

Navigating Information Disruption: A Study of Students Social Construction in the Social Media Landscape

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ABSTRACT: This research aims to find out how to navigate information interference in the study of social construction of students in the Social Media landscape, to achieve a better understanding in avoiding information interference. The theory used as an analysis knife in this research is the social construction theory of Peter L Berger and Thomas Luckman. The method used in this research is a qualitative method with snowball technique. Data were collected through field observation, in-depth interviews and documentation. The subjects of this research are 15 students in Bengkulu City who were selected using snowball technique. The results showed that there are three dialectics, namely the process of externalization, internalization, and objectivation in navigating communication disorders in the study of student social construction in the social media landscape. It was found that the direction of navigation emphasizes the complexity, dynamics, and active nature of the interaction of students in Bengkulu City with information disruption on social media describing a process that involves understanding, adaptation, and continuous decision-making in the face of complex and often misleading information flows. The results of this study show that Bengkulu students' social construction of information disorder is fluid and influenced by local contexts, social interactions and personal experiences. This understanding is helpful in building more contextualized and efficient digital literacy strategies.

KEYWORDS: Information Disruption, Hoax, Social Construction, Misinformation, Disinformation.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In today's digital era, the development of information and communication technology has changed the way people obtain and share information. Social media, one of the products of the digital revolution, has become the main source of information for many people, especially the younger generation. However, this rapid development also brings new challenges, one of which is the phenomenon of information destruction, including misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation. (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). The phenomenon of information disruption not only impacts people's perceptions, but also has a significant impact on all aspects of social and political life. For example, in Indonesia, information disruption has proven to have an impact on the democratic process, as seen in the 2024 elections. (Syafia et al., 2024). Bengkulu, as an integral part of Indonesia's political landscape, cannot be separated from these dynamics. Bengkulu's unique characteristics, with its relatively small but diverse population, create an interesting context for studying information disruption. The province has around 2 million inhabitants, with a mix of urban and rural communities that can influence patterns of information consumption and dissemination (BPS Bengkulu Province, 2021). Factors such as education levels, internet access and ethnic diversity in Bengkulu can provide valuable insights into how information disruption develops and is explained in the local context.

Indonesia, which has the fourth largest number of Internet users in the world, is not immune to this problem. With 202.6 million Internet users in Indonesia by 2023, 167.8 million of whom are active on social media, Indonesia faces significant risks related to information dissemination disruption. (Yahya, 2019). This situation is further exacerbated by Indonesia's ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity, which can accelerate the spread of misleading information (Aswir & Misbah, 2019). (Aswir & Misbah, 2018). In the local context, Bengkulu City faces similar challenges. While there is no specific data on information gangs in Bengkulu City, recent research suggests that areas outside of Java Island are also vulnerable to the spread of inaccurate information, especially through social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook (Hanna et al., 2011). (Hanna et al., 2011). Students in the city are in a unique position. Not only are they active consumers of digital information, but they are also potential opinion leaders in their communities. Recent research shows that

students from outside Java often play a dual role as "digital bridges" between the online and offline worlds in their communities. (G. N. Society, 2016) The social constructionist approach in this study is all the more important given the complexity of the interaction between local and global factors in shaping understandings of information disruption. The theory originated from the work of Berger and Luckman and has been further developed by contemporary scholars such as (Couldry and Hepp, 2017), who emphasize the importance of "communicative images" in the digital age.

This concept can help explain how university students in Bengkulu City are shaped and influenced by their social media networks. In addition, this research is relevant to national efforts to improve digital literacy. Various digital literacy programs have been launched by the Indonesian Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, but it is still unknown how effective they are at the local level, especially in areas such as Bengkulu City (Kominfo, 2021). Understanding university students' social constructions of information disruption can help develop better digital literacy strategies at the local level. Students as a group who are very active on social media and play an important role in society are an interesting subject to research. Previous research shows that students tend to be more exposed to information disruption but also have great potential to be agents of change to fight the phenomenon. The social constructionist approach in this study is based on the understanding that social reality, including perceptions of information disruption, is formed through social interaction and collective interpretation (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). By understanding how Bengkulu students construct their understanding of information clutter, we can gain insight into how they navigate the complex social media environment.

The study can also aid the wider debate on how higher education helps students prepare for the challenges of the digital age. This research can provide valuable input for the development of curricula and educational programs that are more suited to today's media world by focusing on how students navigate the complex information landscape. Finally, this research offers an important case study of how information disorder emerges and is responded to at the local level in a global context where information disorder is increasingly perceived as a threat to social cohesion and political stability (UNESCO, 2022). This can help us understand information disruption as a phenomenon that has a cultural and social context. This research aims to fill the literature gap on information disruption at the local level, particularly in Bengkulu. The results of this study are expected to make a theoretical contribution to understanding the social construction of information disorder and provide practical implications for developing effective digital literacy strategies at the local level.

Bengkulu City students are fairly active in using social media platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp, X and TikTok to communicate and find information. In the era of technology, almost everyone has a device. So there are many students who utilize technology by becoming content creators and sharing information through social media. They also often participate in online discussions about local and national issues. Students also have several roles, one of which is as agents of change so students are also often a source of information for their families and communities, especially for families who live in areas with limited internet access. They are also involved in various online groups related to hobbies, habits or interests in accordance with personal interests and academic interests. Students are also often targeted for spreading false information. Some students actively combat disinformation, misinformation and malinformation by relying on their knowledge in filtering any information on social media by fact-checking. Students who already have the knowledge also spread the knowledge to their friends. There are differences in students' awareness of the terms misinformation, disinformation and malinformation.

From the research, it was found that all students know what "fake news" is, but it was also found that there are still students who do not understand what information disruption is.

Compared to conventional news sources, students tend to trust information from friends and influencers they follow more. While there is skepticism towards official information provided by the government, there is also a tendency to trust information that matches their own personal beliefs. Students' varying levels of vigilance towards the manipulation of online information means that some students may underestimate the potential impact of information tampering on the wider community and themselves. Most informants said it was difficult to distinguish true or false information on social media. They cited the number of hoaxes circulating on social media during the 2024 presidential election, which made them confused about trusting the information they received. At that time, a lot of negative news circulated from each political camp, causing information to spread widely on social media. (Nurrahmi & Syam, 2020). This research gap shows that the proposed research is crucial as it can provide important information about the dynamics of information disruption at the local level and how university students improve their understanding of this issue.

II. METHODOLOGY

The paradigm in this study uses the social definition paradigm. This paradigm is a method used to study the issues studied, the rules that must be followed in interpreting the information collected in order to answer the issues studied. The social paradigm is one of the aspects put forward by Anthony Giddens, that the

central case of social science is "social practice" Giddens said that there could be no dictatorship without the authoritarian actions of one or several dictators. The sampling technique used in this research is to use the snow ball technique, which is a way to find, select, and take samples in a network or chain of continuous relationships. According to another opinion, the snow ball sampling technique, also known as snowballing, is a sampling technique in which samples are collected through a rolling process from one participant to another. The sociogram image consists of circles that are connected or linked, and each circle shows the relationship between participants or cases. (Nurdiani, n.d.). Data collection techniques used in this study by means of observation, interviews and documentation. The research subjects in this study were 15 students in Bengkulu City who were selected using the snowball technique. The theory used in this research is the social construction theory of Peter L Berger and Thomas Luckmann where this theory is an analytical knife in answering the problem formulation of how to Navigate Information Disruption: A Social Construction Study of Students in Bengkulu's Social Media Landscape". The theory is explained by three dialectics, namely externalization, internalization and objectivation.

III. DISCUSSION

The proliferation of modern social technologies has resulted in a new phenomenon: global data pollution. While it is difficult to measure direct and indirect impacts, the impact of disinformation campaigns is most significant in the long term. An interdisciplinary research and policy-making framework is built through efforts to study information disruption, related problems and methods to address information pollution. In the research that has been conducted through the externalization process, which is the process in which individuals express themselves into the social world and contribute to social reality through actions and interactions. Students in Bengkulu City actively create and share content on social media as a way to express themselves and interact with people around them. From the research results, all students share information on social media at least once every day, and some students share content related to social and political issues. Students who already have knowledge from their internalization process use social media to create information containing knowledge in the form of memes, short video content, or articles that show what they know about fake news or misinformation.

In addition, students take part in online discussions that discuss the credibility of information sources and how to distinguish misleading information. However, there are also students who externalize the results of their internalization by still believing some fake news, not trying to check the actual facts, this is due to the lack of understanding received about digital literacy. This shows that the knowledge obtained by students varies depending on the social environment factors of family and friends, scientific meetings obtained by students, and social media owned by students. In the externalization process, the product becomes an objective reality that is jointly recognized by society and separated from its creator, known as objectivation. In this study, students in Bengkulu City often use terms such as "hoax", "fake news", or are divided into 3 types according to the Council of Europe (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2014). (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017) Disinformation, can use misinformation and malinformation technologies. Students can use certain methods to respond to information disruption, such as checking news sources or using truth checking sites. Social media platforms and their features, such as "share" and "report" buttons, have become an objective reality in interactions with online information. Students' social media lives are not free from information interference, with 85% of responding students admitting to having received information that turned out to be false or fake. According to Lim (Eriyanto, 2018), terms such as "hoax" and "fake news" are now part of everyday vocabulary. This shows that the concept of information disruption can be seen objectively.

In the internalization process, which is when a person absorbs objective reality that has been reshaped and becomes part of the student's subjective consciousness through personal experience and social interaction, students gain a subjective understanding of misinformation. Some students said that their understanding of misinformation was mainly shaped by discussions with peers rather than formal education or mainstream media. (Karman, 2015). Based on their experiences and objective standards, students in Bengkulu City acquire a personal understanding of misinformation. They form their views and beliefs about the credibility of various sources of information, which impact the way they interact with information found on the internet. Students use specific ways to consume and share information, demonstrating their knowledge of the risks and responsibilities associated with information disruption. As a result of internalizing digital literacy standards, they may become "critical media users" or "anti-hoax warriors". Although some students still ignore the knowledge they have gained and still believe and share information that is not necessarily true.

Based on students' experiences, students categorized information disruption into various categories. "Political hoaxes", "health misinformation", and "clickbait" were the three main categories that emerged. These three news themes are recognized by students as the ones they find most often on social media. Disinformation, misinformation and malinformation are mostly circulating in the news on social media, criticism of the government is indeed a hot and interesting issue so that if students do not have the knowledge, they will become

victims of the hoax itself. This categorization is in accordance with the experiences of students and the socio-political and health context. (Son & Rashid, 2021). Students develop methods to cope with information disruption, which is a representation of their social construction. Some students rely on trusted friends for verification, students also use truth-checking sites, and compare with main news sources. According to (Prakoso, 2023), this approach combines official sources and trust in social networks. The local context in Bengkulu City affects students' social construction of information disruption. Students who responded said that local issues are more prone to misinformation than national issues. This suggests concerns about the lack of reliable sources of information on local issues.

The results of this study show that Bengkulu students' social construction of information disorder is fluid and influenced by local context, social interaction and personal experience. This understanding is helpful in building a more contextual and efficient digital literacy strategy. The processes of externalization, objectivation and internalization take place simultaneously and continuously, forming a dialectical cycle in the social construction of reality. In the context of social media disruption, these processes explain how Bengkulu students are not only influenced by, but also actively shape the collective understanding of this phenomenon. Results and discussion may be presented separately, or in one combined section, and may optionally be divided into headed subsections. The results show that the social construction of information disorders among students in Bengkulu is very dynamic and complex. We see a continuous relationship between the processes of internalization, objectivation, and externalization, according to the ideas of (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). It is very clear that externalization is shown by the level of involvement of students in sharing information and creating content related to information disorders. This is in line with the idea of (T. I. Society, 1998) of a "culture of participation" that exists in the digital age, where social media users are not only consumers but also active content producers.

The common use of terms such as "hoax" and "fake news", as well as the standardization of news source checking procedures, are demonstrated by the objectivation process. This shows how ideas and practices related to information disruption have become universally accepted realities, in accordance with the concept of "social reality" developed by Berger and Luckmann. Major changes in the way students process online information are shown by internalization, as well as the formation of an identity as a "critical media user". This shows how the factual reality of information disruption is reabsorbed into students' subjective consciousness and influences their behavior and understanding. The fact that students in Bengkulu City feel vulnerable to information disruption suggests that local context is crucial to social construction. This is in line with the idea of (Anthony Giddens, n.d.) of "glocalization", which means that global phenomena, such as information disruption, are interpreted and responded to locally. The inability to gain access to reliable local sources of information indicates an "information gap" at the local level. The methods used to construct and deal with information disruptions can be affected by this. This confirms the idea of (Wodak, 2022) of "local media ecologies" that the study of information disruption should consider local information dynamics.

The finding that students used more than one method to verify the data indicates an increase in digital literacy. This is in line with the idea of "multiliteracies" proposed by the New London Group in 1996, which emphasizes how important it is to have a variety of skills to access the digital media landscape. Showing how important social networks are in the verification process, college students prefer to verify information by talking to friends rather than using online fact checkers. This confirms (Boyd's, 2014) argument on how "connected publics" contribute to shaping adolescents' and young adults' digital understandings and practices. According to (Castells, 2013), the "legitimacy crisis" of conventional institutions in the digital age is indicated by a decrease in trust in mainstream media and government. On the other hand, an increase in trust in local activists and student groups (seventy percent) indicates a shift towards a "logic of connectivity", where interpersonal networks are becoming increasingly important sources of information and action. The results of this study have significant consequences for media policies and digital literacy programs being developed.

Given the critical role of the Bengkulu context in shaping students' understanding and reactions to information disruption, an approach that is contextualized and responsive to local realities is essential. Moreover, the fact that students actively participate in shaping the digital information landscape suggests that digital literacy strategies require a more participatory approach. This is in line with the statement (Foundation & Media, n.d.) on the importance of a "culture of participation" in media education. This study shows how complex the social construction process of information disruption is among students in Bengkulu City. The results show that students not only passively receive information, but also actively participate in understanding, responding to and shaping their understanding of information disruption. This process is particularly important for Bengkulu society, which shows how important it is to use a localized approach to investigate and address the issue of information disruption.

IV. FINDINGS

1. Social construction owned by students towards social media: Students use social media as a tool to interact and maintain friendships, as well as to express themselves and construct their identities. There are differences between students who use social media actively and students who use it passively.
2. Navigation Methods for Information Distraction: College students' understanding of information quality and the risk of information distraction influenced their navigation strategies for navigating information distraction on social media, such as limiting use, selecting content viewed, and improving digital literacy. College students who are more aware of the risks of information distraction tend to use social media more actively.
3. Implications of Navigation Strategies and Social Construction: College students' social construction of social media influences how they navigate information distraction. Using effective navigation strategies can help college students manage their social media use and reduce the negative effects of information distraction. Understanding the social construction and navigation strategies of college students can help related parties (such as educational institutions) in making appropriate solutions to improve students' digital literacy.

V. CONCLUSION

The complex dynamics in Bengkulu students' social construction of the phenomenon of information disruption on social media is demonstrated in this study. The research reached some important conclusions, among others:

- Active role of students: Bengkulu students are not just passive consumers of information; they actively participate in the development and dissemination of knowledge about information disorders. The high level of participation in content creation and information sharing related to digital literacy shows that they are aware of and engaged in this issue.
- Evolution of Understanding: Students' social construction of information disorder is constantly changing. A continuous process of learning and adaptation is evident in the major changes in the way they process and respond to data online.
- Diverse Navigation Strategies: Students have created a variety of ways to cope with the complicated information landscape. The use of various verification methods demonstrates an awareness of the complexity of this issue and an active effort to build information resilience.
- Implications for Digital Literacy: The results emphasize that a contextual and responsive approach to digital literacy is essential. Digital literacy programs should consider variations in students' understanding and evolving practices.

Overall, this study emphasizes the complex and changing social construction of information disorder among Bengkulu university students. To create effective policies and interventions, an in-depth understanding of how university students understand and respond to these information disorders is required. The study also highlights the importance of local contexts in shaping perceptions and practices related to information disruption, and emphasizes the importance of localized methods to improve community digital resilience.

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