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Islamic Journalistic Ethics To Reduce Hoax News During The Covid-19 Pandemic

Suf Kasman[1], Nuryani[2]*, Monita Sholeha[3]
1Universitas Islam Negeri Alaudin Makasar, Indonesia
2Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta, Indonesia
3 Universitas Gadjah Mada Yogyakarta, Indonesia
Corresponding author, e-mail: sufkasman@gmail.com1 ; nuryani@uinjkt.ac.id,
sholehamonita@gmail.com

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A B S T R A C T

This research aims to identify Islamic journalistic ethics in reducing the rise of hoax news during the COVID-19 pandemic and to establish standards for news eligibility free from hoaxes. The spread of hoax news has become increasingly widespread, often trending. The 2020 KIC survey revealed that nearly 60% of Indonesians are exposed to hoax news, primarily related to politics, health, and religion. In Indonesia, hoaxes distort facts by presenting convincing yet unverifiable information, exploited by irresponsible parties to instill slander and hatred. Therefore, this research seeks to examine the rise of hoaxes complicating pandemic management and how to counteract them. Data is obtained from Kompas TV. This research employs a qualitative approach with descriptive methods. The study reveals that Kompas TV journalists adhere to Islamic journalistic ethics and the Cyber Media News Guidelines, ensuring their news content is accurate and verified. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Kompas TV journalists strictly verify information. From Kompas TV's perspective, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to an abundance of hoax news that must be prevented as early as possible.

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic journalistic ethics have played various roles in society, particularly in reducing hoax news during the COVID-19 pandemic. The emergence of the COVID-19 outbreak has been recorded in a number of ancient manuscripts, often described as a calamity related to spiritual matters or as a curse for human actions. A century later, in the 21st century, the curse reappeared in the form of the COVID-19 pandemic (SKA, 2021a: 5). Information on the COVID-19 pandemic has recently come "like a flood that is difficult to stem." The vast amount of COVID-19 information scattered in public spaces can cause general confusion. Kompas TV claims that the recent surge in hoaxes has created concern and indecision, highlighting the urgent need to reduce hoax news.

Hoax news during the COVID-19 pandemic is not a journalistic production but is often associated with mass media coverage. Such hoax news is deliberately made to mislead. According to Sugihartati (n.d.: 6), hoaxes require verification to ensure the truth, as they are packaged to appear genuine and are deliberately engineered for deceptive purposes, presenting themselves as credible news. According to Kompas TV, the role of journalists as social institutions is crucial to preventing the spread of hoax news during the COVID-19 pandemic. Journalists must prevent hoaxes and provide accurate information to the public following the Journalistic Code of Ethics rather than contributing to negative stereotypes and spreading hoax news (SKA, 2021b: 4). Journalists should aim to educate the public

as a well-informed and critically thinking public will be less susceptible to hoaxes.

Hendra (2021: 4), quoted in the Saturday, July 24, 2021, edition of the Kompas newspaper, called on media journalism to play a more significant role, not only in providing information but also in educating and empowering the Indonesian people. The campaign to fight hoax news during the COVID-19 pandemic using media journalism is now more critical than ever, as the harmful effects of hoaxes on society have become increasingly clear. Ignoring this issue could destabilize the nation and undermine its unity. According to Wibowo (2018: 1), the flood of hoaxes threatens national unity as they spread like vines without knowing their roots or origin. The authors suspect that hoaxes will continue to persist in Indonesia because they are effectively used by irresponsible parties to undermine various interests, including government performance.

Hoax news during the COVID-19 pandemic can no longer be considered a minor issue. Suppose the spread of slanderous news in media journalism is allowed to continue. In that case, it has the potential to destabilize a country, especially when done massively and continuously (Wahyuddin & Sunuantari, 2017: 82). Journalists must apply Islamic journalistic ethics and provide solutions to reduce hoax news during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, Islamic journalistic ethics require producing accurate, unbiased, and balanced news and avoiding bad-faith reporting. These ethics do not intend to cause harm to others. If there is misleading information, it must be

corrected. Islamic journalistic ethics focus on maintaining peace and setting the record straight in false or misleading information cases.

Weng and Wake (2021) suggest that news media should offer a more culturally and religiously inclusive public service to promote societal understanding. Current and emerging journalists should have a reflexive understanding of religions through journalism studies and humanities, recognizing their historical and ongoing influence on the world. Islamic journalistic ethics play a diverse role in da'wah, education, entertainment, social control, communication, and influence, serving as a medium for da'wah and learning for the community.

According to Sugihartati (n.d.: 6), during the COVID-19 pandemic, various untrue issues or hoaxes spread on social media and WhatsApp groups. The circulation of hoax news has confused and misled the community in responding to the pandemic. Social media facilitates the sharing of hoax news and attracts many users, indirectly contributing to the spread of fake news, which has many negative impacts (Sugihartati, n.d.: 6).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, every news aspect has been closely scrutinized. Despite the confusion and biases in some reporting, information from media outlets such as Kompas TV, Kompas.com, Detik.com, and others remains essential (Hindarto, 2022: 208-227). Therefore, the role of journalism, as exemplified by Kompas TV, is crucial in ensuring accurate reporting. Then, how does Kompas TV apply Islamic journalistic ethics in reducing hoax news during the COVID-19 pandemic? Kompas TV recognizes the false information (hoaxes) circulating in the community, causing unease among many parties. They understand that hoax news is dangerous as it can provoke and divide the nation. The spread of hoaxes in the community needs to be addressed and clarified. This study focuses on how Islamic journalistic ethics are used by Kompas TV to reduce hoax news during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly examining the July 21, 2021, edition of Kompas TV.

Based on the background of the problem above, this research aims to study "How do Islamic journalistic ethics reduce hoax news during the COVID-19 pandemic?" This research aims to understand "Islamic journalistic ethics in reducing hoax news during the COVID-19 pandemic as Islam and media have a strong relationship in delivering accurate information. This close affinity between Islam and media has provoked both secular skepticism and religious criticism, which continue to this day (Moll, 2020).

This research aims to advance the study of journalism, specifically in Islamic journalistic reporting on "Islamic journalistic ethics in reducing hoax news during the COVID-19 pandemic through Kompas TV, July 21, 2021, Edition." This study was conducted to ensure journalists are fully responsible for their profession when seeking and presenting accurate information.

The results of this study are expected to aid future research with similar themes and provide valuable input and evaluation material for media workers, supporting the development and facilitation of da'wah activities, especially regarding "Islamic journalistic ethics in reducing hoax news." This research is not the first to examine Islamic journalistic ethics in reducing hoax news. Several previous studies have addressed this topic. Researchers such as Hafez (2002), Azzi (2011), Pintak & Setiyono (2011)Steele (2013), andM. K. H. Rofie et al. (2016) have explored various aspects of Islamic journalism ethics.

Hafez (2002) compared journalism codes from Europe and the Islamic world to revisit academic assumptions about the gap between Western and Oriental philosophies of journalism. His analysis shows a broad intercultural consensus that standards of truth and objectivity should be the central values of journalism. Azzi (2011) examined ethics and morality as studied by Al Nursi, a

reformist Muslim scholar. Azzi's research presents a normative perspective on journalism ethics based on Islam, arguing that these ethics need further improvement and change. Piecowye (2011) conducted similar research, discussing a case study highlighting the difficulty of negotiating global and local journalism ethics in a predominantly Arab-Muslim region.

Pintak et al. (2011) explored the mission of Indonesian journalism in balancing democracy, development, and Islamic values. Their national survey of 600 Indonesian journalists showed that Islamic influence in newsrooms is increasing. The journalists support the separation of mosque and state and reject militant Islam. Further, Steele (2013) examined journalism, ethics, and Islam in Indonesia and Malaysia, noting that Islam contains strong prohibitions against gossip, slander, and other forms of libel. For those uncomfortable with press freedom excesses, "trial by press," or the idea that the press should not "judge" someone until the facts are proven in court, aligns closely with Islamic law.

Rofie et al. (2016)studied the understanding and application of Islamic work ethics among Muslim journalists in mainstream and alternative media. They found that the level of knowledge about implementing Islamic work ethics among journalists is moderate, as is their level of job satisfaction. If unchecked, poor work practices can cause damage, as work ethics are crucial in Islam for attracting customers and increasing the reliability of information. Research on efforts to reduce hoax news has also been conducted by Okditazeini (2022), who discussed the role of anti-hoax groups in maintaining religious harmony. The study reported that these groups play an essential role as cyber police, helping to maintain religious harmony. Therefore, previous research findings imply that further study on Islamic journalistic ethics in reducing hoax news is still needed. Previous researchers focused on specific aspects of applying these ethics, allowing current researchers to examine their role in reducing hoax news in Indonesia.

Ethics, etymologically, comes from the Greek words "ethos" and "ethikos." Ethos means nature, character, custom, or habit, while ethikos refers to morality, civilization, good behavior, and actions. Ethics has a normative perspective, focusing on humans and their activities. It includes analyzing and applying concepts such as right, wrong, good, bad, and responsibility. Thus, ethics is a science that provides direction, reference, and foundation for human actions, encompassing good and bad behavior, rights, and moral obligations. It is a set of principles or values related to morals and societal norms regarding right and wrong actions or behaviors (Bertens, 2004: 3-4). The role of ethics in reducing hoax news is crucial and must align with the code of ethics. Ethics helps journalists determine how to behave ethically as a reference for their journalistic activities.

Islamic Journalism is derived from two words, "journalism" and "Islamic." Journalism is a vocational art concerned with reporting, involving the process of processing, writing, and disseminating news and opinions through mass media (Indonesia, 2003: 57). It is an art and profession with professional responsibilities that require journalists to observe events with fresh eyes and capture their unique aspects. However, these observations must have a focus and a direction (Ishwara, 2007: 17). The term "Islamic" refers to values derived from Islam that are applied to something. An entity is considered Islamic if it adopts the teachings of Islam (National, 2008: 549). However, not everything labeled "Islamic" necessarily aligns strictly with Islamic teachings (Nasution, 1988: 5).

When journalism is combined with the term Islamic to form "Islamic journalism," it indicates a publication with Islamic nuances, especially in print media, that promotes the mission of Islam and the aspirations of Muslims. Taufik envisions Islamic journalism as a means to transfer

knowledge and foster wisdom by utilizing various media (Taufik, 2012: 15). Hoax news, in English, refers to tricks, deception, false news, fake news, or hearsay. Hoax news contains information that does not correspond to absolute truth (materiële waarheid) (Chazawi & Ferdian, 2016: 236). It is used to denote false news or attempts to deceive or trick readers/listeners into believing something, often spread through social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, blogs, and others.

To some extent, hoaxes can be harmful, leading to fear, violence, and division. The massive spread of hoaxes can destabilize a country. For example, the Arab Spring, with its protests, civil wars, and bloodshed, allegedly resulted from hoaxes spread through social media (Mauludi, 2018: 236).

The COVID-19 pandemic involves a group of viruses that cause disease in animals or humans, specifically attacking the respiratory system. First detected in Wuhan, China, it has since spread worldwide, including to Indonesia, from the end of February 2020. Although COVID-19 primarily concerns health aspects related to etiology, spread, symptoms, signs, and treatment, it is also closely linked to economic and legal aspects. Several types of coronavirus, such as MERS and SARS, are known to cause serious respiratory infections in humans. A new type of coronavirus was found to cause COVID-19 disease (Anies & dkk., 2021: 5).

COVID-19 Pandemic: The Era of Hoax News Abundance

During the COVID-19 pandemic, it is accurate to describe this period as an era of hoax news abundance. According to Sambo & Yusuf (2017: 6), this is characteristic of a period of unstoppable technological progress that follows the trend of human civilization (Sambo & Yusuf, 2017: 15). Moreover, John Keane, quoted by Daulay, highlights the era of communicative abundance, characterized by the vast amount of information available through various mass media, especially television journalism channels (Daulay, 2016: 9).

The flood of information during the COVID-19 pandemic and advances in information technology have created a 'tsunami' of information invading personal spaces. News now flows like a flood (Daulay, 2016: 9). While some COVID-19 news is objective and reasonable, much of it is false (hoaxes), causing noise, abuse, and even threatening national unity.

According to Jean Baudrillard, quoted by Piliang, noted that in the era of virtuality, it is not humans who seek information; rather, information comes to humans (Piliang, 2011: 55). During the COVID-19 pandemic, information arrives swiftly, competing for public attention, even if its accuracy is uncertain. Piliang describes this as an information bomb, with media continuously publishing COVID-19 news, regardless of its usefulness or impact on quality of life (Piliang, 2011: 60-61). In this era of information technology, it is crucial to address COVID-19 pandemic issues properly, especially on social media. With the advancement of information technology, people can easily access information about the COVID-19 pandemic, which is often useless or false (hoaxes). Everyone has the potential to spread hoax news about the COVID-19 pandemic, whether intentionally or unintentionally, planned or unplanned (Idris, 2018: 17).

On the one hand, information about the COVID-19 pandemic can benefit society. Data disclosure can increase public vigilance in dealing with the virus outbreak. Additionally, information on the COVID-19 pandemic can be used to educate the public, emphasizing the importance of adhering to health protocols.

Relationship between Ethics and Islamic Journalism

Ethics and Islamic journalism are inseparable, like two sides of the same coin. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the importance of ethics and Islamic journalism

in a democracy is crucial for shaping the nation's consciousness. The use of social media has greatly increased, making ethical journalism more critical. In journalism, ethics do not dictate choosing one news story or source over another based on moral considerations and mutual agreement. However, journalistic ethics guide journalists in publishing educational information. When aware of the spread of COVID-19, the community can take more effective preventive steps.

Islamic Journalistic Principles Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic

From research on the duties of Muslim journalists, the Committee of Concerned Journalists, summarized by Asti Musman from Ishwara (2011: 3), outlines the following principles:

a. Journalism's First Obligation is Truth

Journalists should convey the truth so that people can get the information they need to be well-informed. The journalist profession is classified as People at Risk (ODR) because journalists are very vulnerable to contracting the virus when carrying out the noble task of obtaining factual and valid data about COVID-19. It is essential to deliver fair and reliable reports that are valid now and can be used for further investigation. Journalists should be as transparent as possible about their sources and methods so the audience can assess the information presented. According to Albertus Prestiana, as reported by Kompas on Saturday, July 31, 2021, journalists are still the primary source for the public to obtain information on the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the challenges, satisfaction, and trust in mainstream media journalists remain high because the public expects information that provides solutions, is more in-depth, and continues to grow (Prestiana, 2021: 5).

b. Journalism's First Loyalty is to the People

Journalists must maintain loyalty to citizens and the broader public interest if they are to provide news without fear or favor. However, they face challenges and high risks of exposure to COVID-19 due to their constant gathering of information among crowds.

c. The Heart of Journalism is the Discipline to Verify

Journalists must strictly verify information to prevent the spread of hoaxes. While the concept of objectivity is well-established, it does not mean journalists are free from bias. Seeking out witnesses, uncovering multiple sources, and soliciting various comments uphold professional standards.

d. Journalists Must Have Freedom from the Sources They Cover

Freedom of spirit and thought—not neutrality—is a principle that journalists must maintain. While editorialists and commentators are not neutral, their credibility depends on accuracy, intellectual honesty, and the ability to gather data amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

e. Journalists Should Serve as Free Monitors of Power

This role emphasizes the watchdog function of journalism. Journalists are at the forefront of reporting information, such as the progress of government vaccination phases. They must navigate information often covered by the government or conflicting data between institutions, making their research skills crucial.

f. Journalism Should Provide a Forum for Public Criticism and Commentary

Facts, not prejudice or conjecture, should inform public discussions. Journalists must facilitate forums for public criticism and commentary, especially for those who have experienced discriminatory treatment related to COVID-19, such as patients under surveillance (PDP) and people under observation (ODP).

g. Journalism Should Strive to Make the Important, Interesting and Relevant

Journalism is storytelling with a purpose. It must balance what readers know they want with what they need. Journalism should make important, exciting, relevant, engaging, and enlightening audiences.

h. Journalists Must Keep News Proportional and Comprehensive

Journalism creates a map for citizens to determine life's direction. Keeping fast and accurate news about COVID-19 in proportion, without omitting essential details, is crucial. Inflating COVID-19 events for sensationalism, ignoring other perspectives, or being unbalanced will make the information unreliable.

i. Journalists Have a Primary Obligation to Their Conscience

Journalism must strive to make the important relevant and engaging. It goes beyond mere audience engagement to provide essential information balanced with unexpected yet necessary insights. Its value lies in how it engages and enlightens audiences. Keeping COVID-19 news proportional and comprehensive is akin to mapping life's direction. It entails reporting fast and accurate developments without sensationalism, stereotyping, or imbalance, ensuring the integrity of the information conveyed. Every journalist has a primary obligation to their conscience—a moral compass guiding ethical responsibilities. They must uphold fairness and accuracy, even if it means challenging colleagues or superiors in the newsroom and beyond (Musman & Mulyadi, 2021: 36).

Types of Hoax Information

It is undeniable that with the advancement in technology, the public's sources of information have shifted significantly. Previously, people relied on media such as newspapers and television, but now, access to information is diverse and includes various media platforms (Hidayat et al., 2022: 272-286). This shift has facilitated the easier spread of fake news.

There are at least four types of hoaxes circulating in communities regarding information on the COVID-19 pandemic through social media. First, myths or historical tales that may be false but are considered authentic due to longstanding circulation. Second, glorification and demonization, where something is exaggerated positively or negatively. Third, fake news (hoaxes) that fabricate or distort facts. Fourth, misleading information distorts facts from appearing true. Experts sometimes refer to this in communication as "spin doctoring" (Mauludi, 2018: 23).

According to Rahadi (Rahadi, 2017: 26), hoax information can be categorized into seven types. The first is fake news, intended to replace genuine information by introducing falsehoods or conspiracy theories. Second is Clickbait, which Uses sensational headlines or images to attract readers to a different content destination. The third is Confirmation bias, which Interprets recent events to confirm existing beliefs. Fourth is Misinformation, which is False or inaccurate information, often intended to deceive. Fifth is Satire, which Uses humor and exaggeration to comment on current events. The sixth is post-truth, emphasizing emotional appeal over factual accuracy to influence public opinion. Moreover the last is Propaganda, which Uses true or false information to sway public perception.

Responding to COVID-19 Hoax News in Public Spaces

The public's need for credible information on the Corona pandemic is paramount. However, information loses meaning when it becomes a fabrication to obscure the truth (hoax). Over the past two years, hoaxes surrounding COVID-19 have become a significant topic in journalistic and social media circles. Addressing COVID-19 hoax news in public entails blocking misinformation and equipping Indonesian citizens to discern truth from falsehood.

The prevalence of hoaxes, particularly provocative news, deeply concerns citizens. According to the book "Against Hoaxes in Social Media & Mass Media," edited by Aep Wahyuddin and Manik Sunuantari, hoaxes are not new to Muslims; historical instances of false news occurred during the time of Prophet Muhammad Saw, and the Qur'an explicitly

acknowledges their existence (Wahyuddin & Sunuantari, 2017: 138-139). Fake news (hoaxes) can slander and harm individuals or groups involved in the fabricated stories.

Hoax news is not accidental but deliberately crafted with specific intentions, often violating societal norms. Hoax managers aim to make their content viral, increasing site traffic and potentially boosting advertising revenue. In this digital era, hoaxes have peaked, undermining intellectual discourse and common sense (Wahyuddin & Sunuantari, 2017: 158). Therefore, journalists must combat hoaxes by adhering to ethical standards and delivering accurate information to the public. Clarifying information (tabayyun) is crucial in addressing COVID-19 hoax news in the public sphere and preventing the spread of fake news.

Allah SWT reminds Muslims not to hastily confirm news from anyone in this era, especially from those with malicious intent. The Quran teaches believers to be critical, intelligent, selective, and thorough in receiving information or news (QS al-Hujarat: 6).

The professionalism of Islamic Journalists in Facing Hoaxes amid COVID-19 Pandemic

The professionalism of Islamic journalists in confronting hoaxes amid the COVID-19 pandemic is crucial due to the press's importance in providing the public with accurate pandemic-related information. Journalists are as vital as healthcare professionals in this regard. According to Bernard C. Cohen in "Advanced Newsgathering" by Bryce T. McIntyre, journalistic roles include being informers (McIntyre, 1991: 8). Islamic journalists must act as the eyes and ears of the public, reporting on pandemic trends that go beyond public knowledge with impartiality and without bias.

Borrowing Abrar's term, media journalism must be able to observe the root causes of events like the emergence of the COVID-19 virus. It should also serve as a platform for fostering consensus, promoting prevailing values, and offering proportionate entertainment (Abrar, 1997: 6).

In delivering accurate information on the COVID-19 pandemic, Islamic journalism adheres to the principles of journalism ethics. These principles guide Muslim journalists in their work. Without following these guidelines, media outlets and journalists may produce news and articles catering to personal preferences. During the COVID-19 pandemic, all hoax news was embellished to capture public interest. Nasution argues that failure to adhere to ethical standards risks audiences perceiving the media as a receptacle for everything, ultimately leading to its abandonment (Nasution, 2017: 4).

In addition, the core of Islamic journalistic ethics centers on earning, maintaining, and nurturing public trust in media journalism and its practitioners. Leading journalists and professional media organizations underscore this commitment, reflected in their codes of ethics and operational guidelines.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic presents significant challenges for journalists in executing their duties. Unexpected issues often arise in the field, necessitating journalists to adapt quickly to meet tight deadlines. This challenge is particularly pertinent in Islamic journalism, given the prevalence of hoax news in such crises.

Islamic Journalistic Strategies Against the Spread of Hoax News

During the declaration of the Anti-Hoax Society in Jakarta, Septiaji Eko Nugroho, Chairman of the Indonesian Society Against Hoax, outlined five journalistic strategies in "Fighting Hoaxes in Social Media & Mass Media," edited by Wahyuddin & Sunuantari (2017: 55-57), that can aid in combating the spread of hoax news and distinguishing genuine news. Here is an overview:

Beware of Provocative Titles

Hoax news often employs sensational and provocative titles, sometimes targeting specific parties. Content may be derived from official media reports but altered to fit the hoax maker's narrative. Therefore, readers should seek similar reports from official online sources and compare contents to derive a more balanced conclusion when encountering pandemic-related news with provocative titles.

Check the Site Address

Verify the URL address of websites providing information, especially those including links. Information from unverified sites, such as blog domain ones, may be questionable. In Indonesia, out of approximately 43,000 websites claiming to be news portals, fewer than 300 are verified as official news sources, highlighting the potential for tens of thousands of sites to spread hoax news online.

Fact-Checking

Verify the source of COVID-19 pandemic news. Is it from official institutions like the KPK or the National Police? Exercise caution with news from mass organization activists, political figures, or observers. A balanced view requires multiple sources. Distinguish between factual reporting, supported by evidence and testimony, and opinions, which are subjective perspectives of the news writer.

Check Photo Authenticity

In the digital age, text, photos, and videos related to the COVID-19 pandemic can be manipulated. Hoax creators may edit photos to manipulate public perception. Use tools like Google Images to verify the authenticity of COVID-19 photos by conducting reverse image searches. This method compares images found online to verify their accuracy. According to Hidayat et al. (2022: 272-286), online media companies in Indonesia frequently conduct fact-checking activities to validate news—fact-checkers employed by organizations certified by The International Fact-checking Network (IFCN) such as Tirto.ID, Liputan6.com, Kompas.com, Tempo.co, and Mafindo (turnbackhoax.id) are crucial.

Participate in Anti-Hoax Discussion Group

Join anti-hoax fan pages and discussion groups on platforms like Facebook, such as Forum Anti Fitnah, Hasut, and Hoax (FAFHH), Indonesian Hoaks Buster, and others. These groups function as crowdsourcing platforms where members collaborate to verify information and clarify misinformation.

METHODOLOGY

The data guiding Islamic journalistic ethics in combating hoax news during the COVID-19 pandemic were sourced from Kompas TV, particularly from the program "Hoaxes are Rampant, Complicating the Handling of the COVID-19 Pandemic," aired on July 21, 2021. This qualitative study employed descriptive methods to analyze journalistic ethics, emphasizing their application during the pandemic. Findings were presented using formal and informal methods, aligning with the research's basis on Kompas TV as a reliable data source (Hafni et al., 2023: 192-207)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates the necessity of media journalism in news reporting. For media professionals, the scope of the COVID-19 pandemic is akin to an oasis that never dries up in the desert. It plays a crucial role in news production due to its significant news value and immense psychological impact on the audience. Wibowo (2018: 1-2) argues that reputable media journalists are responsible for avoiding spreading hoaxes and hate speech through their reporting.

Sultan noted a tendency where reporting is influenced by the informant's identity and underlying interests. This aspect can also indicate whether a news story is genuine or a hoax. In the July 21, 2021 edition of Kompas TV, three experts—

Rustika Herlambang (Director of Communications at Indonesia Indicator), Septiaji Eko Nugroho (Chairman of the Presidium of the Indonesian Anti Slander Society/Mafindo), and Donny Budi Utoyo (Expert in Digital Literacy and Internet Governance at the Ministry of Communication and Information)—participated in an interactive dialogue hosted by Bayu Sutiyono.

The interactive dialogue, lasting 16:47 minutes, garnered positive responses with 4,180 views on social media. During this discussion, the term "hoax" was mentioned a total of 31 times: Rustika Herlambang mentioned it nine times, Septiaji Eko Nugroho four times, Donny Budi Utoyo 4 times, and Bayu Sutiyono 14 times. Sutiyono's incisive questions and direct language prompted the experts to expose the various facets of COVID-19 news stigmas in Indonesia, highlighting hoaxes as a significant obstacle to overcoming the pandemic. The impact of hoax COVID-19 content ranges from causing unrest and fear in communities to gaining national attention through widespread media coverage.

Figure 1
Interviewees' Perception of the Dangers of Spreading Hoaxes
(Kompas TV July 21, 2021)

Source: author procession

Based on observations of the rise of hoaxes and their exacerbation of the spread of COVID-19 on Kompas TV's July 21, 2021 edition, the researcher identified a distinct framing direction in five news articles. According to the findings, the coverage on

Kompas TV characterized the COVID-19 situation using terms like precarious, problematic, terrible, worse, declining, and full of restrictions to depict the severity of the pandemic. This aligns with Prihatiningsih's statement in the July 27, 2021, edition of Kompas, noting, "With the COVID-19 pandemic worsening, it is logical for the government to impose emergency restrictions on community activities" (Prihatiningsih, 2021: 6).

All three speakers emphasized the criminal nature of creating, disseminating, and forwarding hoaxes to the public. They called on digital platforms to actively collaborate in combating fake news (hoaxes). From 01:17 to 06:25, Rustika Herlambang highlighted the pervasive and significant presence of hoaxes in Indonesia, exacerbated by societal tendencies in the digital age where personal beliefs often overshadow objective facts in shaping public opinion. Herlambang stressed the urgent need for organic countermeasures, clarification, and socialization efforts to address this issue effectively.

Figure 2
Hoax Triggers COVID-19 Contra

Source: author procession

The coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic on Kompas TV's July 21, 2021 edition highlighted the pervasive issue of hoax news, particularly concerning sensitive topics such as vaccine halal status, hospital misinformation, and religious matters, which according to Herlambang reached their peak during the pandemic. Septiaji Eko Nugroho, from 07:51 to 16:47, urged the public to use

designated websites and provided contact information like the WhatsApp number 085921600600 to verify news authenticity collaboratively with 24 online media outlets. Meanwhile, Donny Budi Utoyo emphasized caution against believing hoax news from 13:14 to 15:57.

Islamic Journalistic Ethics to Reduce Hoax News during the COVID-19 Pandemic

During the COVID-19 pandemic, amidst an overwhelming "information flood," journalists must prioritize professionalism and Islamic journalistic ethics to combat hoax news effectively. Credibility, as emphasized by Ishwara (2011: 39), demands precise reporting and adherence to truth-telling, a sentiment echoed by Kasman (2010: 350), underscoring the importance of accurate news for maintaining public trust. Upholding moral principles such as "tell the truth even if it is bitter" is essential for journalists to preserve the integrity of their profession.

Media workers must adhere to Islamic journalistic ethics to reduce hoax news during the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to increase traffic, the media often ignore the code of ethics, which is very sacred and has been maintained for decades by the press community (Sambo & Yusuf, 2017: 102). This journalist competency standard is also part of the journalist's work reference to improve quality and professionalism and avoid misusing journalistic products. So far, the profession has been hijacked by stowaways, causing a bad image of the press (Kasman, 2010: 119).

Therefore, the steps of Islamic journalistic ethics to reduce hoax news during the COVID-19 pandemic involve thorough verification and checking the truth from multiple sources. "Tabayyun," linguistically meaning to seek clarity until the issue is clear, requires journalists to carefully examine and select news, exercising caution in legal and policy matters until clarity is achieved. Human interactions must be grounded in honesty and integrity, ensuring that news is filtered and only reliable information is disseminated. The Qur'an states:

> "O you who believe, when a wicked man comes to you with news, examine it carefully so that you do not inflict a calamity on a people without knowing the circumstances, causing you to regret what you have done" (QS al-Hujarat: 6).

The Quranic guidance in Surah Al-Hujurat (49: 6) advises believers to scrutinize news from potentially malicious sources to avoid causing harm unknowingly. This caution extends to news sources hostile to Islamic values aimed at sowing division within the ummah. Allah's reminder in Surah Qaf (50: 18) underscores the importance of verifying news before accepting or spreading it, lest falsehoods spread unchecked. The Qur'an states:

> "O you who believe, when a wicked man comes to you with news, examine it carefully so that you do not inflict a calamity on a people without knowing the circumstances, causing you to regret what you have done." (QS al-Hujarat: 6).

Here, it is imperative to be vigilant against hoax news originating from individuals with malicious intentions who persist in sinful behavior and disregard Islamic values and principles. What if such misinformation stems from media outlets known for their hostility towards Islam, aiming to sow seeds of discord among the ummah?.

Additionally, Allah reminds us not to propagate news without clear sources. As the Quran states (QS Qaf, 50: 18), "Not a word does he utter, but there is a watcher by him ready to record it." When encountering doubtful news, demand proof from its source. Accept it if substantiated; reject it if the bearer fails to provide evidence, for spreading falsehoods (hoaxes) unjustly harms credibility and trust.

This is how the Qur'an imparts wisdom to its people. Sadly, many Muslims do not consistently adhere to these teachings. Consequently, if a hypocrite spreads hoax news, it swiftly permeates the community, spreading widely without verification. Allah addresses this in Surah An-Nur (24: 15), cautioning about receiving dubious news.

In the digital age, hoax news has proliferated to unprecedented levels. These fabrications, often disseminated through social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp, are crafted to defame specific individuals or groups. Such hoaxes undermine the integrity of intellectuals and academics, severely impairing our collective rationality.

CONCLUSION

The phenomenon of hoaxes in Indonesia distorts facts by disseminating convincing yet unverifiable information. Irresponsible parties exploit this to sow slander and foster hatred. The prevalence of COVID-19 hoax news confuses the public, highlighting the critical need for verification to uphold the truth.

Hoax news during the pandemic is no longer a manageable issue if media journalism continues to propagate slanderous content that could potentially destabilize a country. This problem persists on a massive scale and requires continuous vigilance. Despite facing high risks, including exposure to COVID-19, journalists play a crucial role in gathering accurate information amid public interactions. Upholding Islamic journalistic ethics is essential in combating hoax news during these challenging times. It mandates promptly correcting misleading information and ensuring peace by rectifying false narratives.

CREDIT AUTHORSHIP CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Suf Kasman is the first author to come up with the idea for this research, prepare the introduction, prepare the data, develop the methodology, and carry out the analysis. **Nuryani** is the corresponding author and the second author who helped analyze and prepare the theory, review the literature, and correspond with journals. **Monita Sholeha,** the third author, refined the data interpretation, perfected the writing, and wrote conclusions.

DECLARATION ON CONFLICT OF INTEREST

We certify that there is no conflict of interest with any financial, personal, or other relationships with other people or organizations related to the material discussed in the manuscript.

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