

Clicking on the Truth: Understanding How Samarinda Residents Use Fact-Checking Tools

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Abstract

This research discusses the practice of using fact-checking tools by the Samarinda City residents in the context of digital literacy. The main purpose of the study is to understand the pattern of use, level of understanding, and attitude of the community towards fact-checking tools, as well as evaluating the extent to which the tool can help overcome hoaxes on social media. This study is academically important because it fills the literature gap on information verification behavior at the city level, as well as practically provides a basis for digital literacy strategies and community education campaigns. This research uses a qualitative approach to gain a deep understanding of the experience, perception, and challenges of residents. Data was collected through the Google Form online questionnaire filled by 114 active respondents of internet users in Samarinda City. The analysis was carried out descriptively and thematically to group answers based on the main themes that emerged. The findings show that the majority of Samarinda City residents rely on social media as a source of information, with a high frequency of hoax exposure. Although some realize the importance of verification of information, knowledge, and use of fact-checking tools is still low, with Cekfakta.com into the most well-known platforms. This study concluded that digital literacy plays a crucial role in increasing community resilience to misinformation, and individual awareness is the main key in combating hoaxes. The practical implications of this study include the need to increase education and socialization about fact-checking tools, as well as the development of digital literacy strategies that are appropriate to the local context to support more active and critical community participation in information verification.

Keywords: *digital literacy, hoaxes, fact-checking tools, social media, information consumption behavior.*

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology and social media has drastically changed the way information is produced, distributed, and consumed [1],[2],[3]. On the one hand, digital media opens great opportunities for various knowledge and expanding citizen participation [4],[5]. But on the other hand, the media also accelerates the spread of misinformation and disinformation [6],[7]. The rise of hoaxes raises a serious risk to the process of democracy, public trust, and social cohesion [8],[9]. Digital literacy plays an important role in equipping people with the skills needed to face the phenomenon of the spread of hoaxes. In this context, the presence of various fact-checking tools becomes one of the important mechanisms to fight the misinformation by providing opportunities for the community to verify the truth of the information they encounter online [10].

This article is important because it not only discusses the availability of fact-checking tools but also how these tools are truly used by the community in everyday life. The existence of a factchecking tool does not automatically guarantee its effectiveness. What is more decisive is not the guarantee of its more decisive effectiveness, but rather the extent to which people understand, trust, and integrate these tools into the practice of consuming their information [11]. This understanding has become very relevant in medium-sized cities such as Samarinda, where the level of digital literacy varies, while social media has become the main source of news and information [12]. By examining how people utilize fact-checking tools, this study aims to offer practical insights into digital literacy and misinformation strategies at the local level.

A number of previous studies have highlighted the roles and challenges of using fact-checking tools in various contexts. Aloh and Nweliike found that even though the journalists in Ebonyi State, Nigeria had high knowledge about the fact-checking tools, their use in finding online news remained low. This shows that knowledge is not enough to encourage the use of the tool [13]. Highlighting the audience in the United States, Robertson found that liberal news consumers is more aware, being positive towards, and using facts, examining sites that conservative news consumers, which assesses the site is less useful, so that ideological preferences can affect the effectiveness and reach of fact-checks [14]. Tambuscio and Ruffo offer a framework to understand the spread of urban legends or fake information in local popular cultures through epidemic-based network models, and show that misinformation prevention strategies often difficult to succeed because individual beliefs that have been formed tend to be difficult to change, even though there is an additional source of information [15]. In addition, Ufarte-Ruiz et al. analyzed the fact-checking tools in public service media in Spain during pandemic, found that these units combine traditional techniques and technology applications to verify health and pseudoscience content circulating on websites and social media, emphasizing the importance of organizational structure, procedures, and adaptive approaches to increase information accuracy [16].

The renewal of this study lies in the focus that examines the practice of using fact-checking tools by ordinary people in cities in Indonesia, especially Samarinda, which, until now, is still rarely examined. In contrast to previous studies, which mostly highlighted journalists, audiences in developed countries, or institutional fact-checking tools, this research explores the daily experiences of residents in accessing, understanding, and using fact-checking tools to assess the credibility of online information. This approach provides a micro perspective on digital literacy and misinformation strategies at the local level, as well as showing how the social, cultural, and digital infrastructure context affects the effectiveness of the use of fact-checking tools. Thus, this research not only fills empirical gaps in the literature but also provides practical insights that can be used by policymakers, educators, and community organizations to improve media literacy and public information quality.

Based on previous literature studies, it appears that many studies emphasize knowledge, attitudes, or use of fact-checking tools among journalists or audiences in developed countries [13],[14],[16]. But rarely examines the practice of using these tools by the general public in middle cities in developing countries. This study aims to fill the gap by critically examining how the residents of Samarinda City use fact-checking tools in their daily lives, including challenges, patterns of interaction, and factors that affect the effectiveness of their use. By highlighting the unique micro-experience of residents and local contexts, this research seeks to provide more realistic insights about the implementation of digital literacy and information mission prevention

strategies that previous studies that tended to be top-down, institution-based, or focused on the social and political context of developed countries [15].

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach to gain a deep understanding of the practice of using fact-checking tools by the residents of Samarinda City. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore experience, perceptions, and challenges faced by residents in the local context holistically [17]. Data was collected through a Google Form filled by 114 respondents who are active people of internet users in Samarinda City. This online questionnaire is designed to identify patterns of use, level of understanding, and community attitudes towards the fact-checking tools. Data analysis is carried out descriptively and thematically, with a focus on grouping answers based on the main themes that arise from respondents' responses. This approach allows researchers to interpret the social, cultural, and digital behavioral contexts of the community in a comprehensive manner, as well as connect findings with existing literature regarding digital literacy and the use of fact-checking tools.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Consumption of Information on the Residents of Samarinda City

The development of digital technology has changed the way society in accesses information [18],[19]. No exception for the residents of Samarinda City, who are now increasingly actively utilizing various digital platforms to meet the needs of daily information. This information consumption behavior not only reflects individual preferences for certain media, but also reflects their interaction patterns with increasingly faster and dynamic information flows.

In the context of information literacy, it is important to understand what media is most often accessed by the public, because this is closely related to the potential exposure to valid information and misleading information. In addition, preferences for certain platforms can also affect the level of exposure to hoaxes, as well as determine the information verification strategy carried out by the community.

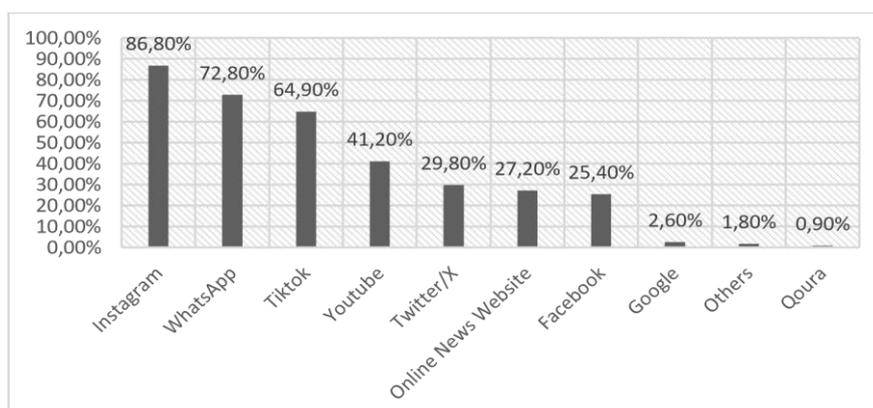


Figure 1. Digital Platforms are Most Often Used by the Residents of Samarinda City
 (Source: The survey result processed by the author, 2025)

Data shows that Instagram is the most widely used platform of Samarinda City people to find information, with a percentage of 86,8 percent, followed by WhatsApp (72,8 percent) dan TikTok (64,9 percent). These three platforms are dominated by visual content and fast interaction, becoming the main source of daily information for residents. Meanwhile, YouTube, Twitter/X, and Facebook are still used even though it is lower, and online news websites are only used 27,2 percent, showing access to more verified sources of information is still limited. Search platforms such as Google or knowledge-based forums such as Quora are used by a small number of respondents.

This finding shows that the residents of Samarinda City more often rely on social media than on formal news sources, which leads to challenges related to the accuracy of information. Social media is also the main channel of the spread of hoaxes [20]. This preference is an important concern in encouraging the use of fact-checking tools and increasing digital literacy. In addition, the high frequency of public exposure to false information shows the weak control of the quality of information and low digital literacy, thus emphasizing the importance of using fact-checking tools.

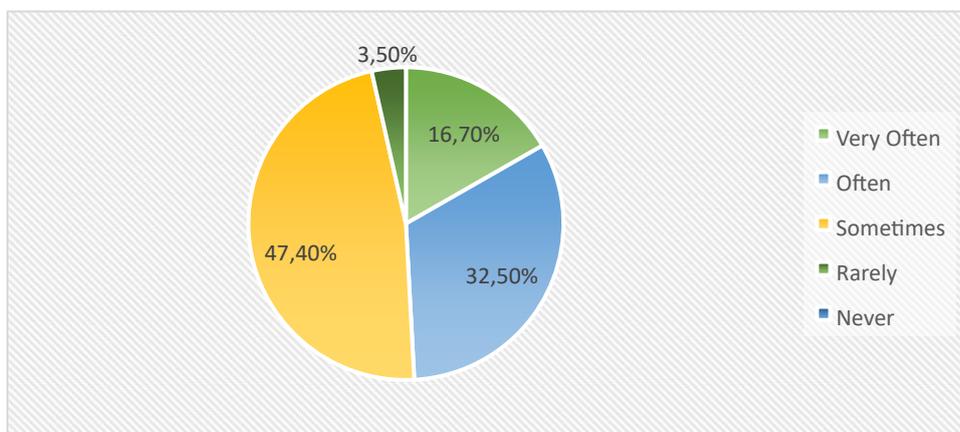


Figure 2. The Frequency of the Residents of Samarinda City Found to Have False Information.

(Source: The survey result processed by the author, 2025)

From the data, it appears that most respondents have found false information in the category sometimes (47,4 percent), often (32,5 percent), and very often (16,7 percent). Only a small portion (3,5 percent) rarely finds hoaxes, showing the potential for exposure to wrong information in the Samarinda community.

This finding confirms that hoaxes are a common part of the digital experience of residents, so information literacy is important. Human activities in spreading information can make it widespread and fast, but this also has a negative impact in the form of disseminating information that is not true, which is often trusted by many people because lack of verification [21]. Hoax exposure requires people to have good verification capabilities and access to fact-checking tools that are easily accessible. It also shows that social media as the main source of information, has not been fully able to filter misleading content [22].

In addition, how people respond to doubtful information into an indicator if their verification capabilities. This response not only shows the vigilance of individuals, but also the extent to which they have access to and trust in the mechanisms of factors. In the context of digital literacy, the ability to filter and verify information is an important part of building resistance to disinformation.

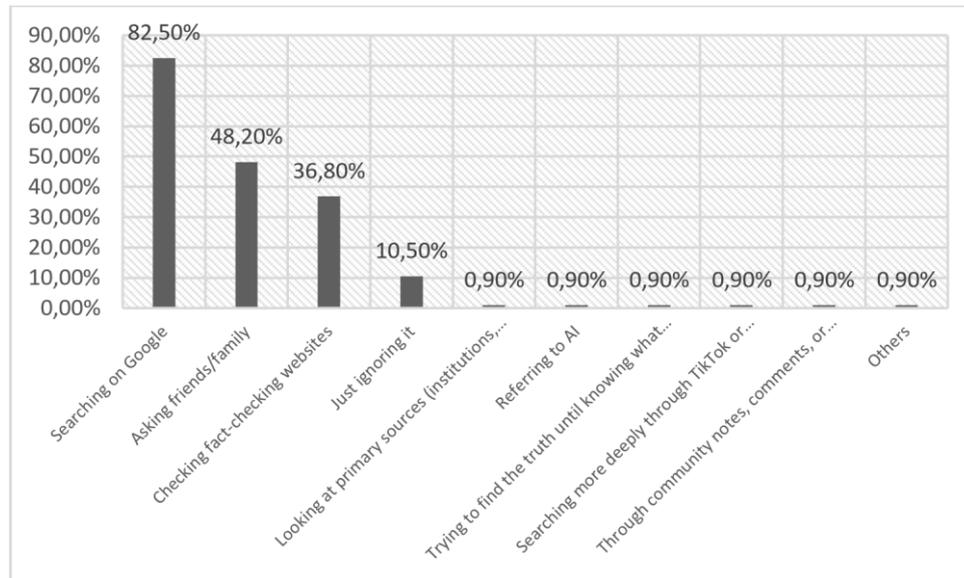


Figure 3. What is Done by the Residents of Samarinda City When Doubtful About Information

(Source: The survey result processed by the author, 2025)

The majority of respondents in Samarinda City who chose to find information through Google when they were doubtful (82,5 percent) showed that the search engine was still the most easily accessible verification tool. Furthermore, 48,2 percent chose to ask friends or family, indicating the verification process was also carried out socially. As many as 36,8 percent use the facts examining site, showing some people began to realize the importance of clarification from credible sources. However, 10,5 percent of respondents ignore doubtful information, while the use of other verification channels, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), official sources, or tracing through other social media, is still very limited (0,9 percent).

This finding shows the pattern of consumption of public information dominated by social media such as Instagram, WhatsApp, and TikTok, with a fairly high hoax exposure. In responding to doubtful information, the residents of Samarinda City mostly rely on Google or the closest person, and some begin to use fact-checking sites, even though the practice of deeper verification is still limited. This indicates that digital literacy in Samarinda City needs to be improved, especially the ability to recognize and verify information, so that people are more resilient to misinformation. Because digital literacy plays an important role in the ability to ward off hoaxes [23].

The Residents of Samarinda City's Knowledge About Fact-Checking Tools

Increased exposure to hoaxes and disinformation on social media requires people not only to be information, but also to have the ability to verify the truth of the information received. One of the important instruments in this process is the fact-checking tools, which are tools or sites that are designed to help users check the validity of information based on credible sources [24]. However, the existence and function of these tools is not necessarily widely known by all levels of society.

To measure the extent to which the Samarinda City community is aware of the existence of fact-checking tools, the survey is conducted by asking whether they know the existence of tools or sites that can be used to check the truth of information. The first question in the survey is: "Do you know of a site or tool to check the truth of information (fact-checking tools)?" The result is presented in Figure 4.

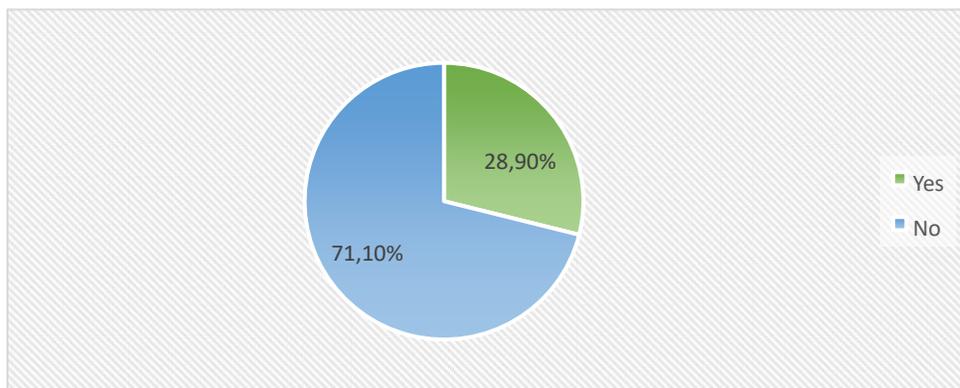


Figure 4. The Residents of Samarinda City's Knowledge of Fact-Checking Tools
(Source: The survey result processed by the author, 2025)

Data shows that 28,9 percent of respondents are aware of a site or fact-checking tools, while the majority (71,1 percent) do not know. This indicates that the level of knowledge of the residents of Samarinda City about fact-checking tools is still low, although they are often exposed to the potential for hoax information. This low recognition is probably due to a lack of socialization, limitations of digital literacy, or the lack of promotions from these tool providers.

This finding confirms that the first step to strengthen the culture of information verification is to increase public awareness of the existence and function of fact-checking tools. Without basic knowledge, the use of these tools will not be optimal, even for active internet users. Furthermore, it is important to know the type or tool or site known by respondents who have heard or know the fact-checking tools, to assess how broad the public understanding of the information verification platform available in Indonesia.

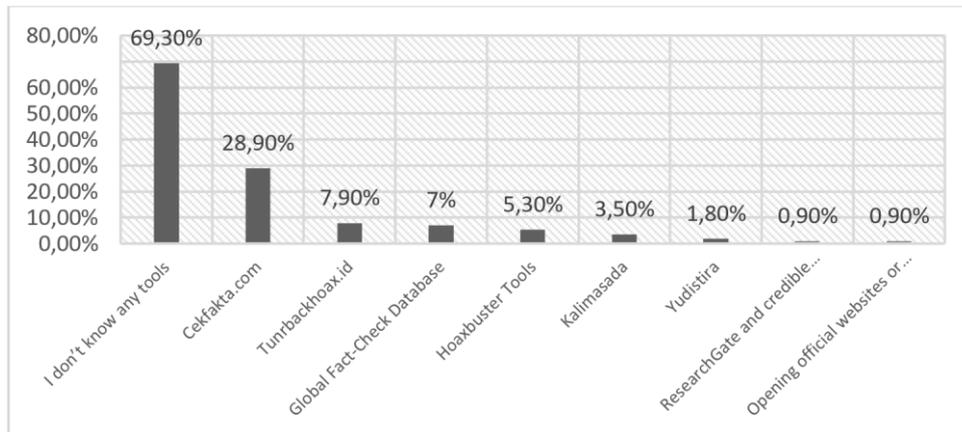


Figure 5. The Residents of Samarinda City’s Knowledge of the Information Verification Platform.

(Source: The survey result processed by the author, 2025)

As many as 69,3 percent of respondents stated that they did not know any fact-checking tools. Of the 30,7 percent who know the *fact-checking tools*, the most mentioned platforms are cekfakta.com (28,9 percent), followed by turnbackhoax.id (7,9 percent) and *Global Fact-Check Database* (7 percent). Other tools such as *Hoaxbuster Tools* (5,3 percent), Kalimasada (3,5 percent), and Yudistira (1,8 percent) are also mentioned, even in small amounts. Some respondents mention general ways, such as opening official pages or using credible national news media.

This finding shows that although the majority are not yet familiar, there is a diversity of understanding of the types of facts examiners among respondents who know their existence, but the use is still limited to a few popular platforms. Knowing the platform known to the public helps assess how broad their understanding of the fact-checking tools available in Indonesia.

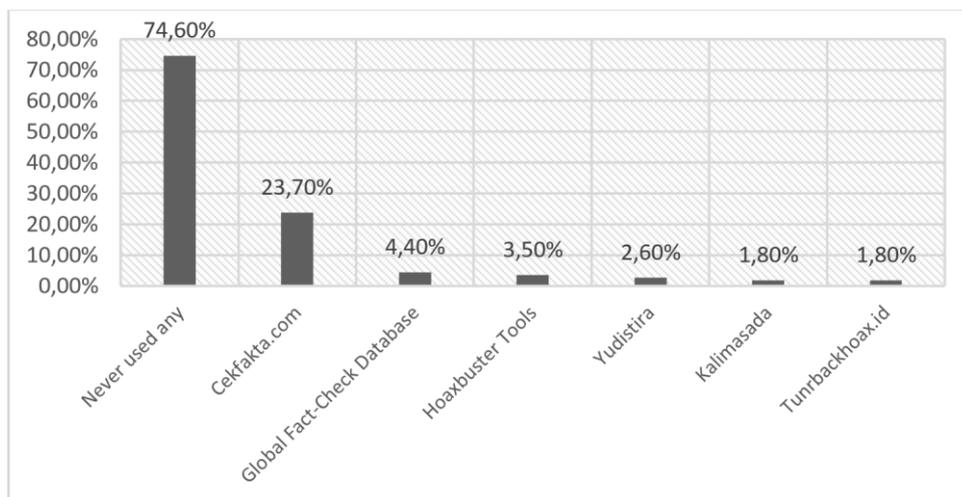


Figure 6. Types of Tools or Sites Known to the Residents of Samarinda City.

(Source: The survey result processed by the author, 2025)

Most respondents (74,6 percent) stated that they had never used a fact-checking tool, showing that despite some knowing its existence, the use of this tool was not yet a general practice. Among

those who have used, cekfakta.com is the most widely used (23,7 percent), followed by *Global Fact-Check Database* (4,4 percent), *Hoaxbuster Tools* (3,5 percent), and Yudistira (2,6 percent), while Turnbackhoax.id and Kalimasada are only 1,8 percent each.

The survey also asks about the frequency of using this tool, because the level of use is an important indicator for assessing whether public knowledge about the fact-checking tools is followed by real practices in attracting daily digital information.

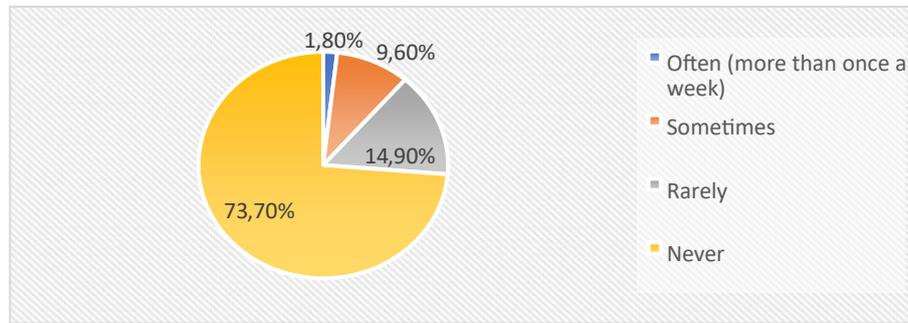


Figure 7. The Frequency of the Residents of Samarinda City in Using Fact-Checking Tools

(Source: The survey result processed by the author, 2025)

Data shows that most respondents (73,7 percent) have never used fact examiners. Only a small portion is used with a certain frequency: 14,9 percent rarely, 9,6 percent sometimes, and 1,8 percent more than once a week. This finding shows that the use of fact-checking tools is still very low, even though people live in the digital era that is prone to false information.

The survey also asks the reasons for the use of fact-checking tools, which are important to understand the motivation of the community and become the basis for designing educational strategies or digital literacy campaigns.

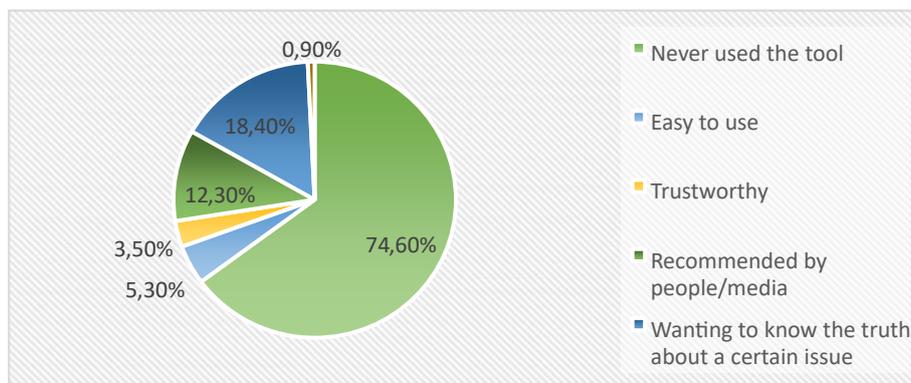


Figure 8. The Reason the Residents of Samarinda City are Using Fact-Checking Tools or Sites.

(Source: The survey result processed by the author, 2025)

The majority of respondents (74,6 percent) have never used fact-checking tools. Among those who have used, the main motivation is to know the truth of an issue (18,4 percent) and because of

recommendations from others or the media (12,3 percent). A small portion mentions the ease of use (5,3 percent) or trust in the platform (3,5 percent). These findings indicate that the motivation for use is more influenced by personal needs and social influences, not merely the ease or credibility of tools.

To understand the obstacles of use, the survey also asks the reasons for respondents who have never used a fact-checking tools so that factors can be identified that prevent community participation in verifying information.

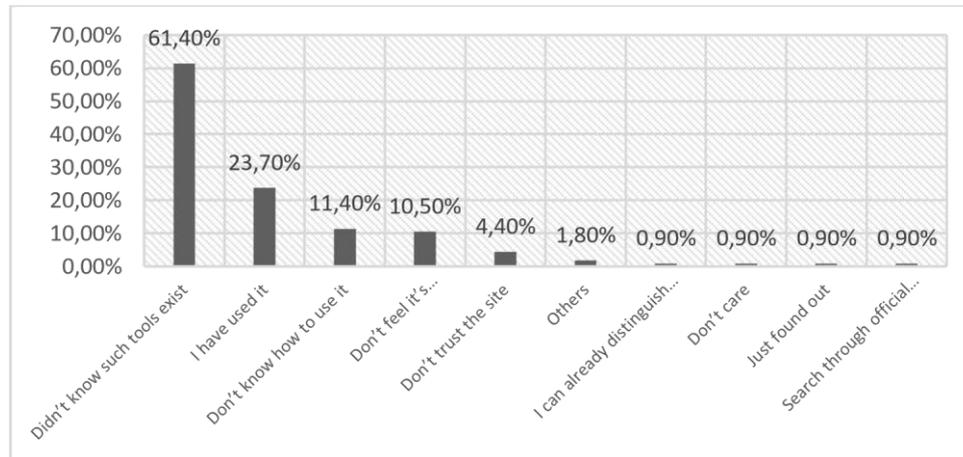


Figure 9. The Reason the Residents of Samarinda City Have Never Used Fact-Checking Tools or Sites.

(Source: The survey result processed by the author, 2025)

Most respondents (61,4 percent) do not know the existence of fact examiners. This shows that the main obstacle lies in the lack of information and digital literacy. In addition, 11,4 percent do not know how to use it, 10,5 percent feel there is no need to verify information, and 4,4 percent do not believe in the fact-checking tools. Other answers, such as “can be sorted by yourself”, “no time”, or “just know” confirm the low awareness and digital literacy.

Overall, the survey shows that the knowledge and use of fact-checking tools in the Samarinda City community is still very low. Although often exposed to potentially false information, the majority of people do not know this tool, and among those who know it, only a few really use it. Cekfakta.com is the most well-known and used platform, but in general, the practice of information verification is not yet common. The main obstacles include the lack of knowledge, low digital literacy, and the assumption that information verification is not important. This finding confirms the importance of education and socialization so that the public not only receives information, but is also able to filter its truth in the digital age [25].

Attitudes and Perceptions of the Residents of Samarinda City with Fact-Checking Tools

In the digital era that is full of fast and massive information flow, the ability and awareness of the public in checking the truth of information before spreading it becomes very crucial [26]. The phenomenon of hoaxes, information, and misinformation circulating on social media and other online platforms not only affects individuals, but can also trigger social unrest and disturb public

order. Therefore, the attitude of the community towards the importance of verifying information is a very relevant initial indicator to assess public readiness in dealing with the era of information disruption.

As part of an effort to understand the behavior of the residents of Samarinda City in addressing the information they receive, this survey asks a fundamental question: *“How important do you think check the truth of information before sharing it?”* This question aims to describe the level of public awareness of information verification and become the basis for designing digital literacy strategies and strengthening community capacity in the use of factchecking tools.

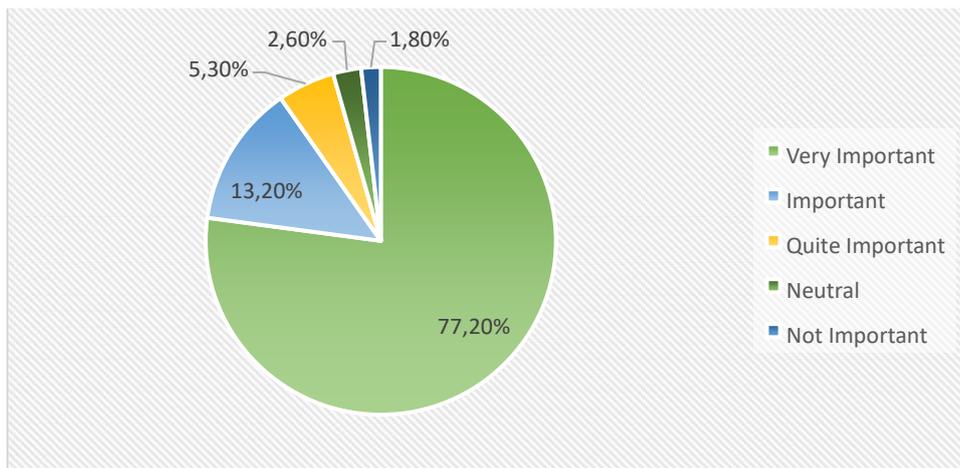


Figure 10. Samarinda City Community Views on the Importance of Examining the Truth of Information

(Source: The survey result processed by the author, 2025)

The majority of the residents of Samarinda City show high awareness of the importance of verifying information before spreading it. As many as 77,2 percent of respondents said this action was very important, and 13,2 percent considered it important, so that more than 90 percent support the principle of caution in sharing information. A small portion of respondents consider to assume that examining information is quite important (5,3 percent), ordinary (2,6 percent), or not important (1,8 percent), which remains an important target in the digital literacy program.

In the digital era with fast information flow, the ability of individuals to filter and assess information is crucial. One indicator of digital literacy is the extent to which people are sure they can distinguish between correct information and hoaxes without the help of fact-checking tools. This perception reflects the confidence and potential of the community to become a critical and responsible agent in the dissemination of information. This finding is important as an initial reference for the strategy of increasing digital literacy and public education.

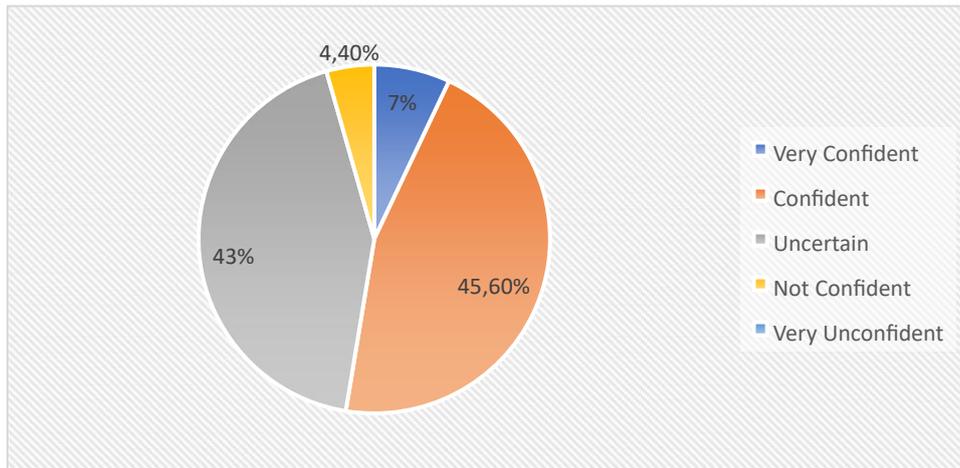


Figure 11. The Confidence of the Residents of Samarinda City in Distinguishing Information Without the Help of Tools

(Source: The survey result processed by the author, 2025)

Data shows that 45,6 percent of respondents feel confident that they can distinguish correct information from hoaxes without the help of fact-checking tools, while 43 percent are still hesitant. Only 7 percent feel very confident and 4,4 percent are not sure, while no one is very unsure. This finding shows that most people have a level of moderate to high confidence, although there is still need to increase digital literacy and access to fact-checking tools.

In addition to individual awareness and abilities, community attitudes are also reflected in their perceptions of who should be responsible for fighting hoaxes. This perception is important because it affects community participation and their expectations of the role of government, media, or other parties in the digital information ecosystem. This survey asks the Samarinda City community's opinion about the main actors who are most responsible for handling the spread of hoaxes.

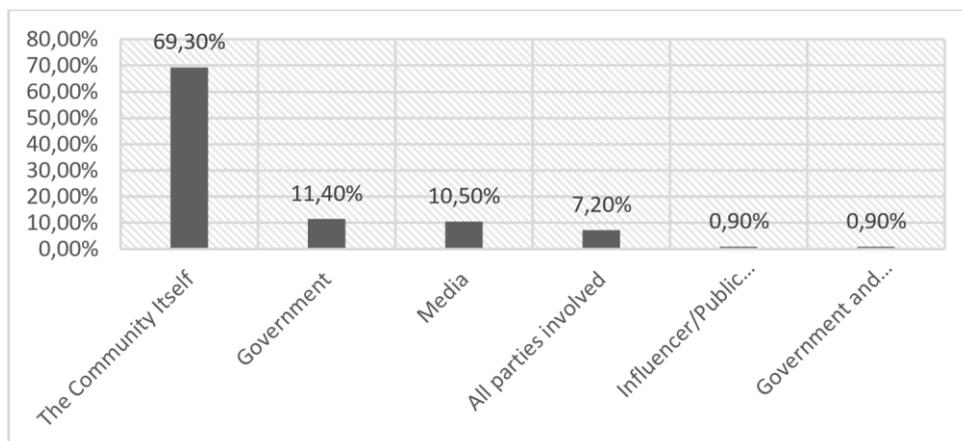


Figure 12. The Residents of Samarinda City Views About the Most Responsible Actors Fighting Hoaxes

(Source: The survey result processed by the author, 2025)

The majority of respondents (69,3 percent) consider that the community itself is the most responsible for fighting hoaxes is the community itself. This shows a high awareness that efforts to fight false information must start from individuals. Others see the role of important institutions: 11,4 percent assess the government, 10,5 percent the media, and 7,2 percent all parties, including individuals, government, media, and stakeholders, must work together. Only 0,9 percent consider influencers or public figures as the main parties, and 0,9 percent assess that responsibilities must be shared between the government and the community.

In conclusion, Samarinda City people show high awareness of the importance of verifying information, with more than 90 percent considering it important or very important. Although most feel able to distinguish correct information and hoaxes without tools, and some are still hesitant, indicating the need for an increase in digital literacy. The majority emphasizes personal responsibility, but still sees the importance of multi-party collaboration to handle the spread of hoaxes effectively.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that the residents of Samarinda City are highly active in consuming information through social media platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp, and TikTok, which are also the primary channels for hoax exposure. Although most of the respondents have high awareness of the importance thing that verifying information, with more than 90 percent considering it important or very important, the level of knowledge and use of fact-checking tools is still low. The majority of Samarinda City residents rely on Google or the closest person to verify information, while the use of fact-checking sites such as cekfakta.com is still limited. This finding confirms that digital literacy plays an important role in the ability of people to ward off hoaxes, as well as the need for multi-party collaboration to increase information resilience in the digital age.

This research has several limitations. First, the survey only includes residents of Samarinda City, so the results cannot be generalized for other mid-sized city areas in Indonesia. Second, knowledge of the fact-checking tools without exploring in depth the effectiveness of their use in practice. Subsequent research can expand samples to other regions in Indonesia and examine the impact of using facts examiners on hoax dissemination behavior, including the effectiveness of digital education strategies and information literacy interventions.

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