

## **The Urgency of Digital Literacy to Minimize the Spread of Religious Hoaxes among Students of Islamic University in Pandemic covid-19**

**Naomi Ainun Hasanah**

State Islamic University of Sultan Aji Muhammad Idris Samarinda

e-mail: [hepzhibahnay@gmail.com](mailto:hepzhibahnay@gmail.com)

**Abstract:** *The development of information and communication technology increase the accessibility to get information through digital devices. In addition, the spread of Covid-19 in these few years increases the need to use digital devices and applications to expand knowledge and sharpen understanding among students of Islamic universities. However, the spread of hoax information related to religious understanding increases. A lack of basic religious understanding can trigger the spread of excessive hoaxes. This research aims to reveal the urgency of digital literacy and religious understanding, especially for students in Islamic universities. The Method of this research is Library Research. This research shows that digital literacy and religious understanding are essential to minimize the entry of extreme ideas and the spread of hoaxes. Therefore, every student of Islamic university should increase digital literacy skills and religious understanding through other authoritative sources*

**Keywords:** Covid-19; Digital Literacy; Hoax; Religious Understanding; Students

### **Introduction**

Amid the rapid development of existing technology, many things are transformed. It allows students to obtain information easily using a smartphone. For instance, students do not have to buy printed books as instructional resources. In addition, students tend to expand their religious Understanding through online media. However, the progress of information and communication technology has negative sides, such as the spread of hoaxes, hate speeches, and digital bullying are increased. The Jakarta Religious Research Centered (JRRC) conducted research involving 400 students at four departments of Islamic Education found out that 90% of respondents prefer to obtain religious information (Kemenag, 2019). On the other hand, it can be concluded that in the majority, religious understanding among students of Islamic universities is obtained through online media (website, youtube, social media) compared to religious printed books. It is critical since online media is not the only authoritative source of religious literacy (Dulkiah and Setia 2020: 2-3).

The process of expanding knowledge seems to be unidirectional. Students accept all the information without hesitation and negotiation. It impacts religious understanding of students, because the students are misunderstanding or misinterpreting the meaning of the information being distributed via online media. It is essential to be a concern for students of Islamic universities, especially in terms of religious understanding and digital literacy. Nowadays, in the covid-19 pandemic era, many shallow thoughts result in radical attitudes and violence in the name of religion. In addition, students are not only agents of change but also agents of empowerment. Therefore, based on education and knowledge, students should become role models in

society.

Students are an active generation in using the internet; thus, students have a great responsibility to use valid and reliable information sources. There is a close relationship between religious understanding and digital literacy. The rise of hoax phenomenon on social media targets various social circles, especially students as the millennial generation. If this is not immediately prevented, it will have a significant impact in the future. Therefore, digital literacy is needed to minimize the spread of hoaxes under the guise of religion.

Understanding ability is higher than knowledge because understanding depends on assessing, comprehension, and appreciating something being studied, which will later be revealed in words and affixed to behavior (Aliasari, 2017: 129). At the same time, digital literacy is the ability to understand and use information in various forms from an extensive source that is accessed using digital devices. Digital literacy is essential for every individual to understand because digital literacy will allow everyone to process all information, messages, and communications effectively. Digital literacy skills allow everyone to think critically and creatively to see the positive and negative consequences of using technology in everyday life (Khairi Murdy 2020: 74). Based on research conducted by Juliana Kurniawati and Siti Baroroh with the article "Digital Media Literacy for University of Muhammadiyah Bengkulu Students" (Kurniawati and Baroroh 2016: 51–52) it was found that the level of individual competence of University of Muhammadiyah Bengkulu students in digital media literacy was at a basic level. Based on these results, a complete concern for students from other universities to continue to hone their knowledge and have implications for this because digital literacy is critical and needed in today's era.

### **Method**

This study aims to determine the urgency digital literacy to minimize the spread of religious hoaxes among college students in pandemic covid-19. The research method used in this research is a literature review. The literature review serves to build concepts or theories that form the basis of studies in research. It was conducted by collecting data or scientific writings aimed at the object of research or data collection of a library nature, or studies carried out to solve a problem-focused on the (Zed, 2014). This research includes descriptive research that focuses on a systematic explanation of the facts obtained when the research was conducted (Sanusi, 2016). The sources used include textbooks, scientific journals, statistical references, research results, and other relevant sources.

### **Discussion**

The rapid development of information and communication technology creates a vast opportunity for hoaxes to spread, especially in the pandemic covid-19 period. It increases the need for social media as a public space. This new public space is different from actual public space since face-to-face interaction directly is no longer needed. It has both positive and negative impacts. Social media can build connections and spread the right ideas on the positive side. On the other side is the uncontrolled spread of hoaxes that can disrupt social order. The distribution of information in the digital era

is not carried out only by mass media sites but also by everyone who uses the internet. Much information or news is distributed individually or in groups that cannot be justified or are indicated as hoaxes. Data from the Kominfo website reveals there are 800,000 sites spreading hoaxes and hate speech in Indonesia (Rahmadhany and Safitri 2021: 31).

Hoax is a side effect of the era of openness, which can create division and hostility because it can confuse people about the truth of information. The phenomenon of hoaxes in Indonesia is seen as causing various problems, one of which concerns the issue of disseminating information related to religion. Many writings that sometimes contain elements of provocation vilify a group even though it is still within the scope of the Islamic religion.

Even now, information or news considered accurate is no longer easily found by the general public. The types of hoax information are as follows (Christiany 2018: 35–36):

1. Fake News is news that tries to replace the original news in order to falsify or include untruths in a news
2. Clickbait (trap link): A link strategically placed on one web to attract people to another site. The content in this link is factual, but the title is exaggerated or has an exciting image attached to lure the reader.
3. Manipulated content, accurate information, or images are deliberately manipulated to deceive
4. Imposter Content, sources are imitated or altered to obscure the facts.
5. Satire, A piece of writing that uses humor, irony, exaggeration to comment on current events
6. Misleading content is content formed with the nuances of twisting to vilify a person or group.
7. False content, that contains the title, image, or description do not support the content or are not tied to one another

The types of hoaxes should become a reference for students to enhance the awareness of hoaxes, especially in terms of religion. However, it is not sufficient to prevent consuming hoaxes. Other alternatives are needed, such as increasing religious understanding through various valid and reliable sources and increasing digital literacy. Understanding is a process of knowing deeply. Understanding is also defined as a process of thinking and learning. Religious understanding implies the extent to which a person can recognize or understand religious values that contain the values of his ancestors and practice these values in attitude and behavior (Aliasari 2017: 131). Good religious understanding will help minimize the spread of hoaxes in the name of religion. It makes students wiser and able to choose and sort the information being learned, either hoaxes or not.

Previous research conducted by Aliasari found that 98.3% agreed that religious understanding also affected the level of hoax spread with a mean of 4.55 (Aliasari 2017: 143). It indicates that good religious understanding based on authoritative sources among students, especially in Islamic universities is crucial to prevent hoaxes, conflict, radical and hate speech. It provides insight into how students should assess the widely spread information, especially related to religion.

Moreover, increasing digital literacy is needed to reduce the spread of religious hoaxes. Digital literacy as a series of media literacy movements is designed to increase individual control over the media they use to send and receive the message (Silvana and Darmawan 2018: 115). Digital literacy involves knowledge of using a range of technological tools to find information and solve complex problems or tasks. Digital literacy also refers to how communication technology impacts the meaning that follows and the ability to analyze and evaluate the knowledge available in web networks (Limilia and Nindi 2019).

Furthermore, Jones-Kavalier & Flannigan (2008) suggests that a person can be said to have digital literacy if he or she has the ability to complete tasks effectively in a digital environment, which includes: consists of the ability to read and interpret media, reproduce data and images through digital manipulation, and evaluate and apply new knowledge gained from the digital environment. Several presentations related to the importance of digital literacy indicate that digital literacy is essential for students of Islamic universities. Knowing the truth of an official content or site will make students more selective in commenting and arguing, especially in pandemic covid-19. Therefore, to minimize the negative impacts, digital literacy is needed. Digital literacy skills allow everyone to think critically and creatively in seeing the positive and negative impacts of using technology in everyday life (Khairy Murdy and Putri 2020: 78). The Correlation Between Religious Understanding, Digital Literacy, and Students' College.

As discussed in the previous one, there is a strong relationship between religious understanding and digital literacy. Digital literacy is like a bridge for students to access information related to religion. The religious understanding referred to in this case is related to how we can adequately filter information or reading sources about religion. The purpose is to minimize the spread of hoaxes related to religious understanding by searching, analyzing, and evaluating the sources.

These two things are also associated with students' college, especially in Islamic Universities since the roles and functions of students are:

1. Agent of Change

Students as agents of change mean that if something happens in the surrounding environment and it is wrong, students are required to change it according to their real expectations, hoping that students can use their disciplines in helping Indonesia's development to become better in the future.

2. Social Control

As a controller generation, a student is expected to control social conditions in the surrounding environment. Thus, being competent in academics and having sensitivity and responsibility to the society and environments is essential

3. Moral Force

As guardians of the community's stability, students are required to maintain existing morals. If things happen in the surrounding environment that deviate from the existing norms, students must change and realign them according to what is expected.

4. Guardian of Value

Students are guardians of community values whose truth is absolute: honesty,

justice, cooperation, integrity, empathy, and others. Students are required to think scientifically about the values they maintain. In addition, students are also carriers, transmitters, and disseminators of the values themselves (Cahyono 2019: 33)

On the other hand, providing education to the campus environment and its surroundings, both in the real or virtual area, regarding what digital literacy is, how we can see patterns about disseminating information, especially during the Pandemic-19, how we should choose an authoritative source and differentiate between a hoax and valid is essential.

### Conclusion

The rapid development of technology and science today has brought many changes in many sectors, especially accessing and obtaining valid and authoritative information. Students easily get information from many sources using mobile phones. However, the convenience obtained also can increase hoaxes that tend to create uncondusive relations among muslim and other religions. In addition, it can cause radical behaviours and conflict. Therefore, religious understanding based on authoritative sources and digital literacy is essential for Islamic university students as the millennial generation and agents of social control, change, and social empowerment.

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