

# Local Media Policy in Countering Hoaxes for the 2024 Elections

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**Abstract:** *The spread of hoaxes is one of the challenges of the 2024 elections, as they can disrupt public trust in candidates. This research compares local media policies in countering hoaxes during the 2024 elections. Local media play an important role in democratization, but often it is trapped as a political agent. This research uses in-depth interviews with editorial boards of local media across Java Island. The results show that local media generally lack specific policies to counter hoaxes. The economic challenges faced by local media influence their policy to counter hoaxes for the 2024 elections.*

**Keywords:** *hoaxes, local media, media policy, the 2024 elections*

**Abstrak:** *Peredaran hoaks menjadi salah satu tantangan pelaksanaan Pemilu 2024. Peningkatan hoaks berpotensi mengganggu kepercayaan publik kepada para calon. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk membandingkan kebijakan media lokal dalam melawan hoaks Pemilu 2024. Media lokal memiliki peranan penting dalam demokratisasi di daerah, namun terjebak menjadi agen politik. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode wawancara mendalam pada redaksi media lokal di Pulau Jawa. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan media lokal tidak memiliki strategi khusus dalam memerangi hoaks. Persoalan ekonomi media lokal memengaruhi kebijakan media lokal dalam memerangi hoaks Pemilu 2024.*

**Kata Kunci:** *hoaks, kebijakan media, media lokal, Pemilu 2024*

The spread of hoaxes increased during the 2024 elections. It is stimulated by the increase in internet penetration in Indonesia by 78.13% (APJII, 2023). Basyari (2023) stated that political hoaxes topped the list with a percentage of 36.2% in the January-March 2023 edition. During this period, 2,602 hoax contents were circulating, and will increase six times ahead of the 2024 elections (Kiat Menangkal, 2023).

Basyari (2023) stated that there are trend differences of political hoaxes from the 2019 and 2024 elections. In the 2019 elections,

hoaxes were more in the form of photos and texts, while political hoaxes in the 2024 elections switched to videos. Meanwhile, the spread of hoaxes in the 2019 elections used Facebook, while the 2024 elections used YouTube. Mafindo (2024) argues that the targets of hoaxes in the 2024 elections are potential candidates, the process of organizing elections, character/lifestyle issues, SARA (ethnicity, religion, race, and intergroup) issues, and elections fraud.

Political hoaxes increased dramatically during elections. Mafindo (2024)

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stated that hoaxes in the 2024 elections attack candidates and influence voters' considerations. Furthermore, hoaxes can also undermine the public trust in both the electoral process and the outcomes. Utami (2018) states that hoaxes played a role in the 2017 Jakarta elections. Hoaxes become a tool of political favouritism that can lead people to distrust the facts. According to Utami (2018, p. 85), users spread hate speech against their political opponents and form new messages that are close to people's lives. Based on his study, Tapsell (2019, p. 2) showed that at least 19 arrests of people accused of creating or distributing hoax news were reported in the 2019 elections. The motivation of people to create political hoaxes is to gain political benefits from the candidates they vote for. Political hoaxes usually take the form of slander against rival candidates (Tapsell, 2019, p. 3). According to Tahir, Kusmanto, and Amin (2020, p. 241), the content of hoaxes in the 2019 elections is about SARA, personalities, and populist narratives with negative news about the government.

The proliferation of hoaxes is closely linked to the existence of technology. Utami (2018, p. 87) argues that social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, & Path) play a significant role in producing hoaxes. Mastel (2019) also noted that social media is the highest channel for spreading hoaxes. Unfortunately, the rise of hoaxes in Indonesia has not been accompanied by an increase in the digital literacy of Indonesian society. Digital literacy is

defined as an individual's ability to find and evaluate information, use this information effectively, create new content using this information, and share and communicate this newly created information using appropriate digital technologies (Reddy, Sharma, & Chaudhary, 2020, p. 81). At the ASEAN level, Indonesia's digital literacy rate stands at 62%, far below the average ASEAN country, which is at 70% (Anam, 2023). Furthermore, digital literacy influences voters' critical thinking within democratic processes. According to Morais (2017, p. 17), the more literate the people are, the more and the better they participate in the governing of their community, and the less literate they are, the less and poorer their involvement in public debate and collective decisions. Meanwhile, public participation becomes the main issue in each presidential and legislative elections (Perdana et al., 2024, p. 10). Perdana et al. (2024, p. 14) stated that public participation in elections is important to increase the quality of democratization.

The presence of new media and their technology, especially in the political field, has its problems. According to Pilliang (as cited in Tahir, Kusmanto, & Amin, 2020, p. 237), political developments in new media are familiarly referred to as e-democracy. E-democracy brings social issues, namely power, truth, law, and morality, which can lead society into an anti-democratic space. The circulation of hoaxes, especially in the political field, can reduce the essence of democracy itself. On the other hand, new media also has its strengths. Each

person can be a producer and consumer of information, allowing users to share and respond to the information, and enabling two-way interaction. In the context of the spread of political hoaxes, new media can influence public opinion on the organization of this elections, even though the political information they consume is not necessarily true. Juliswara (2017, p. 144) stated that the challenges of controlling hoaxes in Indonesia are due to the habit of most people who want to be fast in consuming news quickly. People have a habit of sharing anything on social media. Unfortunately, this habit of sharing information is rarely supported by effort to verify the authenticity of the information.

Verification plays fundamental role in countering hoaxes. According to Kovach and Rosenstiel (2014, p. 112), the essence of journalism is a discipline of verification. The discipline of verification is what separates journalism from entertainment, propaganda, fiction, or art. This verification process is rigorously implemented by mainstream or professional media, as it reflects the core principles of journalism. As a result, the information conveyed tends to be more accurate and less susceptible to hoaxes, due to their gatekeeping process from the editorial team. Furthermore, electoral issues receive significant attention from the mass media, as the issues are regarded as matters of public interest. Elections are a manifestation of the democratic process in Indonesia. Elections become a big party because people choose their representatives with their voting

rights. This situation makes election news becomes highly relevant and essential for the public.. Election news can provide an overview of the development of the election stages and the dynamics that accompany them.

Local media participated in reporting elections issues. Local media contribute to creating a climate of democracy. Local media play a role in disseminating information about the elections. According to Urofsky (Haerudin, Prisanto, Ernungtyas, & Hidayanto, 2020, p. 161), one of the media functions is to disseminate knowledge for the community. Elections hoaxes are a crucial issue in elections, so local media contribute to providing the correct information.

Knowledge about hoaxes is essential to foster critical thinking among the public. When people have critical thinking, they can distinguish the correct information and the misleading information. Potter (2016, p. 45) says that the information consumed by people will shape their beliefs about the world. News exposure is more than just getting the latest information, but a process of building belief structures, knowledge, and attitudes. People actively construct the meaning of messages they receive. The more aware they are of the layers of meaning within these messages, the more control they have over how they interpret them (Potter, 2016, p. 45). On the other side, people need credible information to form accurate beliefs, knowledge, and attitudes. Hence, local media are one of the channels that serve the credible information. Local

media have a gatekeeping process to make credible news. The gatekeeping process refers to how the media outlet practices the verification process. The information conveyed tends to be accurate.

This research aimed to look the local media policy to counter hoaxes in the 2024 elections. Media policy addresses a wide range of contemporary concerns regarding the structure and performance of media systems in the past, the present, and the future (Papathanassopoulos, 2015, p. 1). Media policy is conducted to deal with technological changes and is framed by political, economic, and institutional dimensions. Media policy relates to a series of actions and their consequences and will change depending on the situation (Papathanassopoulos, 2015, pp. 3-4). According to Habermas (as cited in Nugroho, Siregar, & Laksmi, 2012, p. 11), media policy is needed because the media functions as a bridge between society and the state. The media is the center for free communication in society, to get a better social life. Therefore, the media must be guarded by policies to create this. This media policy is an internal issue for the media. In Indonesia, media policy is a manifestation of press freedom as stated in Press Law Number 40 of 1999. Press freedom refers to the autonomy of the media from political interference or censorship (Kenny, 2019, p. 11).

Hoaxes are part of the impact of technology. Hoaxes are spread by technology. The existence of hoaxes certainly needs to be addressed by editors in local media through their media policies. Furthermore, local media were selected as

the subject of research due to dynamics in their newsroom. Currently, local media must compete with mainstream media to get a market. Local media must serve unique content to compete with others and attract advertisements. Romadlono and Indainanto (2020, p. 175) state that local media in Indonesia have greater challenges in the era of media disruption and post-Covid-19. Local media are faced with issues of technological innovation, journalistic quality, and advertising (Tim Sekretariat, 2023). The digital disruption and the Covid-19 pandemic have had a major impact on the traditional media business model that relies heavily on advertising. So that online media at the national or local level can continue to formulate and develop the fit business model to address these conditions (Tim Sekretariat, 2023).

The novelty of this research lies in seeing the challenges of local media editors in countering hoaxes of the 2024 elections. The novelty of this research focuses on local media policies and challenges in the 2024 elections. Previous studies have focused more on information literacy about hoaxes and editorial policies on hoaxes in general. Local media have the power to share local content. Local media carries local wisdom where local content is not available in mainstream media.

Local media play a role in local democratization. For the media to play a role in this democratic system, several conditions must be met by the media. According to Curran and Seaton (as cited in Haerudin, Prisanto, Ernungtyas,

& Hidayanto, 2020, p. 166), there are requirement to media to create the democratization, namely: 1) the media must be able to empower the community and explore the important issue for society, (2) the media must support group identity and be able to represent group interests, (3) the media must supervise strictly to government, (4) the media can guarantee the protection of marginalized groups, and (5) the media become a public space for the community to open discussion the elite domination issue. Jorgensen (as cited in Pamungkas & Pramesti, 2021, p. 91) states that the local media, through the editor's decision, opens an open forum for public discussion on the information provided. Editors also as gatekeepers, cannot refuse their duty to the public conversation. Local media play a role in shaping the discussion for the local community. Therefore, editors choose a local agenda that suits their local community.

Media policy is concerned with the ways and models responsible for the creation and distribution of news and information. These media policy goals include questions of sustainability and ensuring civic and information needs are met, as well as wider questions in terms of media diversity (plurality of sources, as well as who tells and consumes the news) and news production (Radcliffe & Mathew, 2023, p. 1, p. 8). According to Habermas (as cited in Nugroho, Siregar, & Laksmi, 2012, p. 11), media policy is needed because the media serves as a bridge between society and the state. Nugroho, Siregar, and Laksmi

(2012, p. 614) stated that media policy can ensure the public that the character of the media is maintained. There are four assumptions put forward to support this statement, namely: 1) media institution has a profit goal, 2) the media representation must be dealing with the complexity of society, 3) policy for media should be concerned with the area in which the media works, for they do not operate in a vacuum, and 4) the media performs a social function. Nugroho, Siregar, and Laksmi (2012, p. 63) identified several factors affecting media policy, namely: 1) open market, which is policy maker must consider an investment-friendly atmosphere, and do not contradict the principles of a market-friendly media, 2) technological innovation affect the dynamics in society, both in terms of access and content, 3) pragmatism and short-term interest that related to the lack of clarity of a regulation from a bureaucracy/government in regulating the media, and 4) network and clientism, which is the content and result of policy making is heavily influenced by the people, or parties, involved during the process.

Media policy is related to editorial policy. Editorial policy, according to Abdullah (as cited in Wibisono, Pawito, and Astuti, 2019), is the political attitude of the media in viewing a problem as well as the editorial and journalistic rules applied. Pamungkas and Pramesti (2021) stated that editorial policy is related to the internal editorial decisions of each media. This internal decision becomes the right of the media concerned to serve the public. This



right is part of the freedom of the press in carrying out its duties. Shoemaker and Reese (2014, p. 9) divided the factors influencing the editorial policy, such as social system, social institutions, media organizations, routine practices, and individual. Those factors influence the professionalism of the media to share the content based on the principles of journalism.

## **METHOD**

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. Heale and Twycross (2018, p. 7). Heale and Twycross (2018, p. 7) stated that a case study can be defined as an intensive study about a person, a group of people, or a unit, which is aimed at generalizing over several units. A case study has also been described as an intensive, systematic investigation of a single individual, group, community, or some other unit in which the researcher examines in-depth data relating to several variables.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews with five people who were part of the editorial team of local media in Java Island (Jakarta, Bandung, Surabaya, Semarang, and Yogyakarta). The selected informants were either chief editors or editors, as they are directly involved in implementing media policies. Researchers did not provide specific criteria for the local media. According to the authors, the local media focuses on informing the local issues. Therefore, the authors chose the local media that are still actively publishing and consistently report on local matters.

Local media in Java Island was chosen due to the digital literacy level consideration. Five cities in Java island (Jakarta, Bandung, Surabaya, Semarang, and Yogyakarta) have the average rate of digital literacy than other cities (Gelgel, Rahmijati, & Limilia, 2021, p. 20). The authors assumed that if people are literate, they can filter the information from the media. Hence, local media in Java island have a specific media policy to educate their society.

The data were analysed using case study analysis techniques. According to Creswell (2013), case study analysis techniques consist of data organization; description, classification, and interpretation of data into codes and themes; data interpretation; data representation and visualization.

## **FINDINGS**

### **Local Media and Hoaxes in the 2024 Elections**

Local media have an important role in reporting on the 2024 elections. The results showed that all informants stated that the existence of local media is very important in raising local issues related to the elections. Local election issues include the political dynamics of regional leader candidates, a programme of candidates about the marginal issues, and the process of the local election stages. According to all informants, local election issues will make people understand the political dynamics in the regions. Local issues also make people closer to election issues and hopefully increase the political participation of local communities.

Local media also provide support to local communities to provide a forum for discussion about political issues. Political issues as a whole are considered to be interesting issues among local communities because they involve many local political actors with their dynamics.

Many young people here are highly concerned with socio-political issues. Political content on social media always gets high engagement from them. We also often hold offline discussions on issues that get high engagement. (Informant 1, Editorial Team of Bandungbergerak.id, interview, October 3, 2023)

People in East Java are very politically literate, and some areas are thick with political identity. People always access local media to get the latest information about politics. Therefore, we are very careful in reporting. (Informant 2, Editorial Team of Tribun Mataraman, interview, October 6, 2023)

The above statement reinforces that local media are needed by the community to get the latest information about local political issues. All informants stated that local political issues receive more attention from the local community.

Meanwhile, all informants stated that election hoaxes have always been an important issue. According to Informant 3, the Editorial Team of Warta Kota Jakarta, the trend of spreading election hoaxes continues to grow due to the high penetration of social media by Indonesians. Informant 3 explained many contents, both positive and negative, on social media has been spread by teams of presidential/vice-presidential candidates in the 2019

elections. Negative content tends to contain attacks on the other candidate.

In the 2019 elections, public engagement in terms of likes, shares, or comments was very high on both positive and negative election content. In the 2019 elections, many were arrested for hate speech, hoaxes, and fake news (Informant 3, Editorial Team of Warta Kota Jakarta, interview, October 7, 2023).

Informant 3 explained that political hoaxes continue to emerge during the 2024 elections process. According to informant 3, political hoaxes are prone to attack professional mass media. He thinks that professional mass media may report hoaxes due to the click-hunting factor of their readers. Meanwhile, informant 4 emphasized that social media is a space for battles, and it can cause polarization. According to informant 2, if professional mass media only follow trending political news, so that mass media can be trapped in informing hoaxes.

Professional mass media need to be careful with this elections hoax issue. The media is a business of public trust. The media should continue to report the right news. (Informant 2, Editorial Team of Tribun Mataraman, interview, October 6, 2023)

On the other side, informant 4, Editor Team of Suara Merdeka from a local newspaper in Semarang, said that hoaxes do not have a strong impact on print media. According to informant 4, print media has a layered and strict verification process and considers the fact that speed. If there is information containing hoaxes, the editorial

team will do the gatekeeping process to find the truth.

Informant 5, Editorial Team of *Harian Jogja*, a local newspaper in Yogyakarta, said that hoaxes can influence mass media in every situation not only in elections. Hoaxes, according to informant 5, can make the newsroom off guard. If an editor does not check the correct information, the newsroom can publish the hoaxes. According to informant 5, *Harian Jogja* had experience reporting hoaxes a few years ago.

We are very careful with hoaxes. Editors do not just look at the news from famous media or social media. We have to be selective in our news sources. (Informant 5, Editorial Team of *Harian Jogja*, interview, October 6, 2023)

Based on the statement, informant 5 added that local media must adhere to the principle of verification. This verification principle is emphasized continuously to all editors, from reporters to editors, in overseeing an issue, including political issues. The verification process helps the media maintain trust with the public. This is because the media gives the correct information based on journalistic standards.

#### **Media Policy of Warta Kota**

*Warta Kota* is a local media in Jakarta that is part of the *Tribunnews.com* Network. The media policy of hoax has been completed by the election guidelines that have been initiated since May 2022. This guideline contains the code of ethics and editorial content. The contents of elections guideline, namely: 1) the editorial staff must be careful in managing social media in production

and distribution news, 2) newsroom is not showing preference for certain candidates, 3) journalist does not join in elections selections committees, 3) journalists is prohibited to party administrators, and 4) journalist must declare if their family members are involved in political parties. This guideline has been practiced by journalists in the *Tribun Network*. This guideline has several consequences. One of the consequences is that journalists get punished both verbally and nonverbally and are removed from the company.

Informant 3 also has an opinion about viral political news and potential hoaxes. The editorial team considers viral political news strictly and checks it before uploading the news. According to Informant 3, the decision to reject the viral news can decrease the revenue of the media. Despite the revenue loss, the editorial team chooses to publish quality news and non-clickbait. The editorial team believes that quality news can improve the credibility of the media. So that, audience will give the truth to the media itself.

Readers' awareness of quality news is increasing, so they need good content. The more good content, the more we will be trusted by the public. We do not want to be labelled as fake media. (Informant 3, Editorial Team of *Warta Kota*, interview, October 7, 2023)

On the other side, informant 3 explained that the editorial team of *Warta Kota* does not have a special team to check hoax news. Verification is conducted by the entire editorial team to ensure the accuracy of news. Furthermore, the verification process involves cross-checking various



sources to ensure the accuracy of the information. Usually, the editorial team refers to reliable information on a trusted website, and sometimes, they contact sources again to verify the information.

#### **Media Policy of BandungBergerak.id**

BandungBergerak.id is a local online media in Bandung that focuses on marginalized issues around Bandung. This media was born in March 2021. The target audience of BandungBergerak.id is young people aged 18-21 years old. So that, BandungBergerak.id has been collaborating with many local communities to explore the local issues in the Bandung area. The local communities have an opportunity to contribute their idea, and they can write down based on their perspective.

Informant 1 explained that news related to elections was extensively published during the period of September to October 2023. The main target of elections news in BandungBergerak.id is young voters. Hence, the information tends to explore the common issue in elections. They took young people to become the source of news. Furthermore, the editorial team uploaded the news in Podcast format on the *Suara Pinggiran* channel. The big issue of this podcast is to see elections from the perspective of marginalized people.

Election hoaxes are also a concern for the editorial team. However, this media does not have an editorial policy on hoaxes. According to Informant 1, the editorial team applied the conventional model of journalism to cross-check the hoax. The editorial team checks the information through cross-referencing

various sources via Google Search. They do not have special tools and employees to verify the hoaxes. They made a collaboration with other communities to increase the knowledge of hoaxes.

We only have two reporters and still focus on covering local issues. Institutionally, we have not been able to create a special channel. The issue of getting funding is also a challenge for us now. (Informant 1, Editorial Team of Bandungbergerak.id, interview, October 3, 2023)

Based on the findings, the survival issue still becomes the main problem in BandungBergerak.id than elections news. They have been trying to find a donor to support their media outlet. They are looking for training independently to increase their capacity in journalism.

#### **Media Policy of Suara Merdeka**

Suara Merdeka is a newspaper that operates in the Central Java region. This newspaper was born in 1950. This newspaper is currently converging with an online platform, Suaramerdeka.com, but different newsroom management. Based on the findings, informant 4 stated that his media has a special rubric for election news. According to informant 4, the election news is important to report because the community wants to know the latest issues regarding the elections. The community itself also contributes to the election process.

Informant 4 stated that his media is rarely exposed to hoaxes. This is because the newspaper has a different process from online media. In online media, speed is

often prioritized over the quality of content. Consequently, the verification process is typically less stringent than that in printed journalism media. According to informant 4, news in the newspaper still takes a long time to be constantly by journalists and editors. On the other side, there are no special tools or special journalists to check the hoax in Suara Merdeka. The editorial team only follows the principles of journalism when they are working, such as checking the validity of sources, interviewing the sources, and observing the event directly.

Informant 4 also stated that the survival issue is more important than hiring a special team of fact-checkers. According to Informant 4, his media have faced a challenge after the Covid-19 pandemic. Some issues in his media, such as layoffs, a decrease in wages, a lack of advertisement, and declining news readership, have led media outlets to look for a strategy to survive.

#### **Media Policy of Tribun Mataraman**

Tribun Mataraman in East Java is part of the Tribun Network. Informant 2 stated that election news is in great demand by the people of East Java. Hoaxes are a problem in online media during the 2024 elections. Hoaxes are potentially created as a means for media to generate revenue. Hoaxes often gain public attention, getting viral, and gaining high click rates.

Viral and potentially hoax content is a challenge for the media. We need to manage ourselves to create viral news content (Informant 2, Editorial Team of Tribun Mataraman, interview, October 6, 2023)

Media policy to counter hoaxes is implemented through a strict verification process. However, their media does not have a special guidance or dedicated team to detect hoaxes. Informant 2 stated that applying journalistic principles is important to be implemented by all journalists. Journalistic principles like covering both sides, accuracy, and balance are good enough to counter election hoaxes. Furthermore, Informant 2 added that their media has a political talk show to support the information in a paper version. In a political talk show, the candidate has space to speak and clarify to their public. According to Informant 2, audiences more interesting to listen to a political talk show than reading, because audiences can ask to candidate directly about their programmes.

#### **Media Policy of Harian Jogja**

Harian Jogja is a local media in Yogyakarta that was established on May 20, 2008. Informant 5 explained that Harian Jogja has a policy for countering election hoaxes. Harian Jogja has a guidance named the ABC principle (Accuracy, Balance, and Clear Complete) for news production. This principle contains language style and journalistic principles that must be practiced by Harian Jogja's journalists. Harian Jogja also has a team for fact-checking of the election news. Informant 5 gave an example of the application of the ABC principle, such as crosscheck news sources, completeness in news elements, and not being triggered by sensational issues that have the potential to be hoaxes.

Informant 5 also stated that Harian

Jogja has a team to check the hoaxes. This team has received special training for fact-checking. According to informant 5, there is a hoax surrounding elections during the day, so the team must clarify it. To clarify the hoax, Harian Jogja has a special rubric, named *Aspirasi*. *Aspirasi* rubric collected the correct data from any sources. Informant 5 declared that this rubric upholds journalistic standards like accuracy and truthfulness. By using

journalistic standards, Harian Jogja builds and maintains public trust with its audience.

Based on findings, five local media outlets give more attention to countering election hoaxes. Despite not all local media have special teams or rubrics, they always practice the journalistic standard in news production. All of the informants practiced the fact-checking process for election news to limit harmful consequences and promote media literacy.

**Table 1 Comparison of Local Media Policies in Countering Hoaxes of the 2024 Elections**

Media	Coverage	Media Policy on Election Hoaxes	Local Media Challenges
Warta Kota	Jakarta	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Election hoax guidelines (contains employee code of conduct and editorial content about elections)</li> <li>2. There is no special team for fact-checking, only a social media analysis team, and has not yet concentrated on hoax issues</li> <li>3. News verification process by newsroom</li> <li>4. Report non-clickbait news about election and not favoring any candidate</li> </ol>	Viral news that can increase media revenue but is sensationalized
BandungBergerak.id	Bandung	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Not yet concentrating on election hoax issues, still reporting general election news through websites and podcasts.</li> <li>2. Bringing readers (young people) closer to political issues through open discussions</li> <li>3. Strictly verification and not considering the quantity of news</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lack of human resources. There is no special team for hoax-checking</li> <li>2. Sustainability of local media about funding</li> </ol>
Suara Merdeka	Semarang	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There is no special team to check election hoaxes</li> <li>2. Verification is done by newsroom and takes longer to minimize hoaxes</li> <li>3. There is special rubric to discuss election news.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Limited local funding - post-covid there were labor efficiencies, pay cuts, and managerial issues.</li> <li>2. The condition of print media that is losing out to online competition</li> </ol>
Tribun Mataraman	Surabaya	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There is no special team for fact-checking hoaxes</li> <li>2. Strictly verifications from the editorial team</li> <li>3. The news does not favor one of the candidates, providing open space for all candidates to have an opinion</li> <li>4. Concentrate on election news and have a political talk show program</li> </ol>	Viral news that can increase media revenue but is sensationalized
Harian Jogja	Yogyakarta	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Use the ABC principles in news production</li> <li>2. Strictly verification of incoming content - No sensationalized content, no subscription to Google AdSense</li> <li>3. There is fact-checking team and special rubric to clarify hoax</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Viral news that can increase media revenue but is sensationalized</li> <li>2. Multiple and wrong news sources</li> </ol>

Source: Primary Data (2023)

## DISCUSSION

The findings show that local media play a significant role in local democratization. Local media in Java Island give a special portion to election news because the community needs it. All informants stated that their audiences discuss a lot of political issues. Local media in Java Island has a special rubric to discuss political issues. Even one informant stated that media outlets give a chance for young voters to talk about political issues based on their perspective. The editorial team has differences of editorial policy on political issue and based on the needs of the local community (Pamungkas & Pramesti, 2021, p. 91). Based on the findings, political issues become a main issue for society, and it proves that the literacy of people on Java Island to access and understand political news is in the high category (Gelgel, Rahmijati, & Limilia, 2021, p. 20).

Meanwhile, the media have a function to promote good democratization. The media give the public space to society to share ideas about social and political issues. Curran and Seaton (as cited in Haerudin, Prisanto, Ernungtyas, & Hidayanto, 2020, p. 166) state that the media must fulfil the requirements for creating the democratic system. Media empowers the community and explores prominent issues. The finding showed that election news has news value, as elections are people's parties to choose their candidates. People have searched the information about candidates through the media, such as the background of the candidate, vision and mission, and political activity. Hence, local

media put the election news in their media policy and share it with the public. Based on the findings, election issues are neutral news. All informants stated that they have not supported only one candidate. They gave the same space to the candidate to share their vision or mission. One out of five informants declared that their media outlet does not want to be trapped in the identity issue. So, their media does not give any perspective on one candidate. All informants stated that election issues are also discussed both in open forums and closed forums. Unfortunately, this research does not look at the text directly, so the authors cannot prove the neutral news in local media. This aspect also represents a notable limitation of the study.

People can comment on the candidate. Local media facilitated their comment and published it. One informant stated that people can talk together in the podcast. People can share their perspective and give a critique of the candidate. It means that the media present group interests, supervise the government, and ensure the protection of weak groups. According to Curran and Seaton (as cited in Haerudin, Prisanto, Ernungtyas, & Hidayanto, 2020, p. 166), the media becomes a public space for people to discuss openly disagreements with the consensus formulated by the elite domination.

About local media policy for countering hoaxes, the findings show the distinct policies in each region. According to Nugroho, Siregar, and Laksmi (2012, p. 63), some factors influence media policy, namely open market, technological innovation, pragmatism

and short-term interest, and network and clientism. Based on the findings, the open market did not influence to reporting of election news in local media. All information described that election news is important to report. Local media did not limit coverage to popular topics only, since all political issues were considered as essential by the public. Most citizen need to know the latest issues about politics and their candidate. Even two out of five informants declared that their media did not depend on Google AdSense. They described that their media is more interested in discussing politics intensely than focusing on reporting sensational content.

To counter the hoax issue, all informants avoid viral and sensational news. Viral news has been potential to contain hoaxes. Based on findings, local media are capable of conducting their social function in educating the public. All informants stated that local media focus on quality news so that people can trust them. All informants also declared that local media are still looking for the reader, so they must maintain the quality of news. According to Bowler and Karp (as cited in Oganyanova, Lazer, Robertson, & Wilson, 2020, p. 2), sensational content can attract and maintain public attention, but at the same time reduce public trust. Meanwhile, the economic function is still conducted, except that local media editors use the strategy of utilizing viral news only to find keywords. Editors used these keywords to create news headlines and news content with a strict verification process the editorial team ensures that the

title created does not contain hoaxes, while still considering its potential to go viral and attract more clicks from readers. Based on findings, the local media still practice the verification of news to counter hoaxes. According to all informants, a verification process is important to do because they produce the journalistic product. The journalism itself focuses on the process employed to get what happened down right (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014, p. 112)

The second factor is technological innovation, which relates to the presence and innovation of technology in the mass media. Innovation is the use of tools in fact-checking hoaxes. Based on findings, one out of five informants have practiced fact-checking innovation. This media has a special team to conduct fact-checking. Meanwhile, four out of five informants have not fully practiced fact-checking tools due to a lack of human resource knowledge. Even these local media argued that the verification process is only done by manual skill. The manual skill was done by cross-checking with other sources. It happens because these local media outlets focus on getting readers and money to survive. About technological innovations, two out of five informants described that enhancing the internal capacity issue is more important than developing the technology. Sustainability issues, budgeting, and a lack of human resources are challenges for local media.

Based on the findings, technology also has an impact on local media (Nugroho, Siregar, & Laksmi, 2012, p. 63). Technology in this research is related to



using Search Engine Optimization (SEO). SEO itself influences local media editors to create election headlines. SEO helps to look for the keyword that is relatable to the people, so that the editor easier to make news based on the keyword. SEO searches tend to be directed towards sensational and viral news, while it becomes a challenge for editors to follow the news or not. If they follow the trend of viral news, local media will potentially get income from clicks. If they do not follow the trend, the content doesn't get clicks from the reader. The finding shows that editors use SEO to make news. But all informants stated that SEO only helps them to search for the keyword about a political issue. The keyword helps editors to make news, but they still practice the principles of journalism like accuracy, balance, and fairness.

The third factor relates to pragmatism and short-term interests (Nugroho, Siregar, & Laksmi, 2012, p. 63). This aspect relates to government regulation in regulating the media. The findings showed that there is no specific regulation to counter hoaxes for the media. Local media are still guided by the Press Law and Journalistic Code of Ethics as the editorial basis for their work. Meanwhile, from secondary data, the authors found that professional media also spread hoaxes. Based on this data, the absence of government regulations has the potential for local media to disobey the journalistic code of ethics.

The fourth factor related to media policy is networks and clientism (Nugroho, Siregar, & Laksmi, 2012, p. 63). This factor refers to how certain interest groups

succeed in influencing decision-makers in issuing regulations governing the existence of the media. Three out of five informants declared that the networked local media are obliged to follow the rules set together. Three networked local media, such as Warta Kota, Tribun Mataraman, and Harian Jogja have special guidelines governing electoral matters, including hoaxes. These rules must be adhered to by all groups in the network and have the same punishment if violated. Networked local media tend to have less trouble creating editorial policy mechanisms than non-networked media. Compared with non-networked media, two out of three informants argued that they have no specific rules to counter hoaxes. They practice the conventional way to counter hoaxes by cross-checking with other sources.

These four factors work in formulating local media policies in countering hoaxes in the 2024 elections. Local media policy of counter hoaxes becomes an important action with all its consequences. Local media policy is a dynamic process depending on the situation, namely public interest, regulatory authorities, and the international dimension of technological, industrial, and economic governance (Papathanassopoulos, 2015, p. 6).

## CONCLUSION

Local media play a significant role in democratization. One of these important roles is realized by paying more attention to the election news of the 2024 elections. One of the challenges for local media during elections is political hoaxes about

the elections. These hoaxes can harm the function of local media, especially the social function, because people become uneducated.

The findings showed that local media in Java Island pay more attention to the issue of election hoaxes. Local media gave coverage of election news in their rubric. Nevertheless, local media have not made specific guidelines yet to counter hoaxes. Only one of the five local media that has a special guideline for countering hoaxes. Meanwhile, other local media tend to do the verification process by cross-checking with other sources. Furthermore, local media gave neutral news on the elections. They claimed that they only published issues about the activity, vision, and mission of the candidate. Unfortunately, authors cannot prove the findings about neutral news. This aspect also represents a notable limitation of the study.

An interesting finding is about four factors to influence the media policy, namely open market, technological innovation, pragmatism and short-term interests, and networks and clientism. These four factors do not influence local media policy directly in election news cases. Local media consider some considerations to make media policy, such as financial issues, lack of human resources, and the sustainability of local media itself. These issues are more important to local media than following the open market and technological innovation. Meanwhile, internal issues in networked local media are less complex than non-networked media. On the other side,

networked local media tend to follow the media policy of their media group, including the election news.

The local media still practice the verification process to produce the election news. Verification is the essence of journalism, and the local media know distinguish a journalism product is or not. They still focus on the process to get what happened right. From the verification process, they realize that they must produce high-quality news. The high-quality news makes people educated. On the other hand, hoaxes can make people uncritical of election issues. So, people must get high-quality news based on the principles of journalism for people to criticize the election issue.

The further study can be done with a greater geographical coverage in Indonesia and with more informants. Authors assumed that different coverage could influence the local media policy. Local media consider the local issue and the readers. On the other hand, the other research is done by using the content analysis method to see the content of the media. Content analysis is a way to verify whether local media have conducted a social function in reporting political issues and countering hoaxes. Furthermore, authors suggest that the Press Council and the government consider specific guidelines to counter election hoaxes. Hopefully, the guidelines can be implemented by all media outlets. This rule will help local media focus more on the issue of election hoaxes and place them in a special section.

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