# Smart Social Media Education: Preventing Hoaxes and the Spread of False Content Among Vacational High School Student

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## Abstract

The spread of hoaxes in Indonesia continues to rise, as recorded by the Ministry of Communication and Informatics (Kominfo), with more than 770 hoaxes identified between August 2018 and February 2019. This phenomenon indicates that hoaxes pose a serious threat, requiring continuous education and intervention efforts. Therefore, this Community Service Program (PKM) aims to enhance students' digital literacy in recognizing, identifying, and countering fake news on social media. The workshop was conducted at SMKN 1 Klaten, involving 120 twelfth-grade students from the multimedia department. The method used in this program was an interactive workshop that included education on hoaxes, practical exercises in identifying false information, and discussions on the social impact of hoaks dissemination. Through this activity, students were equipped with the skills to become critical and responsible consumers of information in the digital era. The training, which lasted for five class hours, successfully engaged students, as evidenced by the numerous questions that arose throughout the session. It is hoped that this initiative will contribute to creating a safer digital environment and support government efforts to improve digital literacy among the younger generation.

**Keywords**: Education, Anticipation, Hoax Dissemination, Social Media

## *Abstrak*

*Penyebaran hoaks di Indonesia terus meningkat, sebagaimana dicatat oleh Kementerian Komunikasi dan Informatika (Kominfo), dengan lebih dari 770 hoaks teridentifikasi dalam periode Agustus 2018 hingga Februari 2019. Fenomena ini menunjukkan bahwa hoaks merupakan ancaman serius yang memerlukan upaya edukasi dan intervensi yang berkelanjutan. Oleh karena itu, Program Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat (PKM) ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan literasi digital siswa dalam mengenali, mengidentifikasi, dan menangkal berita palsu di media sosial. Lokakarya ini dilaksanakan di SMKN 1 Klaten dengan melibatkan 120 siswa kelas 12 dari jurusan multimedia. Metode yang digunakan dalam program ini adalah lokakarya interaktif yang mencakup edukasi tentang hoaks, latihan praktik dalam mengidentifikasi informasi palsu, serta diskusi mengenai dampak sosial dari penyebaran hoaks. Melalui kegiatan ini, siswa dibekali keterampilan untuk menjadi konsumen informasi yang kritis dan bertanggung jawab dalam menghadapi arus informasi di era digital. Pelatihan yang berlangsung selama lima jam pelajaran ini berhasil menarik perhatian siswa, yang ditunjukkan dengan banyaknya pertanyaan yang muncul sepanjang sesi berlangsung. Diharapkan, inisiatif ini dapat berkontribusi dalam menciptakan lingkungan digital yang lebih aman serta mendukung upaya pemerintah dalam meningkatkan literasi digital di kalangan generasi muda.*

*Kata Kunci: Edukasi, Antisipasi, Penyebaran hoaks, Media Sosial*

## Introduction

The advancement of digital technology continues to grow significantly each day. In various aspects of life, technology is often compared to a double-edged sword (Humaeroh & Dewi, 2021). On one hand, technological innovations bring numerous benefits to society, such as easier access to information, faster communication, and support for the development of the business and education sectors by eliminating geographical and temporal barriers. With technology, individuals can access various resources more efficiently, enabling learning and work processes to be carried out without the constraints of time and space (Wiguna, 2024).

However, on the other hand, technological progress also presents new challenges that must be anticipated wisely. Uncontrolled use of technology can lead to several negative impacts, including the spread of invalid information, digital dependency, and threats to data privacy and security (Arbi & Amrullah, 2024). A study by Sumiati & Is (2017) revealed that technological developments originating from Western countries have greatly contributed to creating progress and enhancing global societal welfare. Indirectly, these innovations also promise a better future by offering solutions to various social and economic challenges. Along with the increasing use of digital technology, the spread of fake news or hoaxes has also become more prevalent on various platforms. This phenomenon has become a serious concern for the government, which has taken strategic steps to counter the spread of misleading information. The government has implemented various policies to firmly act against individuals or groups who intentionally spread hoaxes, aiming to create a deterrent effect and maintain the integrity of public information (Nurlatun et al., 2021).

These measures go beyond stricter law enforcement, also encompassing public education about the dangers and negative impacts of hoaxes. Moreover, the government is strengthening collaborations with various digital platforms to filter and remove content containing invalid information. This initiative aims to create a healthier digital ecosystem where the public can access accurate and trustworthy information without being misled by deceptive content (UNICEF, 2020). The Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (Kominfo) has monitored hoax dissemination over a seven-month period, from August 2018 to February 2019. The report shows a significant increase in the number of circulating hoaxes. In August 2018, only 25 hoax items were identified. However, this number drastically surged to 353 hoaxes by February 2019 (Kominfo, 2019). This increase indicates that the spread of false information via the internet continues to grow and is becoming increasingly difficult to control.

Compared to traditional media such as newspapers or television, hoaxes spread on digital platforms have a broader and more persistent impact. Unlike news in print or broadcast media, which tends to have a shorter lifecycle, digital content can continue to circulate and is difficult to completely remove. This is due to digital footprints, which allow information to remain available across various platforms even after being clarified as false news. Today, the modus operandi in spreading hoaxes is becoming more sophisticated. Certain parties intentionally create fake content that is then distributed through various social media channels. This information is often amplified through digital platform algorithms, allowing it to spread rapidly without adequate verification processes (Juditha, 2019). As a result, public opinion can be easily influenced by inaccurate information, and in some cases, hoaxes can trigger social unrest and polarization within society (Jusnita & Ali, 2022).

Therefore, collective awareness from all elements of society is required to be more critical in receiving and disseminating information (Shovmayanti, 2024). Digital literacy efforts must be continuously improved so that people have the skills to filter valid information and distinguish between true news and hoaxes (Kurwidaria et al., 2023). Through synergy between the government, digital platforms, and individual awareness in filtering information, the spread of hoaxes is expected to be minimized, creating a healthier and more informative digital environment for all (Gani et al., 2023). In today's digital era, students of SMKN 1 Klaten face significant challenges in dealing with the spread of hoaxes and fake content on social media. One of the main problems is the lack of awareness among students regarding the dangers of hoaxes and their impact. Many students still struggle to differentiate between valid and misleading information, making them more susceptible to being influenced by fake news. Additionally, limited information verification skills worsen the situation. Many students are unfamiliar with using fact-checking tools or assessing the credibility of news sources, making them easily believe in unverified information. The spread of inaccurate information is also a serious problem. Unknowingly, many students contribute to spreading hoaxes among their peers, ultimately accelerating the virality of fake news. The lack of understanding about the consequences of spreading unverified news can worsen the situation, causing misinformation to spread even further. Therefore, more intensive digital literacy efforts are needed so that students have a better understanding of filtering and sharing accurate information in this digital age.

To address this issue, the community service program titled Smart Education on Social Media: Preventing Hoaxes and the Spread of Fake Content Among Vocational School Students at SMKN 1 Klaten aims to enhance students' digital literacy. Through this educational program, students will gain a better understanding of how to identify and respond to hoaxes and fake content, as well as be equipped with the necessary skills to verify information effectively. This program will also teach how to use social media wisely and responsibly so that students can help reduce the negative impact of spreading false information.

## Method

This community service activity (PKM) began with the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) between GPIB *Marga Muly*a and *Universitas Kristen Indonesia*. The subsequent steps in the implementation of the PKM include:

1. Coordinating with the leadership and management of GPIB *Marga Mulya*, Yogyakarta
The first step involves establishing communication with the leadership and management of the Protestant Church in Western Indonesia (GPIB) *Marga Mulya*, Yogyakarta. This coordination aims to introduce the program, discuss its objectives, and gain support and approval from the church leadership.

2. Obtaining formal approval from relevant parties
After coordination, it is necessary to obtain official approval from the leadership and administrators of the related institution. This approval ensures that the PKM activities can be conducted smoothly and in accordance with the rules and policies in place at the institution.

3. Planning the PKM schedule and venue
The next step is to design the schedule for the workshop activities and determine the location where the PKM will be held. The schedule should consider the availability of the participants

and organizers and should not conflict with other ongoing activities. The selected venue should meet the training needs and provide a comfortable environment. SMKN 1 Klaten was agreed upon as the venue for the PKM activities.

     4. Determining participant categories

The team needs to determine the categories of participants who will take part in the PKM. These categories may be based on age, educational level, or other relevant backgrounds. Categorizing participants helps ensure that the training materials are tailored to the participants' needs and abilities.

     5. Preparing tools and materials

All tools and materials needed for the training must be prepared and organized. This includes technological devices, learning materials, and stationery. Additionally, the training materials should be systematically arranged and aligned with the predetermined training objectives.

     6. Evaluating the training outcomes

After the training, an evaluation should be conducted to assess the outcomes. This evaluation aims to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the training. Evaluation methods may include questionnaires, interviews, or direct observation.

     7. Writing an activity report

The final step is to write a report documenting the entire PKM process—from planning to evaluation. The report should also include evaluation results and recommendations for future program development. This report serves as both documentation and accountability to relevant stakeholders.

## Results and Discussion

The Community Service (PKM) activity aimed at enhancing digital literacy in recognizing and combating hoaxes was held in person at SMKN 1 Klaten. The event began with participant preparation and registration at 08:00 AM, followed by an opening worship session that lasted until 08:25 AM. Afterward, the Vice Principal of SMKN 1 Klaten delivered a welcome speech, followed by a representative from *Universitas Kristen Indonesia* (UKI). The presence of these stakeholders demonstrated a shared commitment to equipping students with essential digital literacy skills needed in today's digital era. Student enthusiasm was evident from early in the morning, as they arrived ahead of time to fill out the attendance list and prepare themselves before the event started. This behavior reflected their awareness of the importance of digital literacy in facing the challenges of misinformation on social media.

The main workshop session began at 08:35 AM with a presentation titled Anticipating the Spread of Hoaxes and Fake Content on social media. This session, which lasted for an hour, provided students with insights into how to identify, verify, and counter fake news commonly spread across various digital platforms. It was followed by a Q&A session until 10:00 AM, during which students actively asked questions, reflecting their concerns about the widespread nature of hoaxes and the difficulty in distinguishing valid information. Issues previously identified, such as a lack of awareness about hoaxes and the inability to verify information, became more apparent through the questions and discussions that arose during this session.

Following the presentation and discussion, the second session titled Preventing Teen Cyberbullying took place until 11:00 AM. During this session, students became even more engaged, sharing personal experiences related to cyberbullying and how they have frequently

seen or even experienced bullying in the digital world. The Q&A session that lasted until 11:30 AM revealed that many students are still uncertain about how to handle such situations—whether as victims, witnesses, or even as unintentional perpetrators. An open discussion at the end of the event provided them with a platform to express their perspectives and seek collective solutions. As a form of appreciation, the committee presented a token of gratitude to the school before the event officially ended at 12:00 PM. The students' enthusiasm throughout the activity demonstrated how crucial digital literacy is in raising awareness about hoaxes and cyberbullying, enabling them to respond more wisely to information and interact more safely and healthily in the digital world.

This PKM activity was a follow-up to the initiative conducted in July 2024, when UKI established a partnership with the school through the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA). This document solidified the joint commitment between UKI and GPIB Margomulyo to continuously support the improvement of digital literacy among students, including through mentoring programs in several schools, one of which is SMKN 1 Klaten. With the existence of this MoA, it is hoped that similar educational programs can be implemented systematically to further strengthen digital literacy awareness and skills within the educational environment, preparing students to better face the challenges of the digital age.



*Figure 1.* MoA between UKI and GPIB, July 2024

The students' enthusiasm throughout this activity demonstrated that digital literacy is not only an individual necessity but also a collective effort in building a more discerning society capable of filtering information wisely. The widespread phenomenon of hoax dissemination and cyberbullying among teenagers has become a serious concern for the government, which has actively implemented policies to combat misleading information and take firm action against its spreaders (Nurlatun, Nayoan & Pangemanan, 2021). This strategic move is expected to serve as a deterrent while also safeguarding the integrity of public information. On the other hand, technological advancement also offers great opportunities to support digital literacy, particularly in the fields of education, business, and communication (Wiguna, 2024). Through the appropriate use of technology, students can access information more efficiently, verify its accuracy, and foster a healthy and responsible digital culture in facing the challenges of the digital era.

**Material Delivery and Participant Interaction**

The workshop materials were delivered comprehensively using a variety of methods. The session began with the screening of an educational video discussing the threat of hoaxes on social media and their impact on social life. This video provided a concrete illustration of the dangers posed by the spread of false information, along with strategies that can be applied to identify fake news. In addition, up-to-date data from 2024 regarding the trend of hoax

dissemination in Indonesia was presented, including statistics on the spread of false information across various digital platforms.



*Figure 2.* Material Delivery by the UKI PKM Team

The presentation of materials was supported by modern presentation technology such as wireless projectors, microphones, and interactive slide displays to ensure effective communication. After the main session, participants were introduced to various digital platforms that can be used to verify information. They also received practical training on using digital literacy support tools such as Google Fact Check Tools and Turn Back Hoaks from Mafindo. As part of active learning, participants were invited to apply the knowledge they had gained through hands-on practice sessions. They were given case studies of hoaxes that had gone viral in Indonesia and were asked to analyze the validity of the information using the methods they had just learned. In addition, participants were trained to create digital campaigns using Canva, in which they designed educational content on digital literacy and the dangers of hoaxes to be shared on their respective social media accounts.

**Discussion and Q&A Session**

During the discussion session, participants showed high interest and actively asked questions about how to distinguish between real and fake information, effective news filtering methods, and the psychological impact of hoax dissemination on society. Some of the questions raised included how to prevent the spread of hoaxes among peers and how to raise digital awareness within the school environment. This discussion served as an interactive platform that allowed participants to share their experiences and gain a deeper understanding of the importance of digital literacy.



*Figure 3.* Student Q&A Session

## Conclusion

The advancement of digital technology has significantly impacted various aspects of life, facilitating access to information, communication, and supporting the business and education sectors. However, this progress also brings challenges, including the spread of false information

(hoaxes), digital dependency, and threats to privacy and data security. The increasing spread of hoaxes demands a serious response from various parties, including the government, which has implemented strict policies and strengthened digital literacy efforts to mitigate its negative effects. In the educational context, students at SMKN 1 Klaten face major challenges in distinguishing between valid information and hoaxes on social media. Lack of awareness, limited verification skills, and the tendency to share information without fact-checking are key factors that hinder efforts to combat hoaxes. To address this issue, the Student Creativity Program (PKM) titled Education on Anticipating the Spread of Hoaxes and Fake Content on Social Media was conducted to enhance students' digital literacy.

This PKM was initiated through a collaboration between *Universitas Kristen Indonesia* (UKI) and GPIB *Marga Mulya*, as outlined in the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA). The program included a variety of activities, such as training in information verification, the use of digital fact-checking tools, and hands-on practice through case analysis and digital campaign creation. The implementation of the PKM at SMKN 1 Klaten demonstrated strong enthusiasm from the participants, who were actively engaged in discussions and field practice. Through an interactive educational approach, students not only gained an understanding of the dangers of hoaxes but also received training in critically filtering information. The continuation of similar programs is expected to further strengthen digital literacy awareness among students, enabling them to face the challenges of the digital era wisely and responsibly.

## Acknowledgement

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