

Critical Information Literacy in the Post-Truth Era: A Strategy for Facing Information Flow in Indonesia

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Abstract: *Information literacy in this post-truth era is an important thing that must be understood by the Indonesian society in dealing with the truth and lies of the information obtained. This paper examines through a literature approach about the conception of information literacy in the post-truth era and what strategies must be understood by the information community in Indonesia in dealing with the spread of fake news from various media. This study concludes that critical thinking is an important part of information literacy that must be understood by Indonesian people to face the dynamics of information in the post-truth era. Critical information literacy can help our ability to search, find and use quality information. Thus, the strategy that must be carried out in dealing with the dissemination of information in the post-truth era is to identify the source, check the author, read the entire contents, check the novelty of the writing, check the balance of the information, the authenticity of the information, and always ask the experts when checking the web source.*

Keywords: *Critical information literacy, information literacy, post-truth; Indonesia.*

Abstrak: *Literasi informasi di era post-truth ini merupakan hal penting yang harus dipahami oleh masyarakat Indonesia dalam menyikapi kebenaran dan kebohongan dari informasi yang diperoleh. Tulisan ini mengkaji melalui pendekatan literatur tentang konsepsi literasi informasi di era post-truth dan strategi apa yang harus dipahami oleh komunitas informasi di Indonesia dalam menghadapi penyebaran berita bohong dari berbagai media. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa berpikir kritis merupakan bagian penting dari literasi informasi yang harus dipahami oleh masyarakat Indonesia untuk menghadapi dinamika informasi di era post-truth. Literasi informasi kritis dapat membantu kemampuan kita untuk mencari, menemukan, dan menggunakan informasi yang berkualitas. Dengan demikian, strategi yang harus dilakukan dalam menghadapi penyebaran informasi di era post-truth adalah mengidentifikasi sumber, memeriksa penulis, membaca seluruh isi, memeriksa kebaruan tulisan, memeriksa keseimbangan informasi, keaslian informasi, dan selalu tanyakan pada ahlinya saat memeriksa sumber web.*

Kata Kunci: *Literasi informasi kritis, literasi informasi, post-truth, Indonesia.*

A. Introduction

The development of information and technology media used by the public and information providers today has changed the behavior and habits of users. This change is not only in terms of the use of the media, but also from the aspect of people's attitudes in receiving and sharing information with others. Dissemination of various forms of information through print and online media is very easy for individuals and the community to do. Currently, information is no longer written by journalists and writers from the media where they work, but ordinary citizens can also write and share their writings through the internet and other popular messaging applications.¹ This reality has affected the quality and accuracy of the information disseminated, as a result the objectivity of the information is often questioned. This phenomenon has emerged since 2016's with a term called the post-truth era.

Information based on actual facts and created facts have always been controversial issues since the post-truth era. In reality, there is a lot of information currently obtained from hoax news and fake news with inauthentic content. Thus, the ability of the public to select and criticize the news they receive is important to know. This competence is also an effort to deal with the onslaught of fake news circulating in today's socio-cultural life. In the context of the study of information science, this ability is called information literacy. This paper examines through a literature approach about how the conception of information literacy and critical information literacy in the post-truth era and what strategies must be understood by the information community in Indonesia in dealing with the spread of fake news from various media.

B. Definition of Literacy, Information literacy and Post-Truth

Literacy literally means the ability to read and write.² Meanwhile, UNESCO³ defines literacy as ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, and

¹Filak, V. F. (ed.). *Convergent Journalism: An Introduction: Writing and Producing Across Media*, (New York: Routledge, 2019), 1-9.

²Ruslan, Ruslan. "Membangun Literasi Masyarakat Melalui Taman Bacaan Masyarakat: Eksplorasi Pengalaman Community Engagement Program di Cot Lamme–Aceh Besar." *Jurnal Adabiya* 19.2 (2020): 155-168.

calculate using printed and written materials associated with different contexts. Meanwhile, information literacy has several meanings. According to Reitz⁴, information literacy is an understanding of how a library is organized, familiarity with the resources it provides (including information formats and automated search tools), and knowledge of commonly used search methods. The ability to find the information you need. In addition, Reitz also added that information literacy includes skills in critically evaluating information content and using it effectively, as well as understanding the technology infrastructure that forms the basis of information transmission, including the context of social, political, and cultural impacts.

The definition of post-truth according to the Cambridge dictionary⁵ is something that emphasizes conditions, circumstances where the influence of emotional interest and personal trust is higher than facts and objective data in shaping public opinion.

C. The Post-Truth Phenomenon in Recent Years

The emergence of the term post-truth became popular when reporting on the general election in the United States presidential election, between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton, as well as the Brexit referendum or a referendum on Britain's membership in European Union membership in 2016. Trump's victory and Britain's exit from the European Union are considered as Post-Truth Politics victory. Post-truth is generally used to influence public opinion, especially through internet media with various forms of social media.⁶

³UNESCO, "The plurality of literacy and the implications of its policies and programs: UNESCO Education Position Paper", *UNESCO*, 2004 (p.13). Accessed at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001362/136246e.pdf>

⁴Reitz, J. M. s.v. "Information Literacy," in *Online Dictionary for Library and Information Science*, accessed June 4, 2004, https://products.abc-clio.com/ODLIS/odlis_i.aspx#infoliteracy

⁵*The Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus*, s.v. "Post Truth," accessed May 3, 2019, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/post-truth>

⁶Rose, J. "Brexit, Trump, and Post-Truth Politics", *Public Integrity* 19.6 (2017): 555-558. DOI: 10.1080/10999922.2017.1285540

Basically, the term post-truth was first introduced by Steve Tesich. In his essay in *The Nation* daily, Tesich⁷ wrote about his concern about the behavior of politicians or the government which is considered to be deliberately playing public opinion by overriding and tending to degrade facts and objective information data. Post-truth is consciously developed in order to cultivate public sentiment, as a result, less critical community groups will be easily influenced. The impact of this influence is the manifestation in the form of empathy and sympathy for certain political agendas that are being scripted. News or information published, even though it promises something beautiful, fun and interesting, cannot be said to be true.

In another perspective, the popularity of post-truth has an impact on several important aspects. First, turning off expertise or the 'death of expertise' and lack of scientific impact in policy. This also means that the public's assessment is no longer based on the credibility of information sources based on expertise, but tends to choose for emotional reasons that tend to be irrational. Second, hoaxes are produced, disseminated and consumed, regardless of who is speaking and the credibility of the issue, but only aligns the frequency of emotional resonance. The virality and the number of followers of social media accounts have turned into a diction that determines the truth of information, finally alternative facts are accepted more quickly than the truth.

Various online media are currently used by the user community to post, click and share information. Internet is one of the media and it is considered as the most powerful medium in spreading fake news, apart from social messaging applications (WhatsApp, Messenger, etc.). Based on global data on the use of internet-connected messaging applications, Indonesia is one of the countries with a high penetration rate of internet usage, especially social networks. According to Statiska⁸ data, the penetration of social network users in Indonesia in 2019, the most are Youtube channels (88%) and the social messaging

⁷Tesich, S. "A Government of Lies". *The Nation*, January, 1992, retrieved from <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BynDrdYrCLNtdmt0SFZFeGMtZUFsT1NmTGVTQmc1dEpmUC1z/view>

⁸Statiska. "Penetration of Leading Social Networks in Indonesia as of 3rd Quarter 2019", *Statiska*, accessed June 4, 2020, <http://statiska.com>

application WhatsApp (84%). Followed by Facebook (82%), Instagram (79%) and Twitter (56%). This data clearly illustrates that a number of websites and social applications based on social networking and messaging as well as micro blogging serve as channels for disseminating information and utilizing information. In this Covid-19 era, social media networks and messaging applications can be powerful weapons in the post-truth era. It can also be a catalyst for the next global health disaster. Lies that are repeatedly voiced without refutation will have the potential to be believed by the public as truth.

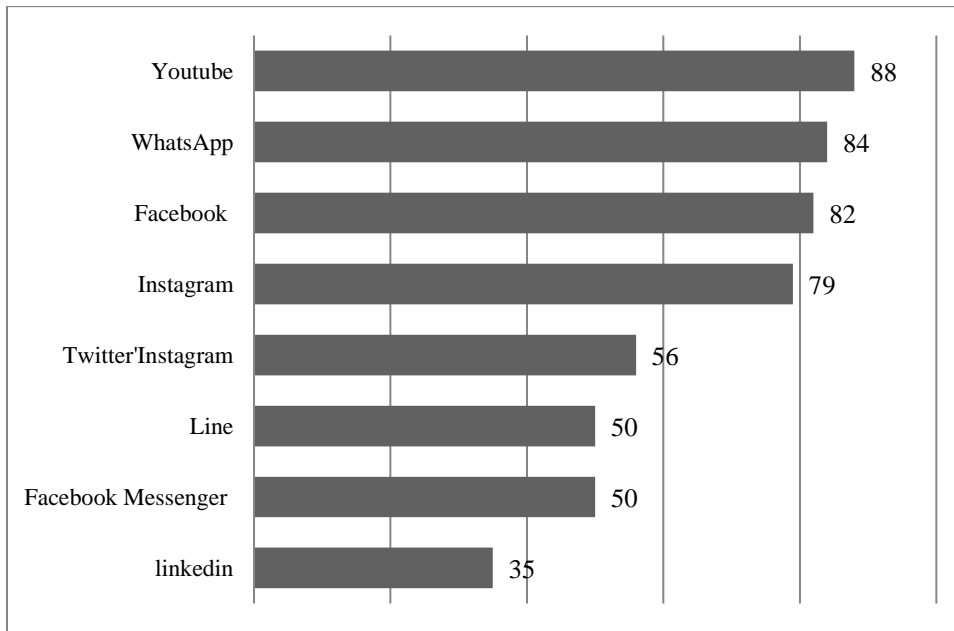


Table 1 Penetration of Leading Social Networks in Indonesia

D. Critical Information Literacy and Strategy for Facing Information Flow

The development of post-truth through the widespread dissemination of information is a global phenomenon that cannot be contained. Facing post-truth is to encourage how information literacy for society is really understood, especially in relation to the information obtained. Thus, the strategy that must be done is to build the habit of being able to "think before liking and spreading" which is to become a common awareness. In addition, prioritizing personal thinking skills, before building further interactions in cyberspace, is also an important aspect to be aware of together.

According to Zurkowski,⁹ ALA,¹⁰ Shapiro,¹¹ Bruce¹² and Reitz,¹³ information literacy basically has several important components. First, the user or users. Someone who is information literate is expected to have knowledge, skills, expertise, techniques and strategies and abilities. Second, activity. Every information user always carries out activities in relation to information, including searching, browsing, criticizing, selecting, tagging, saving, copying, pasting, sharing, downloading, uploading, rating, commenting, and writing. Third, the object of information. In the activities carried out by the user, there are information objects that are targeted, including the source and form of the information. Fourth, interests. Every user in activities related to information objects, always has a desire and interest from their information needs, whether for personal, educational, family, or other interests.

Based on the above conception, the critical thinking strategy is an important part of information literacy that must be considered by the Indonesian user community. Eisenberg et al,¹⁴ Elmborg,¹⁵ and Cooke¹⁶ noted that the ability and attitude of critical information literacy can help users' creativity in finding, finding and using quality information.

⁹Zurkowski, P. G. *The Information Service Environment: Relationships and Priorities* (Washington, DC: National Commission on Library and Information Science, 1974), retrieved from <http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED100391.pdf>

¹⁰American Library Association (ALA), *Presidential Committee on Information Literacy: Final Report* (Chicago: American Library Association, January 10, 1989), retrieved from <https://www.ala.org/acrl/publications/whitepapers/presidential>

¹¹Shapiro, J.J. and Hughes, S.K. (1996). "Information literacy as A Liberal Art: Enlightenment Proposals for A New Curriculum." *Educom review* 31.2 (1996): 31-35.

¹²Bruce, C. *Seven Faces of Information Literacy: Towards Inviting Students Into New Experiences*, 2003, retrieved from <http://www.bestlibrary.org/digital/files/bruce.pdf>

¹³ Reitz, J. M. s.v. "Information Literacy," in *Online Dictionary for Library and Information Science*, accessed June 4, 2004, https://products.abc-clio.com/ODLIS/odlis_i.aspx#infoliteracy

¹⁴ Eisenberg, M., Lowe, C. A., & Spitzer, K. L. *Information literacy: Essential skills for The information age*, second edition (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2004), 81.

¹⁵Elmborg, J. Critical Information Literacy: Implications for Instructional Practice. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 32.2 (2006): 192–199, doi: 10.1016/j.acalib.2005.12.004

¹⁶Cooke, N. A. *Fake News and Alternative facts: Information Literacy in a Post-Truth Era* (Chicago: American Library Association Editions, 2018), 15-16.

In building the critical power of information dissemination in this post-truth era, the approach of Carol Kuhlthau's Model,¹⁷ can also be guided by the community as a strategy to build capacity in reading, interpreting, assessing, and using information in everyday life. In addition, UNESCO in the Prague Declaration¹⁸ has also described how the strategy to build information literacy is an important capability for the information society in the post-truth era to identify, determine, find, evaluate, create effectively and in an organized manner, use and communicate information in overcome various problems.

In the context of librarians, library managers and other information service providers, as written by Gregory¹⁹, the International Federation of Library Association (IFLA) has also campaigned on how to stop the spread of fake news and hoaxes in this post truth era.²⁰ The strategy to deal with all these phenomena is to identify the source, check the author, read the entire contents, check the novelty of the writing, check the balance of the information, the authenticity of the information, always ask the experts when checking the web source. By understanding all of these strategies, the flow of information can be selected properly and will not become a problem in disseminating information to other people.

E. Conclusion

Post-truth is a time that the information society in the world and Indonesia is currently facing. Critical information literacy skills are an important aspect that must be understood by the information community in Indonesia in an effort to deal with the invasion of various fake news and hoaxes that are present in our lives every day. The

¹⁷Kuhlthau, C. C. *Information Skills for an Information Society: a Review of the Research*. Syracuse (New York : ERIC Clearinghouse on Information Resources, 1987), 6-9.

¹⁸UNESCO. *The Prague Declaration: Towards An Information Literate Society*, Prague, Czech Republic, September 20-23, 2003, retrieved from <http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/files/19636/11228863531PragueDeclaration.pdf/PragueDeclaration.pdf>

¹⁹Gregory, J. "Teaching Disinformation Literacy," *The Office for Intellectual Freedom of the American Library Association*, November 6, 2019, retrieved from <https://www.oif.ala.org/oif/teaching-disinformation-literacy/>

²⁰ IFLA. *How To Spot Fake News - IFLA in the post-truth society*, March 13, 2017, accessed at <http://www.ifla.org/publications/node/11174>

information society strategy to have a critical attitude in dealing with the information we seek and publish is indicated by our habit of thinking before liking and sharing the information.

The strategy that must be done in dealing with the dissemination of information in the post-truth era is to identify the source, check the author, read the entire contents, check the novelty of the writing, check the balance of the information, the authenticity of the information, and always ask the experts when checking the web source. Having critical information literacy attitudes and skills will help people's ability to search, find and use quality information.

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