



Indonesian Army Strategic Communication Against Social Media Disinformation

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the strategic communication practices implemented by the Indonesian Army, particularly through the Military Education and Science Center (Pusdik Pengmilum) under the Army Doctrine, Education, and Training Command (Kodiklatad), in countering disinformation and hoaxes circulating on social media. Employing a qualitative approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis involving communication personnel, instructors, and institutional leaders. The findings reveal that strategic communication is implemented through systematic planning, multi-channel media utilization, audience-centered messaging, and the integration of informative, persuasive, and participatory communication approaches. The institution employs owned media, earned media, and shared media, supported by multimedia content, storytelling, counter-narratives, and digital analytics to enhance audience engagement and strengthen institutional credibility. Communication effectiveness is supported by competent human resources, technological infrastructure, interorganizational collaboration, leadership commitment, organizational learning, and public trust. However, several challenges remain, including the rapid diffusion of misinformation, limited human resources, uneven digital literacy, technological constraints, fragmented audience attention, and declining trust in institutions. Overall, the study demonstrates that strategic communication serves not only as an instrument for information dissemination but also as a mechanism for strengthening digital literacy, safeguarding information integrity, and enhancing organizational resilience against evolving information threats in the digital era.

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji praktik komunikasi strategis yang diterapkan oleh Tentara Nasional Indonesia Angkatan Darat (TNI AD), khususnya melalui Pusat Pendidikan Pengmilum (Pusdik Pengmilum) di bawah Komando Pembinaan Doktrin, Pendidikan, dan Latihan Angkatan Darat (Kodiklatad), dalam menangkal disinformasi dan hoaks yang beredar di media sosial. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan pengumpulan data melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi, dan analisis dokumen yang melibatkan personel komunikasi, tenaga pendidik, dan pimpinan institusi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa komunikasi strategis dilaksanakan melalui perencanaan yang sistematis, pemanfaatan media multikanal, penyusunan pesan yang berorientasi pada audiens, serta integrasi pendekatan komunikasi informatif, persuasif, dan partisipatif. Institusi memanfaatkan media milik sendiri (owned media), media yang diperoleh melalui kerja sama (earned media), dan media bersama (shared media), yang didukung oleh konten multimedia, storytelling, counter-narrative, serta analitik digital untuk meningkatkan keterlibatan audiens dan memperkuat kredibilitas institusi. Efektivitas komunikasi didukung oleh sumber daya manusia yang kompeten, infrastruktur teknologi, kolaborasi antarorganisasi, komitmen kepemimpinan, pembelajaran organisasi, serta kepercayaan publik. Namun demikian, masih terdapat berbagai tantangan, antara lain penyebaran disinformasi yang sangat cepat, keterbatasan sumber daya manusia, ketimpangan literasi digital, kendala teknologi, fragmentasi perhatian audiens, serta menurunnya tingkat kepercayaan terhadap institusi. Secara keseluruhan, penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa komunikasi strategis tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai sarana penyebaran informasi, tetapi juga sebagai mekanisme untuk memperkuat literasi digital, menjaga integritas informasi, dan meningkatkan ketahanan organisasi dalam menghadapi ancaman informasi yang terus berkembang di era digital.

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1. Introduction

The rapid development of information and communication technologies in the digital era has significantly transformed the way individuals interact, access information, and participate in social, political, economic, and security activities (Nasrullah, 2022). Social media, as one of the primary products of the digital era, has evolved into a new public sphere where information spreads rapidly without spatial and temporal

limitations. In Indonesia, social media has become an integral part of everyday life. According to the report by We Are Social and Hootsuite, the number of active social media users in Indonesia reached more than 167 million, representing approximately 79% of the total population (We Are Social, 2024). This indicates that social media functions as a dominant channel through which people obtain information, form opinions, and engage in social interactions.

However, the rapid flow of information through social media has not only created positive impacts but has also generated serious challenges, particularly the widespread dissemination of disinformation and hoaxes. Disinformation refers to intentionally misleading or false information created for specific purposes, while hoaxes are fabricated news designed to manipulate public opinion or create panic (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). Data from the Ministry of Communication and Informatics indicate that from 2018 to 2023, more than 12,000 hoax-related contents were identified across digital platforms, covering issues such as politics, health, religion, national security, and defense (Kominfo, 2023). This phenomenon demonstrates that social media is not merely a communication platform but also a battlefield for information that may influence social and political stability. Within the context of national defense, disinformation and hoaxes are categorized as non-military threats with significant potential risks (BSSN, 2022). The concept of information warfare explains that information can be used as a strategic weapon to weaken opponents without employing conventional military force (Thomas, 2020). Through the use of disinformation, certain actors may create distrust toward state institutions, generate social unrest, and even threaten national unity (Tapsell, 2021).

Indonesia, as one of the countries with the largest internet user populations in the world, has become particularly vulnerable to information-based threats (APJII, 2023). Several cases of viral hoaxes circulating on social media demonstrate how misleading information can rapidly influence public perception. For instance, misinformation related to COVID-19 vaccination programs, military operations, and national security issues has contributed to public confusion and declining trust in government institutions (Pradana, 2022). The National Cyber and Crypto Agency further emphasized that disinformation constitutes a form of cyber threat capable of disrupting national resilience (BSSN, 2022). In this context, the Indonesian Army (TNI AD) plays a strategic role in addressing information threats. Based on Law Number 34 of 2004 concerning the Indonesian National Armed Forces, one of the primary tasks of the military is to conduct Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW), which includes assisting the government in overcoming various forms of threats to national sovereignty, including non-military threats such as disinformation and hoaxes (Law No. 34 of 2004). Therefore, military institutions are required not only to maintain physical defense capabilities but also to adapt to the challenges of digital information warfare (Huda, 2021).

To effectively address these challenges, military institutions require structured and systematic communication strategies. Communication strategy is defined as the planning and implementation of communication activities designed to achieve specific objectives (Cangara, 2021). In the context of countering hoaxes, communication strategies must focus on educating the public, correcting misinformation, and strengthening institutional credibility in the digital public sphere. Without effective communication strategies, institutional responses to disinformation may become ineffective and potentially reduce public trust in defense institutions (Suryadi, 2022). One of the key institutions within the Indonesian Army responsible for human resource development is the Military Education and Science Center (Pusat Pendidikan Pengetahuan Militer Umum – Pusdik Pengmilum) under the Army Doctrine, Education, and Training Command (Kodiklatad). This institution plays a strategic role in developing professional military personnel equipped with educational competencies and communication capabilities required in contemporary information environments (Kodiklatad, 2022). Through structured educational programs, including instructor training and language development courses, the institution contributes to strengthening the capacity of military personnel to engage effectively with information-related challenges (Hidayat, 2023).

Given the increasing complexity of information warfare in social media environments, countering disinformation requires more than reactive actions such as deleting misleading content. Instead, it requires proactive strategies including the development of counter-narratives, dissemination of credible information, and strategic engagement with digital audiences (Wijaya, 2022). Furthermore, communication approaches should not rely solely on restrictive measures but must incorporate persuasive and educational communication to enhance public digital literacy and critical thinking skills (Hapsari, 2021). Despite the growing importance of communication strategies within military institutions, empirical research focusing on military-based communication strategies in Indonesia remains limited. Previous studies have predominantly focused on government institutions, media organizations, and civil society actors in addressing misinformation (Savitri, 2020). Therefore, examining the role of the Indonesian Army, particularly through Pusdik Pengmilum Kodiklatad, offers a valuable contribution to the field of communication studies, especially within the context of strategic communication and national defense (Iswanto, 2023). Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze how the Indonesian Army designs and implements strategic communication in countering disinformation and hoaxes on social media. This research contributes both theoretically and practically to the development of strategic communication models in military institutions facing digital information threats (Cangara, 2021; Suryadi, 2022).

2. Method

This study employed a qualitative research design using a case study approach to examine the implementation of strategic communication in countering disinformation and hoaxes on social media. Qualitative research is suitable for exploring complex social phenomena that require an in-depth understanding of processes, meanings, and contextual interactions (Creswell, 2018). The case study approach enabled the researcher to investigate communication practices within their real-life setting and to analyze how communication strategies are planned, implemented, and evaluated (Yin, 2018).

The research was conducted at the Military Education and Science Center (Pusat Pendidikan Pengetahuan Militer Umum – Pusdik Pengmilum), which operates under the Army Doctrine, Education, and Training Command (Kodiklatad). This institution was selected because of its strategic role in developing military human resources, particularly in communication, education, information management, and digital literacy. Through various educational and training programs, Pusdik Pengmilum contributes to strengthening communication competencies and addressing the challenges posed by disinformation in digital environments.

Informants were selected using purposive sampling based on their knowledge, experience, and involvement in communication activities related to information management. Purposive sampling enables researchers to identify individuals capable of providing rich and relevant information (Sugiyono, 2019). The informants included military officers, communication personnel, instructors, media practitioners, and digital literacy experts. Their diverse backgrounds provided multiple perspectives and contributed to a comprehensive understanding of institutional communication practices.

Data collection employed multiple techniques to enhance the completeness and credibility of findings. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Semi-structured interviews explored communication planning, message development, media selection, and evaluation mechanisms used in countering disinformation. Observation was conducted to examine communication practices, interaction patterns, and coordination processes within the institution. Documentation analysis involved institutional reports, communication guidelines, training materials, policy documents, and social media content. These sources were used to identify communication patterns and institutional responses to misinformation.

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Data reduction involved selecting, coding, and organizing information obtained from interviews, observations, and documents into themes related to strategic communication processes. The organized data were then presented in descriptive narratives and tables to facilitate interpretation and identify recurring patterns. Conclusions were drawn based on the identified themes and continuously verified through repeated examination of data. To enhance the credibility and reliability of the findings, this study employed triangulation by comparing information obtained from multiple sources and methods (Creswell, 2018).

3. Result and Discussion

Bagian ini adalah bagian terpenting dari artikel Anda. Analisis atau hasil penelitian harus jelas dan singkat. Hasilnya harus meringkas temuan (ilmiah) daripada memberikan data dengan sangat rinci. Harap sorot perbedaan antara hasil atau temuan Anda dan publikasi sebelumnya oleh peneliti lain.

3.1.1. Strategic Communication Planning

The findings indicate that the Indonesian Army, particularly through Pusdik Pengmilum under Kodiklatad, implements structured communication planning as a fundamental strategy for countering disinformation and hoaxes on social media. Communication planning is closely aligned with institutional missions aimed at strengthening public trust, maintaining organizational legitimacy, and preserving institutional credibility. In the contemporary information environment, communication is viewed not merely as a means of information dissemination but as a strategic resource that supports organizational resilience. Effective communication therefore requires clear objectives, coordinated actions, and adaptation to dynamic digital environments (Zerfass et al., 2018).

An important component of planning involves audience analysis to understand the characteristics of military personnel, students, and the wider public. Particular attention is given to demographic characteristics, digital literacy levels, information needs, and patterns of social media consumption. This audience-centered approach enables communication planners to tailor messages according to the cognitive and behavioral characteristics of different groups. These findings support Lock et al. (2020), who argue that strategic communication effectiveness depends on understanding audience expectations and adapting messages accordingly. The complexity of digital environments increasingly requires evidence-based audience segmentation.

Communication planning also includes the formulation of key themes emphasizing institutional credibility, patriotism, national resilience, and digital literacy awareness. Informants stressed that communication content should prioritize accuracy, clarity, consistency, and transparency to prevent misunderstanding and reduce the spread of misinformation. These findings are consistent with Vos and Schoemaker (2021), who highlight that trust-building communication relies heavily on message consistency and organizational credibility. In this context, institutions are expected not only to disseminate accurate information but also to establish long-term trust with audiences.

The study further reveals that communication planning involves careful selection of communication channels. Social media platforms, official websites, educational forums, and internal communication networks are utilized according to audience preferences and accessibility. This reflects recognition that digital platforms have become central arenas for information exchange and public opinion formation. Bradshaw and Howard (2019) argue that strategic channel selection is essential because social media facilitate the rapid circulation of both factual information and disinformation.

Moreover, communication planning at Pusdik Pengmilum is characterized by coordination among communication personnel, instructors, and institutional leaders.

Cross-functional collaboration ensures consistency between communication objectives and organizational values. This integrated approach reflects the concept of communicative organizations proposed by Heide et al. (2018), which emphasizes that communication should be embedded within institutional processes rather than treated as isolated activities.

3.1.2. Implementation of Communication Strategies

The findings reveal that communication strategy implementation within the Indonesian Army, particularly through Pusdik Pengmilum, involves coordinated activities aimed at disseminating accurate information and responding to misinformation circulating on social media. The institution adopts a multi-layered approach that integrates informative, persuasive, and participatory communication models. This approach reflects the need to combine information dissemination with audience engagement and digital awareness development. According to Zerfass et al. (2018), strategic communication should integrate organizational objectives with stakeholder engagement to strengthen legitimacy and trust.

Informative communication is implemented through official websites, social media platforms, educational forums, and internal communication networks. Communication activities emphasize accuracy, timeliness, and consistency to minimize uncertainty and prevent information distortion. These findings support Bennett and Livingston (2018), who argue that credible information sources are essential for countering the disruptive effects of disinformation in digital environments.

Persuasive communication represents another important element. Communication personnel encourage audiences to verify information before sharing it and promote digital responsibility through messages emphasizing critical thinking and media literacy. This approach corresponds with Vraga and Bode (2020), who demonstrate that corrective communication and digital literacy interventions improve individuals' ability to recognize misleading information and reduce the spread of false content.

Participatory communication is implemented through interactive mechanisms that enable audience engagement and feedback. Communication officers monitor public responses and provide clarification when misinformation emerges. This process allows institutions to understand audience concerns and maintain relationships with stakeholders. Such findings are consistent with Kent and Taylor's (2018) concept of dialogic communication, which highlights interaction and responsiveness as essential dimensions of effective communication.

One important practice identified in this study is the development of counter-narratives. Rather than merely denying false claims, communication personnel provide alternative explanations supported by evidence and contextual information. According to Lewandowsky et al. (2017), misinformation can be addressed more effectively by replacing inaccurate information with coherent narratives that are easier for audiences to understand and remember. To enhance accessibility, counter-narratives are delivered through simple language, infographics, short videos, and visual storytelling. Tandoc et al. (2018) note that communication effectiveness in digital environments depends not only on message accuracy but also on attractive and interactive formats.

The study also highlights the importance of storytelling. Narratives emphasizing patriotism, public service, and institutional values are considered more engaging than purely informational messages. Storytelling creates emotional connections and strengthens audience identification with institutional messages. This finding supports Gill (2015), who argues that storytelling increases message memorability and persuasive impact.

Furthermore, communication implementation is supported by continuous coordination among communication personnel, instructors, and institutional leaders. Such collaboration ensures message consistency and facilitates rapid responses to emerging information threats. Heide et al. (2018) emphasize that communication should be integrated into organizational processes to enhance adaptability and resilience.

3.1.3. Communication Media Utilization

The findings reveal that the Indonesian Army, particularly Pusdik Pengmilum under Kodiklatad, employs a multi-channel communication strategy to disseminate information and counter disinformation circulating on social media. Communication media are used not only as channels of information distribution but also as strategic tools for building credibility, strengthening institutional legitimacy, and fostering public engagement. This integrated approach reflects the need for adaptive communication within increasingly diverse digital media ecosystems (Zerfass et al., 2018).

The institution utilizes communication media that can be categorized into owned media, earned media, and shared media. Owned media include official websites, institutional social media accounts, internal communication platforms, and educational portals. These channels function as primary sources of verified information and enable full control over message content and timing. Informants emphasized that official communication channels are essential for maintaining message consistency and preventing information distortion. This finding supports Macnamara (2018), who argues that owned media enhance credibility and facilitate direct communication with stakeholders. Internal communication systems also support coordination among organizational units and strengthen institutional resilience during periods of information uncertainty, as emphasized by Falkheimer and Heide (2018).

In addition to owned media, the institution utilizes earned media through collaboration with mass media organizations. Media partnerships increase the visibility and credibility of institutional communication by distributing official information through news coverage and interviews. Informants noted that mainstream media remain trusted information sources. These findings are consistent with Bennett and Livingston (2018), who argue that credible journalistic institutions play an important role in mitigating disinformation and maintaining information integrity.

Shared media platforms, including Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and X, constitute another important component of communication strategy. These platforms facilitate real-time communication and enable institutions to respond rapidly to misinformation while maintaining interaction with audiences. Social media are particularly effective in reaching younger generations. According to Kietzmann et al. (2018), social media have transformed communication by creating participatory and interactive communication environments.

The findings further indicate that communication content increasingly relies on multimedia formats, including images, infographics, animations, short videos, and audiovisual materials. Informants emphasized that visual communication improves audience attention and message retention. This finding supports Sundar (2020), who demonstrates that multimedia communication enhances engagement and facilitates information processing. Storytelling and short-form videos distributed through YouTube and Instagram Reels are also considered effective for delivering institutional values and educational messages. Appel et al. (2018) highlight that narratives and visual storytelling strengthen persuasion and message memorability.

Social media are utilized not only for information dissemination but also for audience engagement and dialogue. Communication personnel actively respond to comments, clarify misinformation, and monitor public reactions. Such two-way communication enhances transparency and institutional legitimacy. This observation aligns with Kent and Taylor (2018), who emphasize the importance of dialogic communication in fostering mutual understanding and stakeholder participation.

Furthermore, social media analytics tools are employed to evaluate communication performance through indicators such as reach, engagement rates, audience demographics, and feedback. These data help communication personnel refine future strategies and identify emerging disinformation trends. Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019) argue that digital analytics are essential for evidence-based communication, while Bradshaw and Howard (2019) emphasize the importance of combining communication expertise with technological capabilities to address information disorder.

3.1.4. Counter-Disinformation Techniques

The study identifies several specific techniques employed by the institution to counter disinformation and hoaxes circulating on social media. These techniques encompass debunking, prebunking, and digital literacy initiatives, which together constitute a combination of reactive and preventive communication strategies.

Debunking represents the most frequently used corrective mechanism. It involves identifying false or misleading information and providing timely corrections based on verified evidence. Communication personnel collaborate with subject-matter experts and official authorities to ensure the accuracy and credibility of corrective messages. According to Lewandowsky et al. (2012), effective debunking requires clear explanations, factual evidence, and repeated exposure to accurate information to counter the persistence of misinformation. Similarly, Walter and Murphy (2018) argue that corrections are more effective when they are communicated promptly and originate from trusted sources. In practice, debunking activities are implemented through official statements, social media posts, and clarifications disseminated through institutional communication channels.

Besides reactive corrections, the institution also adopts prebunking strategies aimed at preventing misinformation before it spreads widely. Prebunking focuses on increasing audience awareness regarding common characteristics of deceptive content, such as emotional manipulation, misleading headlines, and fabricated visual materials. This approach is consistent with inoculation theory, which suggests that exposing individuals to weakened forms of misinformation can increase resistance to future

manipulation (McGuire, 1964). Recent studies by van der Linden et al. (2020) demonstrate that prebunking interventions significantly enhance individuals' ability to recognize misleading information and reduce susceptibility to disinformation campaigns. Roozenbeek et al. (2022) further show that psychological inoculation techniques are effective across diverse social and cultural contexts.

Digital literacy programs constitute another essential component of counter-disinformation efforts. These programs are implemented through seminars, workshops, public awareness campaigns, and training sessions designed to strengthen critical thinking and information verification skills. Participants are encouraged to assess source credibility, cross-check information with reliable references, and avoid disseminating unverified content. Research by Guess et al. (2020) indicates that media literacy interventions improve individuals' capacity to distinguish factual information from false narratives. Likewise, Vraga and Bode (2017) emphasize that digital literacy enhances resilience against online misinformation by fostering critical evaluation of media content.

The findings reveal that combining corrective and preventive communication strategies enhances the overall effectiveness of counter-disinformation initiatives. Preventive communication reduces audience vulnerability to misleading information, while corrective communication addresses misinformation that has already circulated. This combination reflects the concept of strategic communication resilience proposed by Bennett and Livingston (2018), which highlights the importance of integrating multiple approaches to mitigate the influence of disinformation ecosystems.

Furthermore, counter-disinformation efforts are strengthened through continuous monitoring and rapid-response mechanisms. Communication personnel actively monitor social media conversations to identify emerging false narratives and respond before they gain broader traction. Such practices align with findings by Bradshaw and Howard (2019), who emphasize that timely responses and digital monitoring are essential for mitigating the viral spread of misinformation.

The findings are also consistent with studies conducted in military and governmental institutions. Bjola and Pamment (2019) argue that strategic communication organizations increasingly combine fact-checking, digital literacy, and audience engagement to confront information manipulation in the digital era. Similarly, Wardle and Derakhshan (2017) note that effective counter-disinformation policies require not only content correction but also the development of societal resilience through media literacy and public awareness.

3.1.5. Evaluation of Communication Strategies

Evaluation constitutes an integral component of strategic communication management and is conducted continuously to assess the effectiveness of communication activities in countering disinformation and maintaining public trust. Evaluation is embedded throughout the communication cycle and functions as a mechanism for organizational learning and adaptation. The institution assesses communication performance through several indicators, including response speed, message accuracy, audience engagement, public perception, and communication effectiveness. These indicators help identify strengths and weaknesses and provide guidance for improving future communication practices.

Response speed is considered a critical indicator because the rapid dissemination of information in digital environments requires timely intervention. Communication personnel prioritize early detection and immediate responses to emerging misinformation to prevent false narratives from spreading widely. Informants emphasized that delayed clarification often increases uncertainty and creates opportunities for misinformation to circulate. Continuous media monitoring and coordination among communication units support rapid response mechanisms. These findings support Coombs' (2019) argument that timely responses are essential for preserving organizational credibility and reducing reputational risks. Likewise, Veil et al. (2011) emphasize the importance of speed and transparency in effective digital crisis communication.

Message accuracy and consistency also represent important dimensions of evaluation. Information disseminated through official channels is routinely reviewed through expert consultation and verification with authoritative sources. Informants noted that inaccurate corrections may undermine institutional credibility and create additional confusion. Therefore, communication effectiveness depends not only on speed but also on information reliability and consistency. This finding is consistent with Men and Bowen (2017), who argue that organizational credibility is strongly influenced by trustworthy communication content.

Audience engagement is evaluated using social media analytics, including impressions, views, comments, shares, likes, and interaction rates. Communication personnel also analyze audience responses to identify concerns, misconceptions, and issues requiring clarification. According to Lovejoy and Saxton (2012), social media engagement provides valuable insights into audience expectations and supports more interactive communication.

Public perception is assessed through social media feedback, direct communication, and interactions with stakeholders. Informants emphasized that communication effectiveness must consider how audiences interpret institutional messages. This finding aligns with the dialogic communication perspective proposed by Kent and Taylor (2016), which highlights reciprocal communication and relationship building.

The study further shows that evaluation extends beyond measuring outputs and focuses on broader impacts, including reducing misinformation, improving public understanding, and strengthening trust. Recurring misinformation themes are documented and used to anticipate future challenges. Evaluation meetings involving communication personnel, experts, and institutional leaders facilitate organizational learning and support coordinated communication practices. This process reflects the organizational learning concept of Argyris and Schön (1996), emphasizing reflection and feedback as sources of effectiveness.

Moreover, communication evaluation functions as a strategic tool for adapting to changing digital communication patterns, audience preferences, and emerging forms of disinformation. According to Macnamara (2018), contemporary strategic communication increasingly depends on evaluation systems that promote organizational learning and adaptive decision-making. Overall, evaluation represents a continuous cycle of assessment, learning, and improvement that strengthens institutional resilience and supports adaptive communication governance in the digital era.

3.1.6. Supporting Factors in Strategic Communication

The findings indicate that the effectiveness of strategic communication is supported by the interaction of organizational, technological, and human factors. Successful communication depends on competent personnel, technological capabilities, institutional collaboration, and leadership commitment, which together create an adaptive environment for responding to evolving information challenges.

One of the most important supporting factors is competent human resources. Communication personnel possess expertise in media management, public relations, content production, and digital communication, and regularly participate in training programs related to strategic communication, fact-checking, and social media management. Their competencies include not only technical abilities but also analytical and interpersonal skills required to understand audiences and adapt messages to different contexts. This finding supports Macnamara (2018), who emphasizes the importance of professional competence and organizational learning, and Zerfass et al. (2018), who highlight the need for strategic thinking, media literacy, and technological proficiency among communication professionals.

Technological infrastructure also plays a crucial role. Communication personnel utilize social media platforms, content management systems, multimedia software, and analytics tools to disseminate and evaluate information. Digital technologies enhance responsiveness by enabling communication teams to monitor audience reactions and detect misinformation in real time. These findings are consistent with Castells (2010), who argues that digital networks have transformed organizational communication into more interactive processes, and Kietzmann et al. (2011), who emphasize the role of social media technologies in strengthening audience engagement.

Institutional collaboration further strengthens communication effectiveness. Cooperation with media organizations, universities, government agencies, and external stakeholders expands dissemination capacity and facilitates information coordination. Such collaborative networks support resource mobilization and collective responses to public issues. This finding supports the network governance perspective proposed by Provan and Kenis (2008) and the interorganizational collaboration framework developed by Agranoff and McGuire (2003).

Leadership support emerged as another significant factor. Leaders provide strategic direction, allocate resources, and foster a culture of transparency and responsiveness. Their involvement strengthens organizational commitment and coordination among communication units. This observation corresponds with Men and Stacks (2014), who found that leadership communication influences organizational effectiveness and employee engagement, and Heide and Simonsson (2015), who emphasize the importance of supportive leadership for organizational adaptability.

The study also reveals that organizational culture and accumulated experience contribute to communication effectiveness. A culture characterized by cooperation, openness, and continuous learning facilitates knowledge sharing and collective problem-solving. Lessons derived from previous communication activities are incorporated into planning and evaluation processes, enabling organizations to anticipate challenges and improve performance over time. This finding reflects the organizational learning perspective of Argyris and Schön (1996).

Public trust functions as an additional external factor supporting communication effectiveness. Informants noted that credibility is built through transparency, consistency, and message accuracy, encouraging audiences to rely on official information sources. This finding is consistent with Hon and Grunig (1999), who argue that trust represents a fundamental dimension of organizational-public relationships.

3.1.7. Inhibiting Factors in Strategic Communication

Despite various supporting factors, the findings reveal several challenges that hinder the effectiveness of strategic communication in countering disinformation and maintaining public trust. These constraints arise from the characteristics of digital media, organizational limitations, audience-related factors, and technological challenges, creating complexities that require organizational adaptability and continuous capacity development.

One of the most significant challenges is the rapid spread of misinformation across social media platforms. Informants emphasized that false narratives often circulate faster than official clarifications because social media algorithms and emotionally charged content enable misleading information to reach audiences almost instantly. Even after corrections are issued, misinformation frequently continues to spread through private messaging applications and informal online communities. This finding supports Vosoughi, Roy, and Aral (2018), who demonstrate that false information spreads faster and reaches wider audiences than factual information. Similarly, Wardle and Derakhshan (2017) argue that interconnected digital networks facilitate the rapid diffusion of misinformation and complicate corrective efforts.

Another important constraint concerns limited human resources. Communication personnel are expected to perform multiple tasks simultaneously, including media monitoring, content production, public engagement, crisis response, and evaluation. Heavy workloads sometimes reduce response speed and limit the production of diverse communication content. This finding supports Macnamara (2018), who emphasizes that communication effectiveness depends on adequate organizational resources, and Zerfass et al. (2018), who highlight the increasing demands placed on communication professionals in the digital era.

Low levels of digital literacy among certain segments of society also contribute to the persistence of misinformation. Informants observed that individuals with limited verification skills are more likely to accept and redistribute unverified information. Emotional narratives and sensational content often influence public perceptions more strongly than evidence-based information. These findings are consistent with Guess et al. (2020), who found that media literacy interventions improve the ability to distinguish between factual and misleading information, and Vraga and Bode (2017), who argue that low information literacy increases susceptibility to misinformation.

Technological and resource limitations constitute another challenge. Informants explained that constraints in software, monitoring systems, and content production facilities restrict the implementation of more sophisticated communication strategies. This observation aligns with Castells (2010), who argues that access to communication technologies represents an important source of informational power. Likewise, Kietzmann et al. (2011) emphasize that effective use of digital platforms requires organizational readiness and continuous innovation.

Bureaucratic procedures and coordination mechanisms also affect communication effectiveness. The need for consultation and approval across multiple organizational levels sometimes delays responses, creating tensions between message accuracy and speed. This observation supports Coombs (2019), who notes that organizations frequently struggle to maintain both precision and timeliness during crises.

Furthermore, fragmented audience attention and declining institutional trust present broader contextual challenges. Informants explained that official information competes with entertainment content and algorithm-driven narratives that often attract greater public attention. This finding corresponds with Bennett and Livingston (2018), who describe the current information environment as fragmented and characterized by declining authority of traditional information sources. Similarly, Edelman (2022) reports declining trust in institutions and emphasizes the importance of credibility in communication.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that strategic communication implemented by the Indonesian Army, particularly through the Military Education and Science Center (Pusdik Pengmilum) under Kodiklatad, constitutes a comprehensive and adaptive approach to addressing the growing challenges of disinformation and hoaxes in the digital era. Communication is no longer viewed merely as an instrument for disseminating information but as a strategic resource that supports institutional legitimacy, strengthens public trust, and enhances organizational resilience.

The findings reveal that communication planning is systematically conducted through the formulation of clear objectives, audience analysis, message development, and the selection of appropriate communication channels. Communication implementation combines informative, persuasive, and participatory approaches, supported by counter-narratives, storytelling, visual communication, and continuous interaction with audiences. The institution utilizes an integrated media ecosystem consisting of owned media, earned media, and shared media, complemented by multimedia content and digital analytics to improve communication effectiveness and audience engagement.

The study further indicates that communication effectiveness is supported by several interrelated factors, including competent human resources, technological infrastructure, institutional collaboration, leadership support, organizational culture, organizational learning, and public trust. These factors create an enabling environment that allows communication strategies to remain responsive and adaptive to evolving information threats.

However, the findings also identify significant challenges, including the rapid diffusion of misinformation, limited human resources, uneven digital literacy, technological constraints, bureaucratic procedures, fragmented audience attention, and declining trust in institutions. These interconnected challenges highlight that countering disinformation requires more than technical communication capabilities; it demands continuous organizational learning, capacity building, and adaptive governance.

Overall, the study concludes that effective strategic communication in the digital information environment depends on the integration of planning, implementation, media utilization, evaluation, and organizational support mechanisms. Communication therefore functions not only as a means of transmitting information but also as a strategic instrument for promoting digital literacy, maintaining information integrity, strengthening institutional credibility, and enhancing resilience against increasingly complex information threats.

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