



## The Role of the Coordinating Ministry of Economic Public Relations in Overcoming Hoaxes on Social Media

Thelma Amelita<sup>1</sup>, Siko Dian Sigit Wiyanto<sup>1</sup>, Irwansyah<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Indonesia, Jawa Barat, Indonesia

\*Corresponding Author: Thelma Amelita

E-mail: [thelma.amelita@gmail.com](mailto:thelma.amelita@gmail.com)



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### Abstract

*This research discusses the role of government public relations (PR) in combating the rampant spread of hoaxes in the digital era. The rapid dissemination of hoaxes on the internet and social media has prompted government PR professionals to take steps to address them, ranging from handling the issues to necessary follow-up actions. The aim of this study is to understand and analyze the role of the Public Relations Coordinator Ministry of Economic Affairs in combating hoaxes on social media. The research utilized a qualitative approach with a constructivist paradigm, employing a case study strategy for learning. Data collection techniques included interviews, observations, and documentation. The study examined how PR strategies were implemented in resolving the cases mentioned. The analysis found that the KLIP Bureau, responsible for public relations in the Ministry of Economic Affairs, plays a significant role in addressing hoaxes. Through stages of monitoring, issue identification, program planning, implementation, and evaluation, the KLIP Bureau successfully filters and clarifies hoax news. Media monitoring, especially through social media, serves as a crucial initial gateway to detect hoaxes before they are identified. Recommendations include the use of search engines and social media, the creation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), training for PR staff, and collaboration with organizations and communities to combat hoaxes. The use of social media for clarification has proven effective in suppressing and halting the spread of hoaxes.*

## Introduction

The digital era means information spreads quickly. This is coupled with increasing number of internet users with various tools or gadgets. Of the total population, 73.7% of Indonesia's 277.7 population are internet users while 68.9% are active on social media (Natasha et al., 2023). However, not all of this information is of high quality. Many hoax information spreads on various social media platforms and social network sites (Kustomo, 2022). This is of course detrimental for internet users, especially those with minimal digital literacy. The damage caused by hoaxes causes social damage, for example, various hoaxes that emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic (Sari et al., 2021). Various misinformation regarding prevention, treatment, and the virus has spread through social media and existing messaging applications such as WhatsApp (Saumantri, 2022). The government even created its own website, namely the "hoaxbuster" on the Covid-19 website.

Currently, many non-profit institutions besides the government itself are carrying out the eradication of hoaxes through websites (Tawaqal et al., 2018). From the government itself, there is the Directorate General of Information Applications (Ditjen Aptika) of the Ministry of Communication and Informatics (Kominfo) (Riskian, 2021). One of the Directorate General's services of Aptika is clarifying hoaxes circulating in the community. Even for COVID-19

services, the Directorate General of Optics has removed 5,666 hoaxes about COVID-19 (Amelita et al., 2023). Apart from that, there are community groups who are also enthusiastic about eradicating hoaxes. Among them is the Indonesian Anti-Defamation Society (Mafindo), which dedicates itself to fighting hoaxes in Indonesia (Amelita et al., 2023). However, more is needed because hoaxes continue to exist, potentially increasing as the political year begins (Riskian, 2021). Hoaxes are also one of the methods or modes of fraudulent crimes. Kominfo found 11,357 hoaxes from August 2018 to March 31 2023. The top four hoax categories included health (2,256), government (2,075), fraud (1,827), and politics (1,355). Many cases of fraud arise from hoaxes with the promise of prizes (Hakim et al., 2022)

The government must disclose public information. One of the government's duties is to provide information immediately. The government must stop the spread of hoaxes to create effective communication between the government and the community (Destyani & Suherman, 2022). Apart from Kominfo, various government websites already have unique pages to eradicate hoaxes, such as those against hoaxes e-paid.kemenkeu.go.id. The government's explanation from the website and official social media accounts is valid information and a source of education for stakeholders, including the general public.

The Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs carries out several tasks, including coordinating ministries related to government administration in the economic sector based on Presidential Regulation 37 of 2020 (Nanda et al., 2023). There have been several times content from social media accounts and websites that use the name of the Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs. The unit that has a function in clarifying circulating hoaxes is the public relations unit. The public relations unit in the Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs is in the Information and Court Services Communication Bureau (Biro KLIP), which is under the auspices of Echelon II structural officials and functional public relations institutions. The objective of this research is to understand and analyze the role of the Ministry of Economic Affairs' Public Relations Coordinator in addressing hoaxes on social media.

## Methods

The author uses a qualitative approach using a case study approach, where the object of research is the hoax issue addressed to the Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs. The issue of hoaxes first emerged in June 2021, which uploaded content in the form of news and hoax images, including the coordinating minister for Economic Affairs. Observations were carried out using in- depth interviews with three informants who were public relations managers, namely one social media admin, one young expert public relations officer, and one Head of the Communications and Public Information Services Bureau (KLIP). Qualitative research is a method that uses a natural setting to describe the activities carried out from the actions carried out by the research object by interpreting the phenomena that occur (Fadli, 2021). The research uses two sources of information—interviews with public relations employees of the Coordinating Ministry and Informatics as primary data. Meanwhile, information from social media becomes secondary data (Fransisca & Erdiansyah, 2020). Research connects various facts in the two data types to draw conclusions. Secondary data or supporting data comes from the Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs' public on its social media accounts, especially Instagram.

Table 1. Research Informant Data

Informant's Name	Age	Work
H.L.	49 Years	Head of KLIP Bureau
IMJ	36 years old	Young Expert Public Relations Institution
L.C.	27 years	Social Media Admin

## Results and Discussion

In this research, the author tries to understand the role of public relations from the KLIP Bureau of the Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs in dealing with hoax news. Based on findings from the official Instagram @per Ekonomianri that the author discovered in June 2021, there was content related to a hoax case that offended the coordinating minister for Economic Affairs, who is also the Chair of the Committee for Handling Covid 19 and National Economic Recovery (KPCPEN). The author tries to make further observations on the hoax issue by collecting data and seeing if the same issues are placed on different platforms, especially those owned by the Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs.

The data preparation technique was carried out through in-depth interviews with three informants who were competent in their fields. Then, proceed with observations of the primary data and secondary data that the author obtained. Based on coding data from interviews with the three informants, it was found that the KLIP Bureau received hoax news about their agency through two categories, namely internal and external. Internally, the KLIP Bureau obtains hoax news through monitoring and news analysis, which is carried out regularly every day, whether monitoring the mass media or official channels of the Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs. Externally, news regarding the Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs is often obtained from external parties or other Ministries or Institutions, which are forwarded via WhatsApp messages.

Public Relations of the Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs carries out media monitoring. After identifying issues developing in national print and online media, the public relations team holds a meeting. It places the issue on a priority scale based on the urgency of the issue. Of all the currently developing issues, only 5 to 10 critical issues are usually selected based on several criteria of magnitude and impact.

*"So for information or how we can identify hoaxes, of course, there are various sources, first from internal and second from external. Because usually, internally, it can come from the results of analysis or what is called our monitoring, which we carry out periodically every day, or externally, it can also come from what is called the public's responses or comments via social media or through other forms such as confirmation via WhatsApp and so on. So there are two sources, internal and external." (Interview with IMJ, Young Expert Public Relations Officer, KLIP Bureau on May 19, 2023 at 15.00 WIB).*

If there is new news related to the Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs, especially news that is considered harmful or tends to cause a response from the public, the first thing the KLIP Bureau does is identify the information; this is carried out using a news monitoring and analysis system which is managed directly by the team in the Communication Management and Strategy section at the KLIP Bureau, especially in the News Monitoring and Analysis sub-section which has a particular task for identifying news related to their agency. In this case, the KLIP Bureau also uses a particular news monitoring system to monitor and analyze every report. This can be done either automatically with an information system or manually.

Public Relations of the Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs conducted data searches and tracing using various methods. Fact tracing is carried out with confirmation from the relevant internal units. To straighten out untrue news, publications are carried out through social media or mainstream media, depending on where the hoax is spread.

*"Firstly, after getting the information I mentioned earlier from external and from our internal monitoring, we then also carried out clarification, meaning in-depth research, whether this is true, whether this substance or material is categorized as a hoax. Now,*

*after we have researched, there are two things that we might often do first: if the substance does not deviate too far, only then can the information also be clarified, meaning it is included in the pic and so on; maybe we will ignore it, but if it is the substance "It is indeed very material, far from the truth, far from the real truth, so we will respond via our social media or mainstream media depending on where the news spreads." (Interview with H.L., Head of KLIP Bureau on May 18 2023 at 09.00 WIB).*

The following is an example of hoax news findings obtained by the KLIP Bureau team of the Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs through monitoring and analyzing news from social media Instagram aimed at the Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs, which was published on June 28, 2021, during the Covid 19 pandemic, when the public Those who were confirmed positive for Covid 19 began to find it challenging to find a hospital for inpatient treatment to cure their illness. The hoax content contains a narrative explaining that if anyone needs an ICU or a hospital room, they can directly contact the cell phone number of the coordinating minister for Economic Affairs, Mr. Airlangga Hartarto, as Chair of the Committee for Handling Covid 19 and National Economic Recovery.



Figure 1. Hoax news on the Official Instagram Account @per Ekonomianri

After receiving the hoax news, the first response made by the KLIP Bureau was to identify the issue in the form of clarification of the content and source of the news. After it was discovered that the news did not come from the official channels of the Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs, the following action was program planning in the form of follow-up to determine whether or not it was necessary to respond to the news in the form of clarification on the official channels of the Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs. The next stage is program implementation. Based on the results of the meeting with the KLIP Bureau team, it was concluded that there was a need for follow- up action in response to the hoax news, which was uploaded via the official Instagram channel @Per Ekonomianri.





Figures 2. Clarifying content from the Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs uploaded to the official Instagram account @per Ekonomianri.

The Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs has carried out the functions of Government Public Relations from planning and implementation to program evaluation.

*"When we decide to respond or provide information that this is a hoax, then we look again at the positive and negative impacts when we post it, so for example, on platform A, for example, it is busy, for example, only on Twitter, that is us if you want "We need to analyze the clarification post first, whether it is enough on Twitter or other social media platforms. We also need to analyze it. To avoid this, we should also be careful so that we do not give the impression that we are giving the stage or spotlighting the hoax issue." (Interview with IMJ, Young Expert Public Relations Officer on May 19, 2023 at 15.00 WIB).*

The obstacles that the author encountered in this research include the absence of a specific Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) from the KLIP Bureau regarding the management of dealing with hoaxes. The information that the author got from informants is that the SOP is still in the drafting stage. The recommendation that the author can convey is to issue a special SOP that includes hoax prevention management immediately. Another obstacle is that when the author researched the role of the Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs social media in tackling hoaxes, no new hoaxes were found aimed at the Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs, and hoax reporting against this agency could be categorized as rare. The author finally found a hoax in 2021, which the author can pick up and research.

## Conclusion

From the research findings, it is evident that public relations, specifically the KLIP Bureau, plays a significant role in combating hoaxes. Their involvement spans from the initial monitoring phase, which includes issue identification, program planning, implementation, and program evaluation. Media monitoring serves as a vital gateway to detect hoaxes before they gain further traction. The author emphasizes the need for hoax classification during monitoring and news analysis in line with international standards. The study reveals that routine monitoring conducted both daily and periodically by the KLIP Bureau successfully filters and clarifies hoax news within their organization. Although the Ministry of Economic Affairs has not been heavily affected by hoaxes, all procedures followed by the KLIP Bureau adhere to

government public relations standards identified in previous research. Anticipating potential future hoaxes is crucial, and media monitoring remains a key strategy. Upon issue identification, effective follow-up actions include clarifications, exemplified by the KLIP Bureau's clarifications posted on their official social media account (@perEkonomianri) to counter viral hoaxes circulating in the public sphere.

Based on the research findings, several recommendations are provided. Firstly, the Ministry of Economic Affairs' public relations team should rely on online media and search engines like google.com for hoax monitoring. Developing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for hoax management, including training for public relations staff to fact-check hoaxes, is essential. The ministry's website should feature a dedicated page containing hoaxes and facts about the institution. A dedicated channel for reporting hoaxes could be established within the contact center, allowing the public to report potentially misleading information. Intensive collaboration with organizations and communities is strongly advised to effectively counteract hoaxes and reach a wider audience. In summary, social media's role in combating hoaxes has effectively suppressed their dissemination, preventing them from becoming more widespread and viral. This achievement is evident from the absence of hoaxes in response to clarifications made by @perEkonomianri. Social media's active role in debunking and clarifying hoaxes has successfully curtailed their impact, ensuring accurate information prevails.

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