians, Donald Trump, who is a foreign politician, has also been a topic of a fact-check. His name appeared several times on hoaxes related to Covid-19. For example, “Video of Donald Trump stressed with covid-19 and doing “ruqyah” (healing

method based on Islamic tradition)" and "Donald Trump Announces Roche Medical Company to Launch a Million Doses of Covid19 Vaccine Next Week". Various Indonesian politicians and public figures also notably emerged in connection with one of the major political movements in Indonesia related to the blasphemy case of Ahok (Tapsell, 2020). Articles mentioning political actors by name often presented personal perspectives such as issues regarding President Jokowi's citizenship, the issue of Prabowo Subianto's alleged inability to read the Quran, and also the issue of Ma'ruf Amin's passiveness while serving as the Vice President of Indonesia.

Besides political themes, an increase in the number of hoaxes with themes outside of the six main topics also occurred during the research period. Examples of these miscellaneous hoaxes are related to disasters, daily events, and various strange phenomena occurring both within and outside Indonesia. Approximately 535 articles (14.6%) fell under the category of miscellaneous hoaxes including titles such as "Video of Mount Sinabung Erupting", "Old Grandma Who Needs Donations", or "Latest News, India has been hit by Tornado Storm." In addition to titles aimed to deceive the public (such as those involving donations), hoaxes of this category are notably sensationalized, using emotional cues to create fear (fear-mongering), and are "clickbaity" (Bean, 2017). This finding warrants further exploration since it raises questions about how MAFINDO decides which miscellaneous hoaxes are deemed "worthy" of a response, compared to other pressing public issues.

Regarding health-related hoaxes, we differentiated between general health issues and those explicitly related to Covid-19. During the research period, the number of health hoaxes was only 207 articles (5.6%). In contrast, there were 365 articles (9.9%) focusing on Covid-19 despite the emergence of Covid-19 issues only in early 2020. This phenomenon might be directly linked to what was later called the "infodemic" (Zarocostas, 2020). It is important to note that the health-Covid-19 hoaxes which were debunked by MAFINDO also intersect with the themes of "Politics" and "Religion". Examples of political themes that intersect with this theme are the issue that "Donald Trump suddenly became unconscious during a speech because he was exposed to corona" or "Joko Widodo the President of Indonesia imposed a limited partial quarantine". Some examples of these hoaxes do carry the names of political figures, but we categorized them into the health-covid-19 theme as the primary focus was on Covid-19 and the pandemic. Some covid-19 hoaxes are also usually related to public agendas, such as pandemic restrictions and government policies in tackling Covid-19.

Furthermore, we also looked at various channels where hoaxes were found and subsequently verified by MAFINDO. According to our observations, in some articles MAFINDO did not explicitly mention the channel where the hoax was found. So, we manually identified the channel based on various indicators within the article, such as the depiction of the channel's image that appears in the article, how the channel was mentioned in the text of the article, and so on. Our focus was on identifying the source channel where the hoax first appeared or initially spread. We categorize the channel into the following: Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Website or Blog, Unspecific, and others.

Based on our analysis, Facebook emerged as the most prominent channel for the spread of hoaxes with 2321 articles (63.4%). In second and third place are WhatsApp with 441 articles (12.06%) and Twitter with 331 articles (9.05%). Furthermore, we observed that the number of hoaxes on Facebook which are then checked by MAFINDO is increasing significantly every year with the highest number being in 2020. In addition to Facebook, Twitter is another channel that has experienced an increase in the number of hoaxes, but it was not as significant as Facebook.

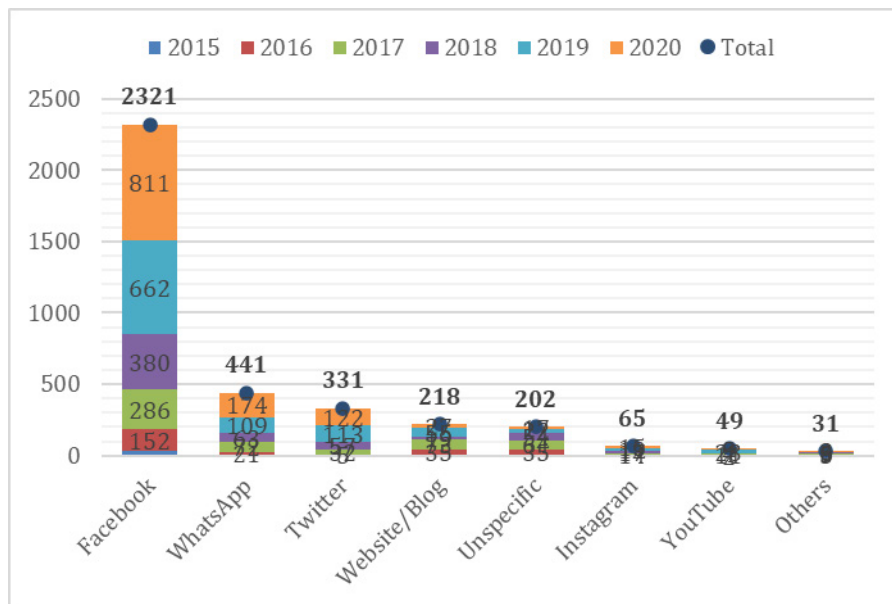


Figure 2: Number of Articles by Channels

Over the past five years, Facebook, which has recently changed its company name to Meta (Zuckerberg, 2021) has experienced significant challenges regarding the issue of misinformation on its platform. On their official website, they maintain a dedicated page (<https://about.fb.com/news/tag/misinformation/>) that provides regular updates on their efforts to combat misinformation in various countries, spanning topics from politics, elections, human rights, health-covid issues, to international conflict like the Russia-Ukraine war. Additionally, they also showcase a timeline highlighting various initiatives on product improvement, policy expansion, external engagement, and transparency reports aimed at addressing various issues related to “platform integrity” including those related to the issue of hoaxes. (Facebook, 2016). The inherent issues of hoaxes and fake news on Facebook cannot be separated from the United States presidential election and Donald Trump’s victory in 2016. After Trump’s victory, at a Technology conference titled “Techonomy”, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg dismissed Facebook’s role in the presidential election and said, “the idea that fake news, of which it’s a very small amount of the content, influenced the election in any way is a pretty crazy idea”. Nonetheless, he later retorted with a post on Facebook stating that he might downplay the issue. Media coverage from Vox, quoted Mark Zuckerberg’s explanation as follows “After the election, I made a comment that I thought the idea misinformation on Facebook changed the outcome of the election was a crazy idea. Calling that crazy was dismissive and I regret it” (Wagner, 2017). Numerous studies and documentation addressing Facebook’s role in spreading misinformation have been frequently published. However, it is worth noting that the problem of Facebook-related misinformation afflicting developing countries in the Global South continues to receive limited attention from Facebook and remains understudied (Elliott et al., 2021).

In Indonesia, Facebook remains one of the primary platforms for digital communication and information exchange. Its role extends beyond interpersonal communication among citizens and encompasses business, economy, and various government public communication activities (Facebook, 2019). In a survey conducted by Daily Social in 2018 which involved 2,032 people in Indonesia, it was found that 77.76% of the respondents ranked Facebook as the top social media for obtaining information, followed by WhatsApp (77.76%) and Instagram (72.93%). Coincidentally, in the same survey, 81.25% of respondents rated Facebook as a source of hoaxes circulating in the digital environment (Daily Social,

2018). The proliferation of hoaxes on Facebook in Indonesia was also highlighted in a global survey from Ipsos-CIGI in 2019 about social media, fake news, and algorithms (Ipsos-CIGI, 2019). MAFINDO also started its fact-checking program through a Facebook group (<https://id-id.facebook.com/groups/fafhh/>) in September 2015. They also provide opportunities for its members/volunteers from various regions to engage in fact-checking activities. Additionally, MAFINDO also implements a hoax reporting system from a wide audience using the same Facebook group. Therefore, it can be said that the Facebook group is their primary platform where the fact-checking process is carried out collectively.

Meanwhile, Indonesia's most popular instant messaging app, WhatsApp, ranks 2nd (441 articles or 12.06%) as the channel where many hoaxes have been debunked by MAFINDO. The process of debunking hoaxes on WhatsApp presents some challenges since the content cannot be searched and verified directly as the fact-checkers do with the content on other platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or YouTube. This is due to the privacy rules of WhatsApp where all messages on the platform are encrypted, and they do not give third parties access to read the circulation of messages on the platform. Hoax is also a significant problem for WhatsApp, and they also have guidance on their official website regarding various ways that can be taken to avoid the widespread spread of hoax (WhatsApp, n.d.-a).

In contrast to the numerous studies focusing on "public" social media that is easier to access such as Facebook and Twitter, many studies that try to capture the problems on "private" apps such as WhatsApp are focused on developing countries in the Global South such as Brazil, Colombia, Kenya, and Malaysia (Rennó, 2015), India (Gupta & Taneja, 2017), Colombia (Serrano, 2017), and Indonesia (Ajengrastri, 2019; Baulch et al., 2022; Wibowo et al., 2019). WhatsApp has made several efforts to address these challenges. For example, they introduced a feature that marks messages that have been forwarded more than five times by giving a two-arrow icon and the label 'forwarded by many' as a sign of caution that the forwarded message has been forwarded by many people and needs to be checked for correctness first. In addition, WhatsApp also cooperates with global fact-checking agencies under the IFCN (International Fact-Checking Network) by providing official and direct channels to several fact-checking agencies, and users can ask if a message is indicated to be misleading or contains misinformation. These efforts highlight the recognition of fact-checking organizations as an important component in countering the proliferation of misinformation (Funke, 2018; Rahmawan et al., 2022; WhatsApp, n.d.-b).

The third most frequently debunked platform by MAFINDO is Twitter. There are some interesting notes about the patterns of Twitter usage in Indonesia. For example, around 2012-2013, Indonesia was one of the countries that had the most active Twitter users in the world. Jakarta and Bandung were included in the list of cities where its residents were very active in Tweeting (Grazella, 2012). As a platform, Twitter serves as a platform to discuss and exchange ideas, including on a variety of topics related to politics. Some discussions on Twitter can become heated and contentious leading to what is commonly referred to as a "tweet war." (Wagstaff, 2016). As a platform that is widely used to talk about public issues, the number of Twitter users is far inferior to other platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp. However, since Twitter has publicly accessible content, various conversations on Twitter are often regarded as proxies for public conversation and picked by the mainstream media. In Indonesia, hashtag wars on Twitter are also often seen as part of the political conversation, although if we look closely, the hashtags are often driven by bots with meaningless messages and actually only serve as part of computational political propaganda. (Bradshaw & Howard, 2019).

In addition to the three platforms mentioned above, there are also 202 articles (5%) that do not explicitly specify, mention or describe the channel through which the hoaxes were disseminated. Hence, these articles are categorized as “unspecific”. Most of the articles falling into this category involve political themes. Hoaxes are also found on other channels such as from blogs and websites that are both verified and unverified by the Indonesian Press Council. It is interesting to note that some of the official news media websites also contain hoaxes which were subsequently verified and debunked by MAFINDO. One example is when Kompas.com published an article entitled “James Hetfield, Metallica Guitarist & Vocalist Gets Ph.D. from Caltech in Astrophysics”. After the article was debunked by MAFINDO, Kompas posted a correction stating that the source of the news turned out to be a satirical blog (Febriarko, 2016).

Next, we also looked at the types of content of the hoaxes debunked by MAFINDO. A study from Angeline et al., (2020) on several types of hoaxes related to Covid-19 in Indonesia, for example, revealed that in social media, text only hoax is the most common hoaxes that frequently appear, followed by hoaxes in the forms of a picture such as memes, hoaxes in the form of videos on social media, and hoaxes resembling news articles (2020, p. 362). In our study, we tried to create simpler categories, namely the category of non-video and image with text (including images resembling online news articles, screenshots, social media displays, etc.) video and text (including text presented in the form of video) and text-only (example such as forwarded messages on WhatsApp) and non-specific types. The result of our analysis indicate that the number of hoaxes in the form of non-video and images with text consistently increases over the year.

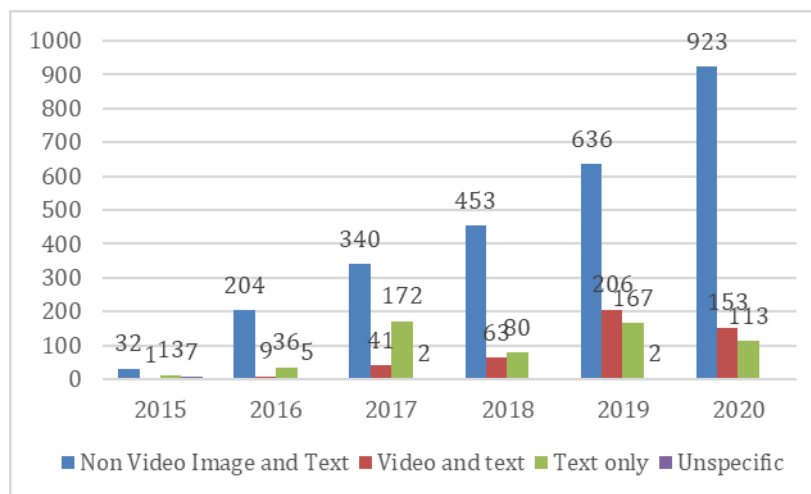


Figure 3: Number of Articles by Types of content

Analysis of content types cannot be separated from the platforms on which the content circulates. All social media platforms, be it Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and instant messaging applications such as WhatsApp provide features like “share”, “retweet” or “forward” that make it easier to spread messages. Furthermore, on platforms like Facebook or Twitter, popular messages or content will also be easier to spread because their algorithms encourage the content to circulate more widely. In the context of hoaxes, various content can be spread with several intentions and deployed a variety of manipulation techniques.

Different types of content also relate to different ways of “storytelling” which in turn affects the levels of emotional impact on people. For example, a particular story or event related to violence, when later retold and presented in the format of a video, may evoke

a different emotional response compared to when it is conveyed through text alone. In an experiment conducted on Twitter, for example, it was found that tweets containing visual elements (e.g. images or photos) got a higher engagement rate, namely getting 18% higher clicks, getting 89% more favorites, and getting 150% higher number of retweets than tweets that only used text and did not contain any visual elements (Cooper, 2013). In addition, various efforts to detect hoax content are also taking into account the concept of multimodal (a combination of text, visuals, and videos) content, because it can be seen that such content attracts more attention and is easier to spread (Alam et al., 2021). Analyzing the types of content debunked by fact-checking organizations is important and complements other findings that emphasize the need to address multimodal hoax content, such as images with text and memes, in the fight against misinformation (Rushkoff et al., 2018).

Conclusion

In the wake of an uproar sparked by Donald Trump's victory in 2016 and the Brexit phenomenon, it can be said that studies on hoaxes have gained significant attention. A range of studies attempts to explore the definitions and typologies of hoaxes, identify the factors that cause the spread of hoaxes, and also tries to propose potential solutions to fight and reduce the widespread proliferation of hoaxes. The fact-checking initiatives done by several fact-checking organizations around the world are considered an important effort to verify and debunk confusing and misleading information circulating within communities. While fact-checking traditionally emerged in journalistic practices, it has expanded beyond the boundaries of newsrooms. Non-Governmental Organization has been joining the fact-checking movement as can be seen in various countries in Europe (Graves & Cherubini, 2016b; Mantzarlis, 2017), and also in Indonesia, spearheaded by MAFINDO.

As an organization that emerged in response to public unrest regarding the proliferation of hoaxes, especially related to political issues, MAFINDO has been consistently engaged in fact-checking practices and debunking hoaxes since 2015. They have established extensive partnerships and collaboration with the media, the government, and also with the private sector. MAFINDO has been recognized as one of the trusted fact-check organizations and has received grants from several notable institutions such as Facebook (Meta) and Google. Given the significance of MAFINDO's role in the fight against hoaxes in Indonesia, this article aims to "checking how fact-checkers check" (C. Lim, 2018) by analyzing the content of their fact-check articles and mapping the content based on the classification of themes, channels, and content types. During the period of analysis from July 2015 to July 2020, there was a clear increase in the number of hoaxes debunked every year. Furthermore, the number of political-themed hoaxes is very dominant compared to other themes, which emphasizes that generally the rampant spread of hoaxes is related to various political events happening in Indonesia throughout the year. We also found that Facebook is the channel where most hoaxes are found, followed by WhatsApp and Twitter. Lastly, the type of content which is frequently debunked by MAFINDO is hoaxes in the form of non-video images and text. It is important to note that this research does not try to make claims encompassing the entire issue of hoaxes. Rather, we hope to contribute to the ongoing conversations on the issues of hoaxes in Indonesia, as well as stimulate further empirical studies with diverse approaches and methods.

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