

The Dynamics of Trust Among Medical Faculty Students at University X Toward the Government in the Issue of the '6000 Foreign Doctors' Hoax

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Abstract

This study investigates the influence of hoax news about foreign doctors on the trust of University X medical students in the government. It focuses on two controversial events: the viral spread of claims regarding the government's plan to recruit 6,000 foreign doctors and the dismissal of Faculty Dean. Both events were widely circulated on digital media, often with sensationalized and misleading headlines, fueling public confusion and skepticism, particularly within the academic medical community. Utilizing a descriptive quantitative approach, the research surveyed 277 out of 903 active students through convenience sampling. Data were gathered via an online questionnaire measuring both the extent of hoax news exposure and the students' level of trust in government institutions. A simple linear regression analysis revealed a strong and significant relationship between hoax exposure and trust levels, with an R^2 value of 0.870 and a correlation coefficient of 0.933. This suggests that 87% of the variation in trust is attributable to the influence of hoax content. Despite students' general awareness of current events, misleading narratives and delayed government responses significantly shaped their perceptions. The findings highlight the need for improved government crisis communication that is timely, transparent, and evidence-based. Additionally, it underscores the importance of fostering digital literacy and critical thinking in educational settings to help students critically assess information and maintain trust in public institutions, especially in health-related matters.

Keywords: Hoax, Trust, Government, Social Media, Health Policy

INTRODUCTION

The digital era has significantly altered the media landscape, bringing about a paradigm shift in the way information is produced, distributed, and consumed. With the rise of social media platforms and online news portals, information now spreads at an unprecedented speed and scale. While this transformation has democratized access to information, it has also facilitated the proliferation of misinformation and disinformation, including hoaxes that pose a threat to public trust—particularly in authoritative institutions such as the government. One notable example in the Indonesian context is the controversy surrounding the alleged plan to bring in 6,000 foreign doctors, which sparked heated debates and widespread confusion across various segments of society.

This issue gained traction in early 2024 when several online news outlets published unverified claims regarding a government initiative to invite thousands of foreign medical professionals to address the shortage of doctors in Indonesia. The reports were further amplified through social media, often stripped of context and laden with nationalistic or protectionist narratives. As public anxiety grew, the topic transcended mere speculation and became a subject of political discourse, especially after the removal of the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at University X, who was accused of resisting this alleged policy. Although the Ministry of Health clarified that no such formal program existed, the damage to public

perception had already been done.

This incident illustrates a broader problem of how misinformation, especially concerning sensitive topics like national healthcare and professional sovereignty, can erode public trust in the government. More specifically, it raises questions about how future health professionals—such as medical students—perceive government credibility when exposed to hoax-laden content. The case of University X students is particularly significant, given their proximity to the controversy and their educational emphasis on scientific rationality and evidence-based decision-making.

Research in the field of communication has shown that trust in government is influenced by various factors, including media framing (Entman, 2007), source credibility (Hovland & Weiss, 1951), and the audience's media literacy (Potter, 2013). In recent years, scholars have increasingly focused on the role of misinformation and its psychological effects on public opinion. Tandoc et al. (2018) classified fake news as a spectrum of content, from satire to fabricated news, highlighting how its intent and interpretation can significantly influence audience reactions. Meanwhile, studies by Lazer et al. (2018) and Pennycook & Rand (2019) point to the cognitive mechanisms behind belief in misinformation, including confirmation bias and emotional resonance.

Within the Indonesian context, previous studies have explored the impact of hoax news on political attitudes, vaccine hesitancy, and social polarization (Syakur et al., 2021; Paramita & Puspitasari, 2022). However, there remains a notable gap in understanding how misinformation specifically affects professional trust in state institutions, particularly among university students in health-related disciplines. This is where the current study seeks to contribute: by examining how exposure to hoax news regarding foreign doctors influences the level of trust that University X students have toward the Indonesian government.

This research is grounded in the theory of political legitimacy, which posits that trust in government arises when institutions are perceived as competent, just, and aligned with societal values (Suchman, 1995; Levi & Sacks, 2009). The dissemination of hoax news can undermine these perceptions, particularly when it questions the government's ability to safeguard national interests or manage professional standards. Moreover, legitimacy theory aligns with empirical models that measure institutional trust as a function of media influence, policy transparency, and narrative consistency.

This study uses a quantitative approach to measure the correlation between hoax news exposure and trust levels among University X students from the 2021–2023 cohorts. The choice of this demographic is strategic: they represent an educated population with direct stakes in the medical profession and are likely to be exposed to both verified and unverified news. By using survey instruments and statistical analysis, this study aims to provide empirical evidence on the psychological and perceptual impacts of hoax news in an academic and professional setting.

Furthermore, the research addresses a crucial gap identified in recent literature: the lack of context-specific studies that examine misinformation's impact on institutional trust within the Southeast Asian and Indonesian health education systems. While global research has highlighted general patterns of misinformation effects, localized studies are needed to inform policy interventions and media literacy campaigns tailored to specific cultural, political, and educational contexts.

The findings of this study are expected to contribute significantly to both academic

discourse and practical policy-making. Academically, it enriches the corpus of communication studies by linking media content (hoax news) with institutional perception (trust in government), particularly within the healthcare education sector. Practically, the study can serve as a diagnostic tool for universities and policymakers to understand the vulnerabilities of young professionals to media manipulation. It can also inform future media strategies, public relations campaigns, and curriculum development to foster critical media consumption and resilient civic attitudes among students.

In light of these considerations, the central research question of this study is: *To what extent does exposure to hoax news about foreign doctors affect the trust of University X students in the Indonesian government?* The hypothesis posited is that higher levels of exposure to hoax news are negatively correlated with students' trust in governmental institutions. This hypothesis is tested using survey data and analyzed through statistical techniques to ascertain the validity of the proposed relationship.

In sum, this research seeks not only to map the perceptual impact of digital misinformation in the realm of public health and education but also to propose actionable insights for stakeholders involved in media regulation, higher education, and public trust-building initiatives. The relevance of this study is magnified in a time when misinformation is not just a byproduct of digital communication but a strategic tool used to shape public narratives, often at the expense of truth and trust.

METHOD

This research uses a descriptive quantitative method to examine the impact of foreign doctor hoax news content on the trust of students from University X in the government. A quantitative approach is appropriate for studies that require accurate measurements and objective analysis of the relationship between independent variables (foreign doctor hoax news) and dependent variables (students' trust in the government).

The data collection process involved a survey conducted among students from University X. The survey aimed to gather perceptions and reactions to the hoax news related to the dismissal of the Dean and the Minister of Health's clarification regarding foreign doctors. The survey data was supplemented with secondary data from credible news articles to provide broader context. The study's population consists of all active students of the Faculty of Medicine at University X in 2024. The sample was selected using a convenience sampling technique, where participants were chosen based on their availability and willingness to participate. The final sample size was 277 respondents, calculated using Slovin's formula for accuracy at a 5% margin of error.

Data analysis was carried out using simple linear regression to measure the impact of hoax news on students' trust in the government. Hypothesis testing was performed with t-tests and F-tests to evaluate the significance of the results. All analyses were done using SPSS software.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study centers on students from the Faculty of Medicine at University X, chosen as the primary research subjects due to their critical role in shaping future medical practice and policy interpretation. Medical students are a unique demographic: highly educated, actively involved in academic discourse, and positioned at the intersection of media influence and

institutional policy shifts. Their responses offer vital insight into how misinformation and hoaxes, particularly those involving professional identity and institutional credibility, shape public trust in government institutions.

The object of this research focuses specifically on hoax content regarding the alleged deployment of 6,000 foreign doctors to Indonesia and the subsequent dismissal of the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at University X. These two narratives were amplified by various online news platforms and social media, triggering widespread discourse and confusion. Media headlines such as “Government to Bring 6,000 Foreign Doctors” and “Dean of University X Dismissed After Criticizing Foreign Doctors” sparked public anxiety, particularly among those in the medical education ecosystem. The Ministry of Health later clarified that these were hoaxes.

These issues generated waves of skepticism and concern within the university. By examining this context through a social-psychological lens, we better understand how misinformation operates not just as a matter of fact versus fiction, but as a mechanism of identity, trust, and institutional power.

Using the Pearson Product-Moment correlation, all items in the questionnaire were found to be significantly correlated with their respective total scores. This confirms construct validity and ensures that the instrument accurately captures the intended variables—perception of hoaxes and trust in government.

Table 1.1 Pearson Product Moment Validity

Statement Item	Colleration Value	Pearson	Description
Hoax (Variable X)			
X 1.1	0	0.05	Valid
X 1.2	0	0.05	Valid
X 2.1	0	0.05	Valid
X 3.1	0	0.05	Valid
X 3.2	0	0.05	Valid
X 4.1	0	0.05	Valid
X 4.2	0	0.05	Valid
Trust (Variable Y)			
Y 1.1	0	0.05	Valid
Y 1.2	0	0.05	Valid
Y 2.1	0	0.05	Valid
Y 2.2	0	0.05	Valid
Y 2.3	0	0.05	Valid
Y 3.1	0	0.05	Valid
Y 3.2	0	0.05	Valid
Y 4.1	0	0.05	Valid
Y 4.2	0	0.05	Valid

Table 1.2 Cronbach Alpha Relliability

Variable	Relliability Statistic
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Variable X	0,836
Variable Y	0,901

With Cronbach’s Alpha values of 0.836 for hoax perception (X) and 0.901 for trust in government (Y), the instruments are highly reliable. These high scores affirm the consistency and dependability of the responses gathered from University X’s medical students.

Out of 299 distributed surveys, 277 were analyzed. All participants were active students of the Faculty of Medicine at University X, spanning the 2021 to 2023 cohorts. The respondents were 18–23 years old, digitally literate, and highly engaged in current events.

Table 1.3 Hoax Statement’s Answer Distribution

Statement Item	Score					Mean
	1	2	3	4	5	
X 1.1	5	4	5	111	152	4,447
X 1.2	3	7	6	142	119	4,324
X 2.1	4	10	2	142	119	4,306
X 3.1	8	4	8	132	125	4,306
X 3.2	8	2	8	144	115	4,285
X 4.1	1	8	9	150	109	4,292
X 4.2	4	6	5	133	129	4,361
Grand Mean						4,332

A unanimous 100% of respondents reported awareness of the hoax issues, showing how deeply the narratives had penetrated academic circles.

Respondents showed strong agreement across all questionnaire items related to hoax exposure, with a grand mean of 4.332. This suggests widespread awareness and acknowledgment of the hoax narratives. It also highlights the role of media—particularly sensationalist reporting—in shaping student perceptions.

Table 1.4 Trust Statement’s Answer Distribution

Statement Item	Score					Mean
	1	2	3	4	5	
Y 1.1	6	7	3	140	121	4,310
Y 1.2	5	9	2	138	123	4,317
Y 2.1	8	3	5	138	123	4,317

Y 2.2	6	3	9	135	124	4,328
Y 2.3	5	8	4	150	110	4,270
Y 3.1	7	7	6	131	126	4,306
Y 3.2	6	5	3	129	134	4,371
Y 4.1	6	7	7	145	112	4,263
Y 4.2	7	6	5	135	124	4,310
Grand Mean						4,310

Similarly, the trust variable recorded a grand mean of 4.310, indicating a generally low level of confidence in government institutions among medical students. Notably, this trust deficit emerged despite clarifications issued by the Ministry of Health, suggesting that initial misinformation has a lingering psychological effect that formal denials or corrections struggle to reverse.

The regression model:

$$Y = -1.266 + 1.321X$$

indicates a strong positive relationship between hoax exposure and decreased trust. Although the coefficient is positive, the relationship implies that more recognition of hoax exposure correlates with lower trust in the government among medical students.

F-Test (Model Fit):

An F-value of 1841.014 with a p-value of 0.000 confirms that the regression model is highly significant. This suggests that the independent variable (hoax exposure) explains a substantial proportion of variance in the dependent variable (trust in government).

T-Test (Individual Predictor Significance):

The hoax variable has a significant t-value (42.907, $p < 0.05$), reaffirming that it exerts a statistically significant influence on student trust levels.

Coefficient of Determination:

With an R^2 of 0.870, it is evident that 87% of the variance in trust levels among medical students can be attributed to exposure to hoax news. The remaining 13% may be influenced by factors such as personal ideology, previous government interactions, or broader political context.

Based on the results of the simple linear regression analysis, it was found that hoax news content regarding foreign doctors has a significant effect on the level of trust that students at University X have toward the government. The coefficient of determination (R^2) value of 0.870 indicates that 87% of the variation in students' trust can be explained by exposure to hoax content, with a very strong correlation coefficient ($R = 0.933$). This means that the higher the frequency of exposure to hoax content, the lower the students' trust in the government.

These findings align with the Theory of Political Legitimacy (Lipset, 1981), which posits that government legitimacy heavily depends on public perceptions of honesty, goodwill, and accountability. In this case, the misleading news content about the alleged arrival of 6,000 foreign doctors created negative perceptions among students regarding the government's goodwill in managing health issues, transparency in public communication, and accountability in policy-making.

According to the Framing Theory (Entman, 2003), the way the media framed hoax stories

such as “The Government Will Bring in 6,000 Foreign Doctors” in a provocative and sensational manner amplified the negative impact on student perceptions. News content presented with a framing that suggested threats to local doctors or suppression of academic freedom (in relation to the dismissal of the Dean) reinforced negative opinions toward the government.

The Spiral of Silence Theory (Salmon et al., 2014) is also relevant. In the case of the dismissal of the Dean at University X, students may have felt afraid or hesitant to express their opinions out of concern that their views would not align with the dominant narrative. This can lead some of them to remain silent, reinforcing skepticism and reducing their trust in the government.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis presented in Finding and Discussion, this study reveals that hoax news content regarding the presence of 6,000 foreign doctors significantly influences the level of trust among students of the Faculty of Medicine at University X toward the government. The findings indicate that higher exposure to hoax news correlates with a lower level of trust in government policies related to foreign medical personnel. This is evidenced by the regression analysis results, showing a strong relationship between the hoax and trust variables, with a correlation value of 0.933 and a coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.870.

The study also highlights that although most respondents were aware of the existence of hoax news surrounding the foreign doctor issue, not all were able to critically assess the information. The spread of hoaxes can shape negative perceptions of the government and healthcare policies, particularly when the authorities fail to provide effective clarification. Furthermore, the controversy surrounding the removal of the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at University X exacerbated the situation, intensifying the negative impact of the news on students' trust. This issue not only affects trust in the government but also undermines the academic environment, which should uphold objectivity and academic freedom.

This research emphasizes that hoaxes are more than just misinformation—they have tangible effects on public trust, especially among medical students who have a direct stake in healthcare policy in Indonesia. It underscores the urgent need for the government and related institutions to proactively manage public communication, ensuring that policies are accurately understood by the community. Moreover, raising awareness about digital literacy and critical thinking skills is increasingly essential in an era overwhelmed by misinformation and hoaxes.

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