

# COVID-19 Hoax News in Indonesian Context: Looking Beyond the Essence Using Content Analysis

Yusri Yusri \*, Mantasiah Rivai, & Muhammad Anwar

Universitas Negeri Makassar, Makassar, Indonesia

yusri@unm.ac.id

## ARTICLE HISTORY

Received : 2022-01-26

Revised : 2022-07-21

Accepted : 2022-08-03

## KEYWORDS

Content analysis

Mass trauma

Hoax news

Covid-19

Symbols



## ABSTRACT

The hoax has been widely discussed in many studies employing various approaches, and one of the hoaxes massively spread recently is news about COVID-19. This qualitative study aims at investigating the essence of hoax news related to COVID-19 in the Indonesian context using a content analysis approach. The main source of data was 50 hoax news collected from [turnbackhoax.com](http://turnbackhoax.com), which is one of the credible anti-hoax news sources in Indonesia. The present study collected the news from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2022 until 30<sup>th</sup> March 2020. They were then analysed and interpreted qualitatively. The research findings revealed that hoax news circulated during this pandemic era mostly had the purpose of sparking public panic, especially panic buying and panic moving. To trigger such a condition, writers of hoax news frequently used symbols such as time markers (time signals) and quantifiers and involved famous figures. This implies that hoaxes are not only spread during political events or other important occasions but also when most humans in the world experience mass trauma, which in this case is due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 1. Introduction

Hoax news is a topic that many researchers have extensively studied through various approaches. Many earlier studies investigated hoaxes from a linguistic perspective. Previous studies on hoax news focused on investigating the meaning of each word or sentence and the purposes of their usages based on linguistic theories like discourse, critical discourse analysis, and cognitive linguistics (Volkova et al., 2017; Walsh, 2006; Pérez, 2012; Marbun, 2020). Besides linguistics, psychology also widely discusses hoax news to explain what motivates people to spread hoaxes (Rahayu et al., 2019; Ilahi, 2018) and other social theories such as social network analysis (Ginting, Manongga, & Sembiring, 2018).

Besides various approaches, hoax news has also been studied within different disciplines. Some researchers studied hoaxes related to politics, like how they affect the electability of a politician or a political party and how they are used to bring down political opponents (Utami, 2018; Chua et al., 2016; Park & Rim, 2019; Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). Besides politics, the hoax is also widely discussed in the religious sector. In this case, the hoax news usually contains information that aims at disuniting societies with different faiths and reports about religious events, and some studies focused on how to identify hoaxes related to religion like Martinkova (2008), Salam (2018), Wimmer (1998), Tulung & Kalampung (2019).

Hoaxes related to the academic world are generally referred to as academic hoaxes. Some researchers who have investigated this topic are Ravitch (2014), Epafras, Djalong & Kaunang (2018), Grech (2019), and Glass & Shaughnessy (2015). Some studied hoaxes about academic policies, while others explored hoaxes related to sciences or health. The existence of studies related to hoaxes in politics, religion, academics, and other sectors show that hoax has become a big issue frequently found in all aspects of life. Hoax is highly related to the use of social media as it becomes the main media to share them (Santoso et al., 2017; Suyanto et al., 2018; Assiroj et al., 2018; Arif, 2016) like Facebook, WhatsApp, telegram, Instagram. Broadcasting hoax news involves some parties, including 1) a person who intentionally creates and spreads the news, 2) readers who also share the news, and 3) readers who only read without sharing the news. Readers who share the news usually do not have sufficient knowledge to accommodate them in analysing the materials' accuracy (Ilahi, 2018).

As explained before, hoaxes are generally spread before the general election, including the election of the regional head. In addition, hoaxes are usually circulated in national and international incidents. COVID-19 can be categorised as a non-natural disaster faced by all countries, including Indonesia. It became one of the biggest problems in the era as it led to thousands of victims in many countries, and the World

Health Organization (WHO) had put this case as a pandemic meaning that COVID-19 was a disease spreading widely all around the world. In other words, this disease has become a shared problem worldwide.

A problem faced by communities when this incident happened was that many hoax news spread that raised confusion in societies, and it was generally difficult for them to differentiate between facts and fakes. One of the negative impacts of hoax news is that the public will panic and tend to act negatively, which disadvantages society. The panic occurs due to uncontrolled anxiety after receiving the hoax news (Prasetijo et al., 2017; Putri et al., 2019; Zannettou et al., 2019). An example of hoax news spread in Indonesia during the COVID-19 pandemic was “Indonesia’s President is to regulate Lock-Down as soon as possible.” This hoax triggered panic among societies; hence many of them hoarded food and other daily necessities.

This study aimed to analyse the meaning of each word or sentence in hoax news related to COVID-19 using a content analysis approach. The difference between the current study from the earlier ones is the situation in which the hoaxes spread. Most previous studies investigated hoaxes in political events or daily lives like health and education. While in this study, the hoaxes were spread when most humans in the world experienced mass trauma caused by COVID-19. The findings of this study can be a comparison to other kinds of hoaxes circulated in different situations.

## 2. Method

This qualitative study employed a content analysis approach to investigate the essence of hoax news in the Indonesian context. This approach focuses on explaining how discourse messages are organised, used, and understood. It also shows the variations of strategies and messages used by the writers in formulating hoax news.

Data used in this study were 50 hoax news about COVID-19 circulated in Indonesia from 1st January 2020 to 30th March 2020. They were obtained from the site of the Indonesian hoax news collection (<https://turnbackhoax.id/>) managed by FAFHH (Anti-Defamation, Incitement, and Hoax Forum). Before the hoax news is posted on this site, it must be verified and confirmed to ensure the reliability of the content. The validity of this site had been attested in earlier studies which also used it as their source of data (Asidiky & Puspa, 2020; Ginting, Manongga, & Sembiring, 2018; Mustika, 2018; Pudjajana et al., 2018; Epafra, Djalong, & Kaunang, 2018).

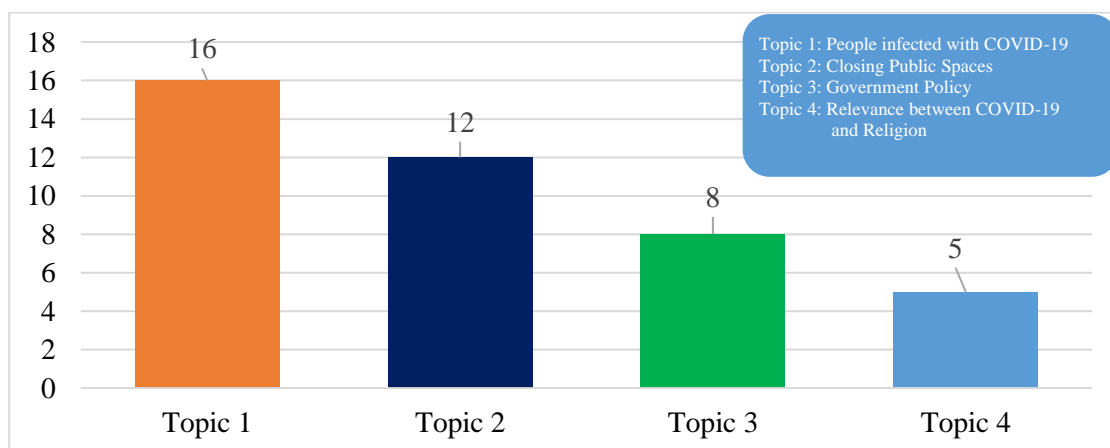
The data were analysed using the conventional content analysis technique. We used theory and previous research findings to analyse data as a guideline for initial coding. In conventional content analysis, coding categories are derived directly from text data (Walia, 2015). In ensuring the validity of the meaning from the researchers’ interpretation, two expert validators were involved to re-interpret the research data. Creswell (2012) explains that to ensure the validity of the coding process, we can involve “external auditor” as expert validators. The expert validators are linguists who have been well-experienced in conducting and publishing research articles related to content analysis in a qualitative study.

## 3. Results

This study aimed to investigate the essence of hoax news related to COVID-19 in the Indonesian context. In analysing the hoax news, the first step was to divide the collected hoax news into several different topics. This division was based on the similarity of the topics discussed in the news. It was to identify what topics are often reported as hoax news related to COVID-19.

### 3.1 Topics of Hoax News

Based on fifty data (hoax news) analysed in this study, in general, the topics can be divided into four main groups. More details can be seen in Figure 3.1:



**Figure 3.1.** Topics of Hoax News

Data depicted in Figure 3.1 shows that most hoax news circulated among societies were under two main topics, namely hoaxes about people infected with Coronavirus and the closing of public places as a solution to prevent the widespread of the Coronavirus. The following are some examples of news titles about the topics:

### 3.1.1 Topic 1: People Infected with Corona Virus (16 News)

The hoax news on this topic focused on announcing people who had tested positive for COVID-19.

*“Ratusan Warga China yang Menetap di Indonesia Menuju Singapura karena Virus Corona”* (Hundreds of Chinese Citizens Residing in Indonesia are Heading to Singapore due to Corona Virus)

*Title 1 Source: Helsyanto (2020)*

*“Jokowi Positif Corona”* (Jokowi is positive for Corona Virus)

*Title 2 Source: Khairil (2020)*

*“Dosen Kedokteran Gigi UI Meninggal Karena COVID-19”* (A Dentistry Lecturer of UI has passed away due to Covid-19)

*Title 3 Source: Khairil (2020)*

The data shows that some people mentioned infected with this virus were the crucial people of the country like the President, Ministries, and other famous figures. For example, hoax news in **Title 2** mentions the President of the Indonesian Republic (Joko Widodo), and hoax news in **Title 3** mentions a dentistry lecturer at the University of Indonesia.

Both President and dentistry lecturer are categorised as important figures. In addition to mentioning important people, hoax news on this topic also uses quantifiers to exaggerate the number of people infected with COVID-19. **Title 1** informs that hundreds of Chinese citizens got infected. The use of the symbol of quantifier tends to make the readers panic.

### 3.1.2 Topic 2: Closing of a Public Place due to Corona Virus Pandemic (12 News)

Besides related to people infected with COVID-19, other news that has triggered societies' panic was about the temporary closing of public places like markets, supermarkets, and offices as a solution to prevent the spread of Coronavirus. Some examples of the titles in the second topic are:

*“Antisipasi Corona, Seluruh BUMN DKI Ditutup”* (Anticipating Corona, all DKI state-owned corporations are closed)

*Title 4 Source: Syafitrah (2020)*

*“Pasar Wameo dan Karya Nugraha di Tutup selama 1 minggu”* (Wameo and Karya Nugraha Markets are closed for 1 week)

*Title 5 Source: Khairil (2020)*

*“Pandemi Corona, Anies Baswedan : Universitas di Jakarta Diliburkan, Kecuali Universitas Pancasila”* (Corona Pandemic, Anies Baswedan: Universities in Jakarta are Closed, Except The University of Pancasila)

*Title 6 Source: Khairil (2020)*

The use of quantifiers can be seen in the hoax news **Titles 4 and 5**. In title 4, “all (*seluruh*)” means that COVID-19 affected all corporations in Jakarta. Whereas, **Title 6** informs Anies Baswedan meaning that it used symbols of an important or famous figure. Involving a famous figure in the news aims to make the reader more trusting of the news.

### 3.1.3 Topic 3: Government Policy (8 News)

To prevent the spread of COVID-19, the central and regional governments issued some policies. This matter then was also taken as material for hoax news. Some examples of news titles categorised in group 3 are:

*“Joko Widodo, Presiden Republik Indonesia, memberlakukan kerantina parsial terbatas”* (Joko Widodo, The President of Republic of Indonesia, imposes the limited partial quarantine)

*Title 7 Source: Syafitrah (2020)*

*“APD dari China Dibeli dengan Uang Pribadi Prabowo”* (PPE from China was Purchased using Personal Funds from Prabowo)

*Title 8 Source: Helsyanto (2020)*

The involvement of important figures as a symbol in hoax news can be found in hoax news **titles 7 and 8**. **Title 7** informs about Joko Widodo, who imposed a policy, and **title 8** informs about Prabowo Subianto, one of Indonesia's ministers. Involving a famous figure in the news aims to make the reader more trusting of the news.

### 3.1.4 Topic 4: Relevance between Corona Virus and Religion (5 News)

Other exciting data were the news correlated religious issues and this pandemic, like the trigger for COVID-19 and the power of a high priest to solve COVID-19. Some titles in this topic are:

*“Foto Perempuan Muslim Uighur yang Dizalimi dan Doanya Memicu Azab Virus Corona”* (The photo of Perverted Uighur Moslem Woman whose supplication has triggered the Corona Virus doom)

*Title 9 Source: Khairil (2020)*

“Di tanya soal virus corona korlap FPI: hanya imam besar kami yg punya penangkal virus corona, karna imam besar kami cucu nabi” (Asked about the Corona Virus, FPI corps: only our high priest who has the Corona Virus antidote, because our high priest is the grandson of the prophet)

*Title 10 Source: Khairil (2020)*

“Sholat Jum’atan di China menjadi lautan manusia, orang Islam di Wuhan tidak Satupun yang kena virus corona” (Jummah Pray in China became a sea of people, none of Moslems in Wuhan infected with Corona Virus)

*Title 11 Source: Rahayu (2020)*

The three news titles above correlated the incident of the Coronavirus pandemic with Islam. The first news informed that the Coronavirus was a punishment from God because some people wronged a Muslim woman from Uighur, and the supplication of the woman resulted in the Corona Virus pandemic. The idea in the news was connected with a belief in Islam that God will more easily answer the supplications of a person who has been wronged. A person whose honour, wealth, life, religion, or one of its rights is oppressed will have his supplications not rejected.

There is a similar pattern found in topic 4 with other hoax news. The involvement of important figures as a symbol in the hoax news can be found in **titles 12 and 13**. Title 12 informs about Uighur Moslem Woman, a famous woman, whereas title 13 informs about FPI corps. FPI is an Islamic Defenders Front, and the news's subject is the organisation's head. Moreover, **title 14** uses the symbol of the quantifier. *A sea of people* is a phrase that means that there are many people.

### 3.2 Hoax News Potency to Trigger Public's Panic

As explained before, most hoax news taken as the data in this study had the purpose of triggering society's panic. To understand further how hoax news stimulates panic among people, some data were analysed using a linguistic approach: a conventional content analysis.

#### 3.2.1 Data 1

*Title of Hoax News*

*Pasar-Pasar Tradisional di Tanjung Karang & Teluk Betung Mulai Besok Ada yang Tutup 3 Hari SD 5 Hari*

(There are Traditional markets in Tanjung Karang and Teluk Betung closed Starting From Tomorrow for 3- 5 days)

*Explanatory Information*

There was a chain message shared through Whatsapp stating that some markets in Tanjung Karang & Teluk Betung, Lampung would be closed

because the government would spray steriliser. The following is the fragment of the hoax news that potentially trigger societies' panic:

“Untuk saudara” yg mau beli obat/ vitamin utk persediaan di rumah,,,**belilah sekarang**, karna stok obat vitamin yg lg dibutuhkan saat ini stoknya sdh **menipis**., Distributor Farmasi obat”an & Expedisi byk yg diliburkan. Beberapa Pasar” Tradisional di Tjk.Karang & Teluk Betung **mulai besok** ada yg tutup 3hr SD 5hr karna mau d Semprot/Disterilisasi, dr pemerintah,,, Jadi yg mau beli Sayur”an **belilah sekarang**.,” (for you who want to buy drugs/vitamins for stock at home, buy now, because the supply of the vitamin needed at the moment is running low in stock. Many Pharmacies, Drug Distributors and Expeditions are Off. Some traditional markets in Tjk. Karang and Teluk Betung starting tomorrow are off for 3 to 5 days for spraying / sterilization from the government. So if you want to buy vegetables, you must buy now).

*Data 1 Source: Khairil (2020)*

Here, the writer used a time signal to trigger societies' panic like “*belilah sekarang* (buy now)” and “*mulai besok* (starting tomorrow)”. The phrase “buy now” is repeated twice, meaning the writer stressed the communities to immediately buy drugs, vitamins, or even materials for the leading food. Another time signal is the phrase “starting tomorrow” in the sentence “some markets are off starting tomorrow”. That day was the last chance for communities to purchase stuff they would need. Based on the data analysis, it can be concluded that the purpose of the writer of the hoaxes was to make societies panic or frightened, which potentially triggered panic buying among those who trusted the news.

#### 3.2.2 Data 2

*Title of Hoax News*

*Pasar Wameo dan Karya Nugraha ditutup selama 1 minggu (Wameo and Karya Nugraha Market are Closed for 1 week)*

*Explanatory information*

News circulated among the societies stated that Wameo and Karya Nugraha markets were to be closed to avoid crowds and to be sterilised. The following fragment of the hoax news that potentially triggers societies' panic:

“Assalamu Alaikum ... Info dari pedagang pasar Wameo dan Karya Nugraha dari Hasil Rapat tadi Siang di pasar Wameo bersama Wali kota Bau Bau, **Mulai Pekan depan** atau **senin depan** pasar Wameo dan Nugraha di Tutup **selama 1 minggu** , Untuk menghindari kerumunan Orang , dan pasar mau di bersihkan” (“Assalamu Alaikum, ...

this information comes from the merchants of Wameo and Karya Nugraha markets, based on the meeting conducted this afternoon in Wameo market with the Mayor of Bau Bau, Starting Next Week or next Monday, Wameo and Nugraha markets will be closed for 1 week, to avoid crowd, and the market will be cleaned).

*Data 2 Source: Kominfo (2020)*

The data shows similarities to the previous one as the news writer used time signals to trigger panic among societies. The time signals, in this case, are 'starting next week' and 'for one week'. This news was spread on Saturday night so the sentence "starting next week or next Monday" means the societies would only have a-day chance to purchase their primary needs in those markets, because starting Monday, both markets would be closed for one week. Therefore, the points emphasised in the news are that the societies had one day for shopping for their one week needs. Based on the data analysis, it can be concluded that hoax news also potentially provokes panic buying.

### 3.2.3 Data 3

*Title of Hoax News*

*Pemerintah Indonesia memberlakukan Lockdown mulai tanggal 20 Maret 2020 (Indonesia Governments Implement LockDown starting March 20, 2020)*

*Explanatory information*

A narration was shared through Whatsapp and Facebook, mentioning that the government was to lockdown Indonesia on Friday, 20th March 2020. A link showing the conference video of Minister of Foreign Affairs, RI, Retno Marsudi, was also attached to the message. Following is the fragment of the hoax news that potentially triggered societies' panic

*"Akhirnya, Indonesia berlakukan Lockdown mulai tengah malam nanti, Jumat (20/3/2020) pukul 00.01 WIB". (Finally, Indonesia is to implement lockdown starting this midnight, Friday (20/3/2020) at 00.01 WIB)*

*Data 3 Source: Kominfo (2020)*

The fragment above also used time signals that potentially trigger people's panic, like 'starting this midnight' followed by date and time (Friday, 20/3/2020, at 00.01 WIB). The decision to lockdown in the hoax news was made on 19/3/2020 at 13.00 WIB. The point emphasised in this news is that the duration of the lockdown remained at 11 hours only. It triggered panic, both panic buying and doing other activities outside the house.

### 3.2.4 Data 4

*Title of Hoax News*

*DKI Jakarta mulai besok Lock down Warga di luar Jakarta tidak dibolehkan masuk kecuali ada izin polisi*

(DKI Jakarta starting tomorrow lock down the societies outside Jakarta to enter the city except receiving a permit from the polices).

*Explanatory Information*

In social media and Whatsapp group chat, information stating that "DKI Jakarta starting tomorrow lock down the societies outside Jakarta to enter the city except receiving a permit from the polices" was spread. Following is the fragment of the hoax news that potentially triggered societies' panic

*"DKI Jakarta mulai besok Lock down Warga di luar Jakarta tidak dibolehkan masuk kecuali ada izin polisi". ("DKI Jakarta starting tomorrow lock down the societies outside Jakarta to enter the city except receiving a permit from the polices")*

*Data 4 Source: Syafitrah (2020)*

The component potentially triggering societies' panic from the news is the time signal and information of persons. The time signal refers to the phrase "starting tomorrow", which means that society did not have much time to perform activities as usual. Besides the time signal, in the news, the use of information about the person can be seen as in the phrase "residents outside Jakarta". The panic that could arise here is the panic moving to immediately go to Jakarta, considering that the following day, it would not be allowed to enter the city.

### 3.2.5 Data 5

*Title of Hoax News*

*Pasar Kodya Cirebon Ditutup Mulai 20 Maret 2020 (Kodya Market, Cirebon is closed from March 20, 2020)*

*Explanatory Information*

WhatsApp shared the news that Kodya Market in Cirebon would be closed on 20th March 2020. Following is the fragment of the hoax news that potentially triggered societies' panic

*"Mulai besok, jum'at 20 maret 2020 semua pasar wilayah kodya tutup serentak slama minimal 3 hari kedepan krn ada penyemprotan". (Starting tomorrow, Friday, March 20, 2020, all markets in the region of Kodya will be closed simultaneously for at least 3 days ahead for spraying")*

*Data 5 Source: Khairil (2020)*

The last datum also shows similarities to previous data in that the writer emphasised the time signal of the hoax news that had the potential to trigger panic among communities. The time signal in the hoax news can be noticed in the phrase 'starting tomorrow'. The time signal 'tomorrow' clearly means "in a moment", in this case, at least 2 hours. As a result, the societies believed that they were informed that the remaining time they

had to shop in the market to fulfil their primary needs three days ahead was 24 hours for maximum.

Besides that time signal, there was also information about the place that triggered panic. The information about the place can be found in the phrase "all markets in the region of Kodya". It means the communities would have no alternative places for shopping for three days ahead. Therefore, the potential emerging panic was panic buying.

#### 4. Discussion

There were various topics of hoax news circulating at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, like persons who were confirmed positive for COVID-19, lockdown or temporary closure of public places, and government policies. They were different from hoaxes circulated before the election of the regional head or the general election on social media, which were susceptible to bringing negative impacts to the unity of the nation like religion or tribal issues. Hoax generally aims to provoke Moslems as the dominant societies in the country or societies from particular tribes. Hoax news created for political purposes apparently may raise dangerous issues for national and social lives (Astrika, 2019; Hasfi, Santosa, & Lukamantoro, 2017).

Creating hoaxes has several motives like to cause panic or fear in the community. This point is in accordance with the findings of several previous studies conducted by Shiddiq (2020), Marbella et al. (2021), and Yunus & Rezki (2020), explaining that people who easily believe in hoax news have the potential to feel anxious, panicked, and afraid when reading it. Nevertheless, Dharmastuti et al. (2020) proves that there is evidence that hoaxes might make people more anxious. There are still few current pieces of literature about the effects of hoaxes on human health during the COVID-19 pandemic. The youthful, Internet-dependent Millennial generation has the highest level of anxiety. Moms or women from the millennial generation are already tech savvy. The pandemic undoubtedly exposes them to scams.

This study's findings also exhibit that several symbols are used in hoax news to provoke panic in readers. These symbols include time markers or modalities, quantifiers that exaggerate a quantity, and important figures (as objects discussed in the news). Using time markers (time signals) on hoax news can trigger panic in readers. The time marker in the data indicates that people do not have much time to do something, like shopping at a store or market and travelling to a place. There are several symbols of time markers widely used in hoax news, such as "starting tomorrow", "now", "1 week", and "just a few days". The concept of this time marker in linguistics can also be defined as a modality. Lyon (1969) explains that modality is related to the content of speech that is believed, doubted, expected, or assumed by the speaker. The concept of modality in this hoax news tends to be

a trusted modality. It can be noticed from the time markers, which refer to certainty or something that will happen. Halliday (1992) explains that to make the public understand the meaning and intention of the news text, we can add the concept of modality to the news text. It shows that the use of the time marker potentially makes readers easier to believe the information and triggers their panic.

Another symbol found in some hoax news is quantifiers. Quantifiers are words to indicate the quantity of a noun. However, the quantifier used here tends to exaggerate the quantity of the object it explains. Readers' panics tend to be triggered when they see victims in large numbers. There are several quantifier symbols that are generally used in hoax news, such as "hundreds", "all", "most", "many", and other quantifiers. This phenomenon can be explained through conformity theory. Panizza, Vostroknutov, & Coricelli (2021) and Mofakhami explain that conformity behaviour is the tendency to change one's beliefs or behaviour to conform to the behaviour of others. People's trust or belief in hoax news can potentially change when they see the number of people or other objects. Li et al. (2021) shows that the results reveal that panic buying can be explained as a response to both environmental stimuli. Li et al. (2021) proves that societal influence and social norms, as well as estimated vulnerability and severity of a pandemic event, might encourage consumers' perceptions of scarcity and affective responses, which in turn prompts impulsive panic buying and It can be occurred as influenced by numerous people. Numerous people can be seen clearly through the concept of quantifier.

Another factor that potentially triggers panic is the involvement of important figures to be objects discussed in the news. The involvement of important figures or famous figures causes people easily believe the news. When a figure like Jokowi as President of the Republic of Indonesia is replaced with another person not well known, readers may not believe the news. Even some readers will think that the news is not essential. Previous research conducted by Tanase et al. (2021) and Dan et al. (2021) show that news readers will respond differently when the figures discussed in the news are public or important political figures. This point is also explained through the concept of framing theory by Chong (2007), which states that the public will tend to be more easily influenced when the objects discussed in the news are well known by the readers.

Based on the discussion above, there are several symbols used in hoax news which potentially raise different responses than hoax news without symbols. The symbols used in hoax news include time markers, quantifiers, and famous figures. The reader's response can be in the form of panic or fear. This finding is related to the previous study conducted by Dharmastuti et al. (2020) showing that any hoaxes during this pandemic can make people more anxious. One indication of health anxiety is experiencing panic and

paranoia together with palpable physical symptoms. Several maladaptive behaviors resulted from the hoax exposures, including overstating the need for medical advice, delaying hospital treatment, and over-storing logistical activities. This is supported by Scott (2022) proving that during the COVID-19 pandemic, hoaxes in social media could heighten social anxiety and fear. It could then impact other aspects of daily emotional stability.

The findings of this study should be considered in preparing anti-hoax news media campaigns for the public, that the public should not easily believe the news circulating on social media no matter how convincing they are. Moreover, one of the interesting topics which should be needed further study is the correlation of hoax spread in the societies and its mental-health impacts quantitatively.

## 5. Conclusion

This qualitative study employed a content analysis approach to investigate the essence of hoax news in the Indonesian context. The findings of this study reveals that hoax COVID-19 news circulated in the era primarily aimed at triggering societies' panic, especially panic buying and panic moving. The findings of this study also show that to trigger people's panic, the news writer usually used symbols such as time signals, quantifiers, and famous figures. The novelty of this study emphasises that hoaxes are not only spread during political events or other important occasions but also when most humans in the world experience mass trauma, which in this case is due to COVID-19 incident. There are some symbols written in the Hoax news which can potentially trigger panic behaviour.

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