

Indonesian Government Agents' Responses to Hoaxes: From Platitudes to Rebuttals

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ABSTRACT

Hoaxes have been troubling the government because they often claim to be official government information or make false accusations about the government. This research aimed to analyse how government institutions respond to hoaxes, as reflected in the content of their websites. This article employs a corpus linguistic approach and uses several tools to collect data and examine issues and responses related to hoaxes through content analysis of news and press releases published on the official channels of 34 ministries between 2020 and 2022. The data analysed consisted of 1,348 news and press releases related to efforts to counter hoaxes and promote digital literacy, collected from the websites of these ministries and agencies. The research highlighted that the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (*Kemenkominfo*) played a dominant role in countering hoaxes, providing dedicated web pages for fact-checking. While other government organisations could counter hoaxes directed against them, they also offered counterinformation to be published on *Kemenkominfo's* website. However, despite their extensive public outreach, some other government organisations were not as active in countering hoaxes. Hoaxes did not seem to be their primary concern. The findings underscored the importance of digital literacy and proactive communication strategies in mitigating the impact of hoaxes and maintaining public trust in governmental institutions.

Keywords: *Hoax, disinformation, fact-checking, content analysis, Indonesia.*

INTRODUCTION

Easy access to information in today's increasingly advanced digital era brings many benefits to society. On one hand, easy access to information can speed up communication and facilitate access to various sources. On the other hand, this convenience also increases the chance of spreading harmful hoaxes. Moreover, massive technological developments enable the rapid and widespread dissemination of hoaxes, often outpacing the spread of valid information (Vosoughi et al., 2018). This condition is further exacerbated by people's dependence on information from the internet through various channels, such as social media, instant messaging applications (e.g., WhatsApp, Telegram, Line), and websites. Not surprisingly, internet users have reached over 50 per cent of the Indonesian population (Rusli et al., 2021).

Hoaxes can harm specific individuals or groups and even threaten the security of society as a whole. Their impacts can cause widespread anxiety and fear among individuals and groups, leading to national attention in mass media reports. Studies indicate that hoaxes often circulate in society and are related to ethnic, religious, racial, intergroup issues, health,

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and politics. Political hoaxes that circulate during elections can damage the reputations of political opponents and delegitimise the political system itself (Rojano et al., 2020). On the other hand, health-related hoaxes, such as those widely circulated during the COVID-19 pandemic, can cause people to ignore the dangers of spreading the virus or experience excessive fear (Tasnim et al., 2020).

Meanwhile, research on the roles of government websites in digital literacy has not been conducted in the Indonesian context, based on search results from Google Scholar and the Garuda databases. Therefore, this research is essential due to its novelty in Indonesia. The results of this research are expected to provide policy recommendations to strengthen the role of government websites in combating hoaxes and increasing digital literacy. Government websites are anticipated to be frontline tools in the fight against the growing number of hoaxes.

In 2018, the Indonesian government strengthened its legal and institutional response to the spread of hoaxes through the Cyber Crime Directorate, which intensified efforts to identify and prosecute individuals responsible for disseminating fake news that negatively impacts society and threatens national unity (Sekretariat Kabinet RI, 2018).

By 2021, the government, through the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, had further reinforced its role in monitoring and verifying hoaxes as part of a broader strategy to mitigate their potential harm to the public interest. During this period, the issue of immunisation-related hoaxes emerged as a serious public health challenge. Misinformation and fake news became significant barriers to the implementation of child immunisation programs in Indonesia, underscoring the urgent need for more extensive public education (Jakarta Post, 2021).

Entering 2025, efforts to combat health-related hoaxes have become more systematic and collaborative. The Ministry of Health now actively conducts public education campaigns, strengthens coordination with other government institutions, and utilises digital platforms to debunk misinformation using scientifically verified evidence. These integrated efforts reflect the government's increasing commitment to protecting public health and strengthening digital literacy in the face of persistent misinformation challenges (Arlinta, 2025).

Research on government websites linked to efforts to ward off hoaxes is also interesting to examine from several research question perspectives. First, how intensely is the Ministry/Agency website responding to hoaxes through news and press releases? Second, does the government have a significant public relations (PR) function in countering hoaxes through Ministry/Agency websites? Third, has each Ministry/Agency made reasonable efforts to prevent hoaxes through its official website?

Based on the three research questions mentioned previously, this research aims to (1) analyse the intensity of Ministries/Agencies in responding to hoaxes through news and press releases on their websites, (2) examine the function of government public relations in countering the spread of hoaxes and providing digital literacy about these hoaxes through Ministry/Agency websites, and (3) observe the efforts of each Ministry/Agency through its website in preventing hoaxes and promoting good digital literacy. This study analyses news articles and press releases from 34 Ministries/Institutions related to preventing hoaxes from 2020 to 2022 to answer these research questions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Role of Government Websites in Countering Hoaxes

Technological sophistication presents both a challenge and an opportunity for society in addressing the increasingly massive problem of hoaxes. In this context, individuals as members of society are expected to become key actors in initiating and supporting hoax prevention efforts. Community involvement in preventing hoaxes plays an important role; however, the involvement of the government remains unavoidable (Susanti & Nurmiati, 2022). Various approaches can be undertaken to curb the spread of hoax information in society, and these efforts will be effective only if there is integration among society, government, and the private sector. All societal elements should provide open and credible access to information related to circulating hoax content. Such efforts should not be limited to providing factual reading materials but must involve continuous public education and the enforcement of sanctions against individuals who intentionally and effectively spread hoaxes.

Hoaxes occur on a large scale and are often designed to attract public attention while simultaneously disrupting society and consuming significant resources to address their impacts. Hoaxes can be classified into three categories. First, disinformation refers to false information deliberately created to harm individuals, social groups, organisations, or countries, with the aim of deceiving the public to influence public opinion or gain certain advantages (Kemenkominfo, 2019; UNESCO, 2018). Second, misinformation refers to incorrect information that is not disseminated with harmful intent (UNESCO, 2018). Misinformation often arises from good intentions, such as efforts to "remind" or "correct" others, despite the inaccuracy of the information (Kemenkominfo, 2019). The third category is malinformation, which is based on factual information but presented in ways that cause harm to other parties rather than serving the public interest. Examples include verbal harassment, hate speech, discrimination, and the dissemination of personal information that violates privacy (Kemenkominfo, 2019; UNESCO, 2018).

Addressing hoaxes requires extra efforts, and one of the key actors in hoax prevention is the government, particularly through its official websites. As a form of new media, websites have become embedded in everyday technological practices; they are widely used by the public and integrated into daily routines (Purwadi & Irwansyah, 2022). At the same time, websites have become significant spaces for the circulation of hoaxes. For this reason, government websites must play a proactive and critical role in countering hoaxes by clarifying and debunking misleading information. Although information disseminated through social media spreads rapidly, it is often quickly displaced by newer content. In this context, government websites function as official and authoritative sources that the public can trust and rely upon. Through channels such as news updates and press releases, government websites can counter hoaxes while simultaneously promoting digital literacy among the public.

In addition, government websites provide access to public databases, including statistical data and government document archives. Their primary purpose is to facilitate public access to information while enhancing government transparency and accountability in carrying out official duties. Government websites are also designed to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of public services (Wiratmo et al., 2017). As communication platforms, they serve to disseminate government programs and policies, respond to public inquiries, and correct inaccurate information circulating in society. In this regard, the use of government websites to correct misinformation constitutes an important strategy in

countering the increasingly massive spread of hoaxes, particularly through the dissemination of news content and official press releases.

Digital Literacy

Digital literacy includes technical understanding and ability (using various software tools to optimise the acquisition and utilisation of information) and the cognitive ability to sort and select information critically. Digital literacy also refers to an individual's ability and expertise in utilising computer devices, the internet, and other digital tools to support communication activities optimally (Setyaningsih et al., 2019). Digital literacy also includes understanding online security and privacy, digital ethics, and how to communicate effectively through digital technology. Digital literacy is often considered the ability to use the internet and digital media. However, there is a view that frequently perceives technological mastery skills as the most essential skills (Buckingham, 2015).

Spiers and Bartlett (Spiers, 2019) have divided various intellectual processes related to digital literacy into three categories: (a) discovering and consuming digital content, (b) creating digital content, and (c) communicating digital content. Digital literacy is critical as our world becomes increasingly connected and driven by digital technology. In an increasingly digitally connected environment, individuals and organisations that cannot use technology effectively will be left behind in many ways, whether in education, employment, or social engagement. It is essential for creating order in relationships between citizens in cyberspace and the real world. Technological progress has not been matched by society's social adaptability (Harmoko, 2021). Modern humans must adapt to technological advances in order to face global challenges, making it increasingly difficult to separate human activities from technology. Akbar and Noviani (2019) revealed that at least two efforts could be made to create a society capable of digital literacy: (1) Indonesian society must have the broadest possible access to technology, and (2) the public must be provided with material about technology and digital literacy to ensure people have the cognition and skills to use digital media, including being competent in digital literacy.

Research indicates that individuals with strong digital literacy skills are better equipped to recognise false information and prevent its dissemination (Guess et al., 2019). Effective digital literacy allows individuals to sift through information accurately, distinguishing between reliable and unreliable sources more effectively. This ability is crucial in the digital era, where information can rapidly and widely spread through social media and online platforms. By acting as the first line of defense against the spread of misinformation, digitally literate individuals play a vital role in maintaining the integrity of information.

Furthermore, high levels of digital literacy are positively correlated with improved employee performance. Research by van Deursen et al. (2014) demonstrates that employees with robust digital skills tend to be more productive and efficient in their tasks. They can leverage technology to streamline work processes, reduce errors, and enhance accuracy. This condition boosts individual performance and positively impacts the organisation's overall performance.

Digital literacy is a field that has experienced rapid research growth globally, as evidenced by the sharp increase in the number of publications between 1997 and 2021, particularly in the last five years, with Indonesia ranking fourth among the countries contributing the most documents (Ahsan et al., 2022). In Indonesia, digital literacy education is crucial for addressing the challenges of rapidly changing lifestyles driven by the use of information and communication technologies (ICT), including gadgets and the internet. These

challenges encompass issues such as information overload, negative content, negligence in network etiquette, and gadget addiction. Digital literacy must encompass three main dimensions: technical (how to use devices), cognitive (how to create, evaluate, and obtain useful digital information), and socio-emotional (Rahmah, 2015).

METHODOLOGY

To understand how Indonesian government institutions deal with hoaxes, this article draws on information collected from their official websites. It employs corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS), a method increasingly used to investigate discourse beyond strictly linguistic contexts (Flowerdew, 2024; Gillings & Mautner, 2024; Taylor, 2014). The corpus—constructed specifically for this study—provides a structured and systematic way to engage with the data and address the research questions (McEnery & Brezina, 2022). Various common corpus techniques—such as identifying N-grams and examining keyword co-occurrence—are used to better address the research questions.

All government information related to hoaxes was searched using the Google search engine with Indonesian keywords such as *hoaks* (hoax), *disinformasi* (disinformation), *misinformasi* (misinformation), *berita bohong* (fake news), *berita palsu* (fake news), *ujaran kebencian* (hate speech), and *fitnah* (slander). The English terms *hoax*, *disinformation*, *misinformation*, and *fake news* were also included, as many people continue to use English terminology for concepts that were originally introduced from abroad.

The resulting dataset comprises 1,348 news articles and press releases published from 2020 to 2022 on the websites of 34 ministries and non-ministerial government agencies (see Appendix 1 and Appendix 2). The 2020–2022 period was selected because the COVID-19 pandemic created widespread uncertainty due to limited information and knowledge about the virus, making the public vulnerable to hoaxes—either by downplaying the risk or reacting with excessive fear. During this period, Indonesian government websites played a crucial role in disseminating accurate information and debunking hoaxes to help the public remain cautious while maintaining emotional well-being.

This article employs CADS to examine how Indonesian government institutions addressed and responded to hoaxes. As CADS is a computational approach, several software tools were used throughout the process—from data acquisition to analysis and visualisation. The following steps were undertaken:

a. *Identifying Relevant Information*

Information on hoaxes issued by government institutions was identified using the Google search engine.

b. *Collecting URLs*

The resulting links from the search were gathered using the Chrome browser extension *Link Grabber*.

c. *Cleaning and Filtering The Dataset*

The collected links were cleaned and refined using *OpenRefine*. Only URLs belonging to ministries or non-ministerial government agencies were retained. The output of this stage was a CSV file containing the article title, publication date, and article text. The domain of the link indicates that the article is owned by the Ministry of State Secretariat (*Kementerian Sekretariat Negara*):

https://setneg.go.id/baca/index/waspadai_infodemi_covid_19_di_ruang_informasi_public

d. *Preparing Text Files*

A short Python script was used to convert each article in the CSV file into separate plain-text files for analysis.

e. *Corpus Processing and N-gram Analysis*

The text files were imported into *LancsBox* (Brezina et al., 2021). Various N-grams were generated to identify major themes in the corpus.

f. *Visualizing Keyword-in-Context (KWIC) Using a Bidirectional Word Tree*

KWIC is commonly presented in a concordance table, such as the one provided by *LancsBox*. However, visualizing KWIC in a bidirectional word tree can offer a more informative and intuitive representation of contextual patterns. For this purpose, the *TextExplorer* application was used to display KWIC graphically in a bidirectional word tree, while also providing the corresponding KWIC data in a concordance table (Maulana, 2025).

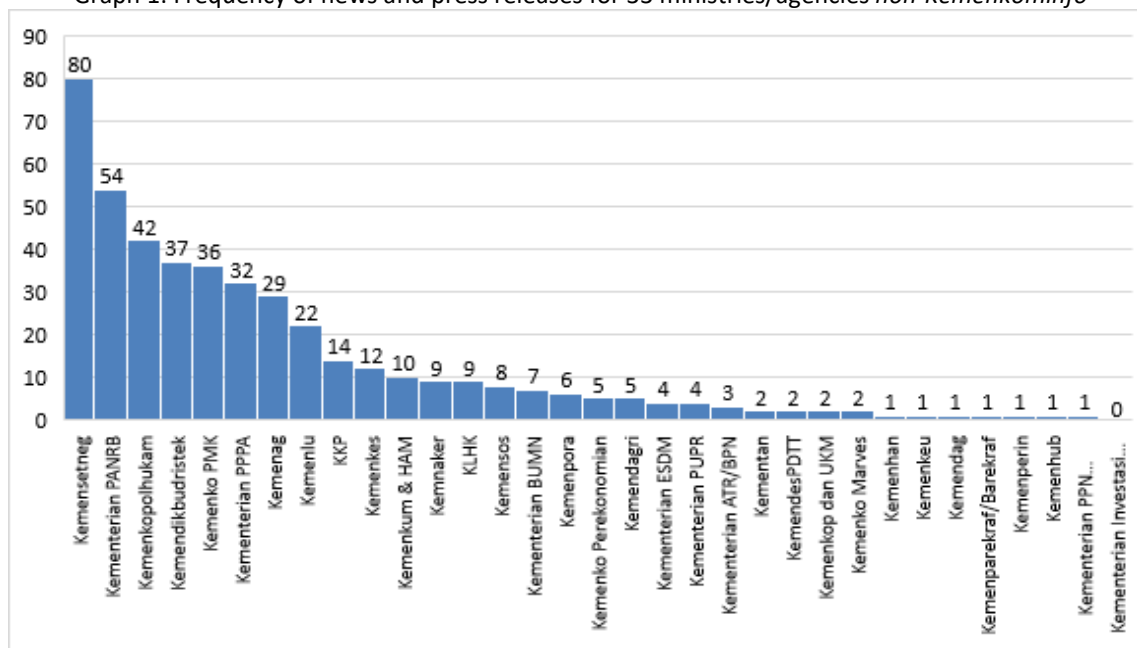
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings from the Analysis of Research Data

a. *Distribution of Hoax-Related News and Press Releases on Government Websites*

The initial data processing involved 1,348 downloaded news articles and press releases from the websites of ministries and non-ministerial government agencies. The Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (*Kemerkominfo*) emerged as the most dominant institution, contributing 905 documents—over 67% of the total. This indicates *Kemerkominfo*'s leading role among government institutions in using its website to combat hoaxes. The second most active institution is the Ministry of State Secretariat (*Kemensetneg*), which contributed only 80 documents (see Appendix 2 for complete data). Due to the disproportionately large number of documents from *Kemerkominfo* compared to all other institutions combined, the authors decided to exclude *Kemerkominfo* from Graph 1, which displays the frequency of news articles and press releases issued by other government organizations.

Graph 1: Frequency of news and press releases for 33 ministries/agencies *non-Kemerkominfo*



Source: Primary data

b. Identifying Common Themes in Ngrams

To identify the major themes in the dataset, this article extracts *n*-grams using LancsBox. The recurrence of similar phrases across documents indicates the presence of shared themes. The analysis focuses on 2-grams, 3-grams, and 4-grams, with each *n*-gram categorized into several major thematic groups. The list of 2-grams is presented in Table 1, 3-grams in Table 2, and 4-grams in Table 3.

Table 1: Top 20 words/phrases from LancsBox 6.0 2-gram analysis results

Num.	Word/Phrase	Frequency
1	<i>Kementerian Koinfo</i> (Ministry of Communication and Information Technology)	1.490
2	<i>Tim AIS</i> (AIS Team)	1.408
3	<i>Media Sosial</i> (Social Media)	1.120
4	<i>Isu Hoaks</i> (Hoax Issue)	665
5	<i>Hasil Penelusuran</i> (Search Results)	633
6	<i>Literasi Digital</i> (Digital Literacy)	554
7	<i>Laporan Isu</i> (Issue Report)	503
8	<i>Pandemi COVID-19</i> (COVID-19 pandemic)	496
9	<i>Ruang Digital</i> (Digital Space)	361
10	<i>Masyarakat Umum</i> (General Public)	319
11	<i>Vaksin COVID-19</i> (COVID-19 vaccine)	291
12	<i>Menteri Koinfo</i> (Minister of Communication and Information Technology)	281
13	<i>Informasi Publik</i> (Public Information)	234
14	<i>Berita Palsu</i> (Fake News)	229
15	<i>Komunikasi Publik</i> (Public Communication)	227
16	<i>Virus Corona</i> (Corona Virus)	222

Source: Primary data was processed using the LancsBox 6.0 application

Table 2: Top 20 words/phrases from LancsBox 6.0 3-gram analysis results

Num.	Word/Phrase	Frequency
1	<i>Komunikasi dan Informatika</i> (Communication and Informatics)	1.138
2	<i>Penelusuran Tim AIS</i> (AIS Team Search)	565
3	<i>Hoaks dan Disinformasi</i> (Hoax and Disinformation)	513
4	<i>Laporan Isu Hoaks</i> (Hoax Issue Report)	496
5	<i>Kebijakan Pemberian Booster</i> (Booster Policy)	193
6	<i>Pemberian Booster Kedua</i> (Giving the Second Booster)	193
7	<i>Media Sosial Facebook</i> (Social Media Facebook)	180
8	<i>Misinformasi dan Disinformasi</i> (Misinformation and Disinformation)	180
9	<i>Presiden Joko Widodo</i> (President Joko Widodo)	164
10	<i>Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan</i> (Education and Culture)	125
11	<i>Pegawai Negeri Sipil</i> (Government Employees)	118
12	<i>Kementerian Sekretariat Negara</i> (Ministry of State Secretariat)	118
13	<i>Keterbukaan Informasi Publik</i> (Openness of Public Information)	113
14	<i>Riset dan Teknologi</i> (Research and Technology)	106
15	<i>Kualitas Layanan Telekomunikasi</i> (Telecommunication Service Quality)	92
16	<i>UU Cipta Kerja</i> (Job Creation Law)	91
17	<i>Sekretariat Negara RI</i> (Republic of Indonesia State Secretariat)	91
18	<i>Biro Humas Kementerian</i> (Ministry of Public Relations Bureau)	90
19	<i>Humas Kementerian Koinfo</i> (Public Relations of the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology)	89
20	<i>Disinformasi dan Misinformasi</i> (Disinformation and Misinformation)	89

Source: Primary data was processed using the LancsBox 6.0 applicatio

Table 3: Top 20 words/phrases from LancsBox 6.0 4-gram analysis results

Num.	Word/Phrase	Frequency
1	<i>Kementerian Komunikasi dan Informatika</i> (Ministry of Communication and Information Technology)	966
2	<i>Tim AIS Kementerian Kominfo</i> (Ministry of Communications and Information Technology AIS Team)	576
3	<i>Hasil Penelusuran Tim AIS</i> (AIS Team Search Results)	548
4	<i>Isu Hoaks dan Disinformasi</i> (Hoax and Disinformation Issues)	271
5	<i>Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak</i> (Women and Child Protection)	263
6	<i>Kebijakan Pemberian Booster Kedua</i> (Second Booster Policy)	193
7	<i>Masyarakat Umum Usia 18</i> (General Public Age 18)	193
8	<i>Booster Kedua bagi Masyarakat</i> (Second Booster for Society)	193
9	<i>Hoaks, Misinformasi, dan Disinformasi</i> (Hoaxes, Misinformation and Disinformation)	166
10	<i>Laporan Isu Hoaks Misinformasi</i> (Misinformation Hoax Issue Report)	162
11	<i>Menteri Komunikasi dan Informatika</i> (Minister of Communication and Information Technology)	133
12	<i>Uang Nasabah atau Masyarakat</i> (Customer or Community Money)	113
13	<i>Subsidi Pemerintah dari BRI</i> (Government Subsidies from BRI)	106
14	<i>Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan</i> (Ministry of Education and Culture)	95
15	<i>Kabag Ops Polres Cilegon</i> (Head of Ops, Cilegon Police)	92
16	<i>Biro Humas Kementerian Kominfo</i> (Public Relations Bureau of the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology)	89
17	<i>Kementerian Sekretariat Negara RI</i> (Ministry of State Secretariat of the Republic of Indonesia)	88
18	<i>Politik Hukum dan Keamanan</i> (Legal Politics and Security)	85
19	<i>Hoaks Disinformasi dan Misinformasi</i> (Disinformation and Misinformation Hoaxes)	82
20	<i>Dugaan Korupsi Penyertaan Modal</i> (Alleged Capital Investment Corruption)	75

Source: Primary data was processed using the LancsBox 6.0 application

From the above three tables, the following three common themes consistently appear across the 2-gram, 3-gram, and 4-gram tables:

a. *The Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (Kementerian Kominfo)*

This theme focuses on the institution itself and its leadership, indicating the leading role of *Kementerian Kominfo* in handling hoaxes.

- 2-gram: *Kementerian Kominfo* (Ministry of Communication and Information Technology) and *Menteri Kominfo* (Minister of Communication and Information Technology).
- 3-gram: *Komunikasi dan Informatika* (Communication and Informatics) and *Humas Kementerian Kominfo* (Public Relations of the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology).
- 4-gram: *Kementerian Komunikasi dan Informatika* and *Menteri Komunikasi dan Informatika*.

b. *Information Integrity (Hoaxes, Disinformation, and the AIS Team)*

The most prominent theme involves the identification and reporting of false information.

- 2-gram: *Tim AIS* (AIS Team), *Isu Hoaks* (Hoax Issue), *Hasil Penelusuran* (Search Results), and *Laporan Isu* (Issue Report).
- 3-gram: *Penelusuran Tim AIS* (AIS Team Search), *Hoaks dan Disinformasi* (Hoax and Disinformation), and *Laporan Isu Hoaks* (Hoax Issue Report).

- 4-gram: *Tim AIS Kementerian Kominfo* (Ministry of Communications and Information Technology AIS Team), *Hasil Penelusuran Tim AIS* (AIS Team Search Results), and *Isu Hoaks dan Disinformasi*.

c. *Public Health and COVID-19*

This theme tracks the evolution from general pandemic awareness to specific vaccination policies.

- 2-gram: *Pandemi COVID-19* (COVID-19 pandemic) and *Vaksin COVID-19* (COVID-19 vaccine).
- 3-gram: *Kebijakan Pemberian Booster* (Booster Policy) and *Pemberian Booster Kedua* (Giving the Second Booster).
- 4-gram: *Kebijakan Pemberian Booster Kedua* and *Booster Kedua bagi Masyarakat* (Second Booster for Society).

In addition to shared themes, some themes appear exclusively within specific *n*-gram categories. The theme unique to 2-grams (Table 1) relates to the digital ecosystem and literacy, encompassing 2-grams such as *Media Sosial* (Social Media), *Literasi Digital* (Digital Literacy), and *Ruang Digital* (Digital Space).

By contrast, the themes unique to 3-grams (Table 2) concern government administration and labor, as reflected in 3-grams such as *Pegawai Negeri Sipil* (Civil Servants), *Kementerian Sekretariat Negara* (Ministry of State Secretariat), and *UU Cipta Kerja* (Job Creation Law). Additionally, Table 3 highlights themes related to service quality and state leadership, including *Kualitas Layanan Telekomunikasi* (Telecommunication Service Quality) and references to national leadership, notably *Presiden Joko Widodo*.

Themes unique to 4-grams (Table 3) relate to social protection, financial issues, and law enforcement. Social protection is reflected in the 4-gram *Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak* (Women and Child Protection). Financial issues and scams are indicated by more specific references to economic concerns, such as *Uang Nasabah atau Masyarakat* (Customer or Community Money), *Subsidi Pemerintah dari BRI* (Government Subsidies from BRI), and *Dugaan Korupsi Penyertaan Modal* (Alleged Capital Investment Corruption). Additionally, law enforcement-related themes appear in references such as *Kabag Ops Polres Cilegon* (Head of Operations, Cilegon Police).

c. *Dealing with Hoaxes that Complicate the COVID-19 Response*

The COVID-19 pandemic was marked by profound uncertainty. Both the government and the public had never experienced a similar crisis before. This uncertainty stemmed from limited knowledge about the virus, but more concerning was the widespread circulation of false information and hoaxes. Hoaxes related to COVID-19 were especially dangerous because they could lead people either to underestimate the risks or to overestimate them, potentially causing panic or psychological distress.

One way to deal with the spread of the virus was to limit people's mobility and social interaction, such as by closing shopping centers and other public places. At certain times, however, people were required to come to specific locations to receive vaccinations or food assistance due to the economic disruption caused by the pandemic. This information was often distorted by hoaxes. Such hoaxes frequently claimed to originate from government institutions, leading to misunderstandings and unnecessary public gatherings. As a result,

people became tired and frustrated after attending events that turned out to be based on false information.

While all government institutions sought to address hoaxes related to their respective areas of responsibility, the Ministry of Communication and Information was specifically tasked with coordinating the government's response to hoaxes, particularly those that could harm society or undermine public trust. Most of the hoaxes the ministry had to deal with concerned various aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic, as shown in Figure 1.

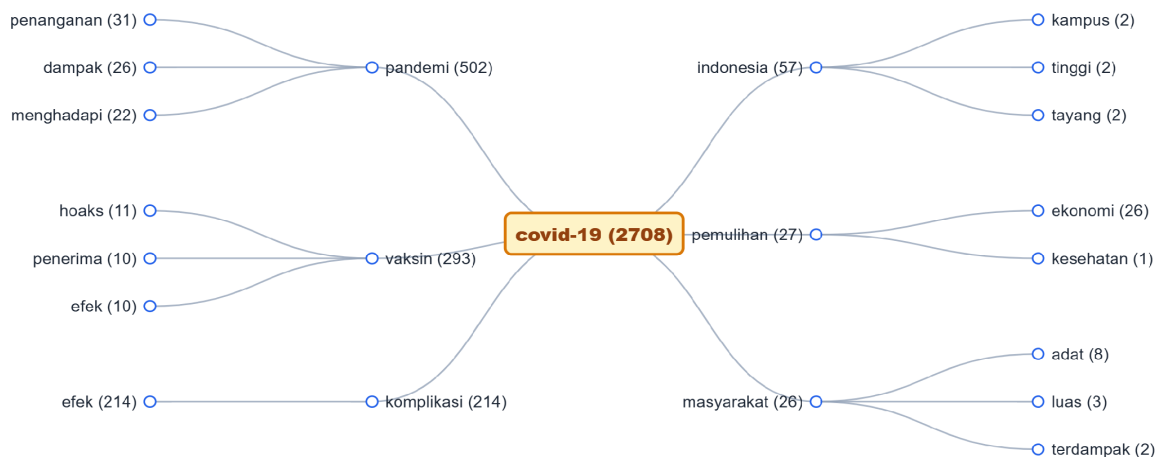


Figure 1: Bidirectional Keyword-in-Context (KWIC) word tree visualization of "COVID-19"
 Source: Primary data

The number shown in "covid-19 (2708)" indicates the frequency with which COVID-19 appears in the entire dataset. Each node, including the central keyword "COVID-19", branches into a maximum of three of the most frequent immediately adjacent words. For example, the adjacent node "*pandemi (502)*"—which appears one word to the left of the keyword "covid-19"—indicates that the n-gram "*pandemi covid-19*" occurs 502 times. Similarly, "*vaksin covid-19*" occurs 293 times, while "*efek komplikasi covid-19*" (effects of COVID-19 complications) appears 214 times. These collocations reflect three prominent concerns related to COVID-19. In addition, although not visible in the graph, Table 3 shows another COVID-19–related hoax, "*Booster Kedua bagi Masyarakat*" (Second Booster for Society), with a frequency of 193.



Figure 2: The word tree visualization of "*penanganan*" (handling)
 Source: Primary data

The complexities faced by the government during the pandemic are illustrated in Figure 2. The term *penanganan* (handling) appears 602 times in the dataset and primarily refers to the handling of COVID-19. This includes the establishment of the *Gugus Tugas*

Percepatan Penanganan COVID-19 (COVID-19 Task Force), which operated under and reported directly to the President. The task force aimed to strengthen national health resilience, accelerate the COVID-19 response through inter-agency coordination, anticipate the spread of the virus, enhance policy coordination, and improve preparedness for prevention, detection, and response. At the same time, pandemic management was accompanied by efforts toward pemulihan (economic recovery), which appears 19 times in the dataset. Both COVID-19 handling and economic recovery efforts were disrupted by *berita palsu* (false news; 88 occurrences) and *berita hoaks* (hoax news; 3 occurrences). As a result, the government had to simultaneously address public health and economic challenges while also combating disinformation that undermined these efforts.

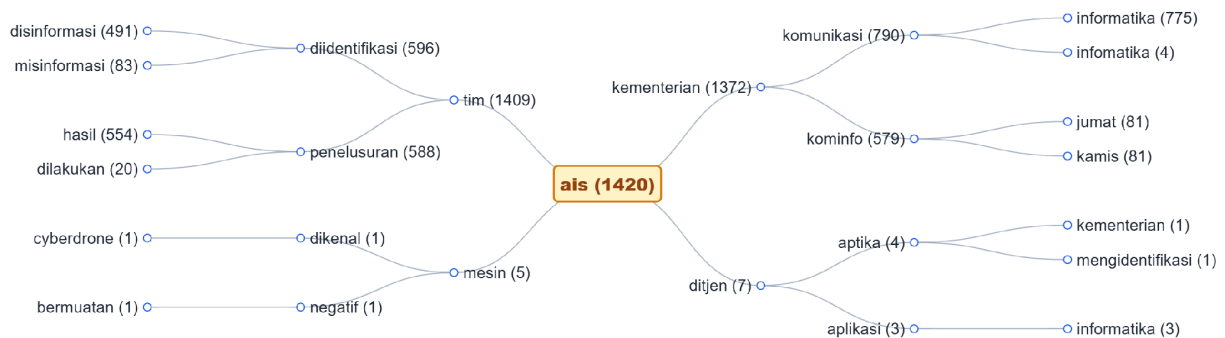


Figure 3: The word tree visualization of AIS (Automatic Identification System)
 Source: Primary data

In line with the themes extracted from Tables 1, 2, and 3, AIS-related phrases occupy a significant position in the dataset, appearing 1,420 times. More importantly, AIS refers to a specific unit, namely the *tim AIS* (AIS Team). In the right-hand part of the graph (i.e., words occurring to the right of the central keyword), this team is associated with *kementerian* (the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology) and with divisions within the ministry, such as the *Ditjen* (*Direktorat Jenderal*; Directorate General). Meanwhile, in the left-hand part of the graph (words occurring to the left of the central keyword), AIS is linked to *disinformasi* (disinformation) and *misinformasi* (misinformation), indicating that the team identified these forms of false information and actively conducted *penelusuran* (monitoring/search) for hoax content. As shown in Figure 3, the Automatic Identification System relies on *mesin* (machine-based systems) to automatically detect and monitor hoaxes.

In addressing hoaxes during the COVID-19 period, the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (*Kemenkominfo*) was tasked with coordinating the government's response. While it was responsible for detecting hoaxes and informing the public through its website, the sheer volume of hoax production meant that this challenge could not be handled by the ministry alone. Consequently, *Kemenkominfo* cooperated with other institutions, including civil society organizations such as *Masyarakat Anti-Fitnah Indonesia* (MAFINDO; Indonesian Anti-Defamation Society) and the *Gerakan Nasional Literasi Digital* (GNLD; National Digital Literacy Movement). To support hoax detection, *Kemenkominfo* also established the AIS Team (Automatic Identification System) to identify, verify, and validate negative online content.

While the automatic detection of hoaxes and the acceptance of public reports are crucial, educating the public about the harms of hoaxes is no less important. This is particularly because detecting every hoax in circulation is impossible; ultimately, a critically

literate society must be able to evaluate and filter false information independently. For this reason, both the government and civil society recognized the importance of promoting public awareness of hoaxes, as reflected in the frequent appearance of the terms *literasi digital* (digital literacy; 554 occurrences) and *literasi media* (media literacy; 59 occurrences) in the dataset. Figure 4 shows the importance of *meningkatkan literasi* (promoting literacy; 58 occurrences) in society, as well as initiatives undertaken by the GNLD.

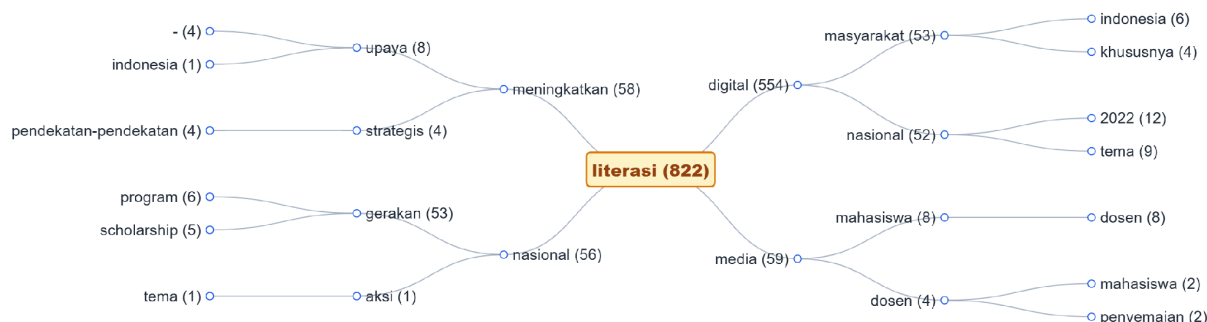


Figure 4: The word tree visualization of "literasi" (literacy)
Source: Primary data

DISCUSSION

a. *Kemenkominfo as Government Public Relations*

Kemenkominfo is the most active government organisation in combating hoaxes and disinformation, as mandated by Presidential Regulation Number 43 of 2018. This regulation designates *Kemenkominfo* as the coordinator for implementing national policies to combat misinformation. To fulfill this role, the Ministry issued several guidelines, including Minister of Communication and Information Technology Regulation Number 5 of 2020, which outlines stakeholder responsibilities in preventing hoaxes and harmful content in digital spaces. *Kemenkominfo* also operates various programs to combat hoaxes and enhance digital literacy across Indonesia. When a hoax pertains to the area of responsibility of a specific ministry, that Ministry is tasked with addressing it. Ministries can provide information to *Kemenkominfo*, whose website is widely recognised for fact-checking, and they may publish corrections regarding the hoax on their websites. Based on data from website, the government is trying to counter this by fact checking. Fact-checking has become central to content moderation on social platforms (Vinhas & Bastos, 2025).

Disinformation spreads through contemporary communication processes in democratic societies. As public spheres become increasingly fragmented and disrupted, the democratic foundations of authoritative information, traditionally produced and disseminated by social and political institutions are being challenged. In this context, Government Public Relations plays a crucial role in restoring public trust, ensuring the credibility of official information misleading and manipulative content (Bennett & Livingston, 2018). In complex modern governance systems, trust is a key element. Trust forms the basis of relationships and interactions between various actors, namely the public sector (government), the private sector, and civil society (Six et al., 2025).

Therefore, this study recommends strengthening two-way symmetrical communication strategies, as conceptualized by Grunig (2013) which emphasizes the importance of dialogue, openness, and public participation in the communication process. Furthermore, the use of credible influencers and the integration of local culture-based communication approaches are recommended as future policy development directions to

increase the effectiveness of information dissemination and public trust in government communications. The integration of influencers into political and governmental communication raises several concerns (Reveilhac, 2025).

b. Measuring Ministry/Agency Efforts to Respond to Hoaxes

While *Kemenkominfo* has dedicated web pages for fact-checking hoaxes, other government organisations do not. Their information related to hoaxes and disinformation is mixed with other types of information. Aside from documents containing refutations of hoaxes published by *Kemenkominfo*, only 53 documents have been produced by other government organisations (see Figure 5). Most other documents are news about government activities where the threat of hoaxes is mentioned by the person being reported on, or they contain warnings for people to be aware of the threat of hoaxes or express hope that we can better respond to hoaxes.

Ind.	File	Left	Node	Right
9	kemdikbu	yang beredar di media sosial. Berita-berita yang	tidak benar	tersebut membuat WNI yang tinggal di dalam
10	kemdikbu	yang beredar di media sosial. Berita-berita yang	tidak benar	tersebut membuat WNI yang tinggal di dalam
11	kemenag-	selain keperluan pemberangkatan ibadah haji. "Banyak berita	tidak benar	terkait penggunaan dana jemaah haji. Misalnya, ada
12	kemenag-	bisa mengetahui info atau berita semacam ini	tidak benar	dan fitnah," ujarnya. "Bagi pihak-pihak yang menyebarkan
13	kemenag-	PD Pontren Waryono memastikan bahwa surat tersebut	tidak benar	alias hoaks. "Itu surat palsu. Informasinya tidak
14	kemenag-	benar alias hoaks. "Itu surat palsu. Informasinya	tidak benar	dan menyesatkan, alias hoaks," tegas Waryono di
15	kemenag-	Selain secara substansi informasi dalam surat tersebut	tidak benar,	lanjut Waryono, secara teknis administratif, penulisan surat
16	kemenag-	Madrasah M Zain memastikan bahwa surat tersebut	tidak benar	alias hoaks. "Itu surat palsu. Informasinya tidak
17	kemenag-	benar alias hoaks. "Itu surat palsu. Informasinya	tidak benar	alias hoaks," tegas M Zain di Jakarta,
18	kemenag-	Khoirizi memastikan bahwa informasi tersebut hoaks alias	tidak benar.	"Itu hoaks, tidak benar. Sampai saat ini
19	kemenag-	tersebut hoaks alias tidak benar. "Itu hoaks,	tidak benar.	Sampai saat ini belum ada informasi resmi
20	kemenag-	Khusus Menag Kevin Haikal memastikan berita itu	tidak benar	alias hoaks. "Tidak benar Menag kembali positif
21	kemenag-	memastikan berita itu tidak benar alias hoaks.	"Tidak benar	Menag kembali positif Covid-19. Alhamdulillah Menag dalam
22	kemenag-	Barat H. Hendri memastikan bahwa informasi tersebut	tidak benar	alias hoaks. "Ini tidak benar. Melihat dari
23	kemenag-	informasi tersebut tidak benar alias hoaks. "Ini	tidak benar.	Melihat dari foto yang beredar di media
24	kemenag-	sejak Juni 2020. Karenanya, Hendri menegaskan bahwa	tidak benar	ada pemberangkatan jamaah haji asal Padang Sumatera
25	kemenag-	agar kita semua terhindar dari menyebarkan berita	tidak benar,"	tandasnya. (Humas Sumbar)
26	kemenag-	Imam mengemukakan ada dua jenis berita yang	tidak benar	yang sering beredar di dunia maya, yaitu
27	kemenag-	Suhaili memastikan bahwa itu adalah informasi yang	tidak benar	alias hoak. "Itu hoak. Belum ada pengumuman
28	kemenag-	dari penyelenggaraan yang dilakukan Kementerian Agama, adalah	tidak benar	dan merupakan disinformasi. "Tidak benar Aceh sedang
29	kemenag-	Agama, adalah tidak benar dan merupakan disinformasi.	"Tidak benar	Aceh sedang siapkan haji sendiri, lepas dari
30	kemenak-	public. Jadi tuduhan bahwa kita mengendap-ngendap itu	tidak benar,"	kata Menaker Ida membuka dialog dengan para
31	Kemenhu	informasi media digital yang harus mendoang berita	tidak benar	(hoax) yang diharapkan dapat memperkuat ketahanan nasional

Figure 5: Concordance of "tidak benar" (not true) in 53 documents, indicating refutations of hoaxes related to governments or falsely attributed to government organisations

Source: Primary data from the LancsBox 6.0 application

The primary problem is not a lack of information, but rather a communication failure; the existing information is not presented in a clear, concise, and readily usable format to decision-makers. In the context of tackling information and fast checking, this situation becomes crucial because disinformation spreads rapidly, while the verification process often lags behind (Lonsdale, 2019). In this situation, centralizing information handling, for example, through a single coordinating institution, is crucial to ensure message consistency, verification standards, and visual and narrative clarity in public communications. When information is verified and communicated centrally, the risk of an information gap between government institutions and the public can be minimized, as official messages are delivered in a format that is easy to understand and share.

However, the complex challenges of a digital society also explain why information handling cannot be fully centralized. Because technological improvements can exacerbate already existing socioeconomic inequities, the digital gap draws attention to issues of equality and access. It is crucial from an ethical standpoint to make sure that technology serves all facets of society, not just the wealthy (Kantha et al., 2024). The need for fast checking requires the involvement of various actors, other government institutions, the media, digital platforms, and civil society, who operate dispersedly in the public sphere (Iosifidis, 2011). In

this context, decentralization enables a faster and more contextual response, although it risks inconsistencies if not well-coordinated. In fact, various issues may prevent the materialization of the vision of electronic networks recreating the public sphere.

c. Digital Literacy is an Important Key to the War Against Hoaxes

The urgency of digital literacy is about processing information available on the internet. People's digital literacy skills and their ability to use technology are a golden solution for preparing a competent global society (Aspi & Syahrani, 2022). Unfortunately, the data and content available on the internet are not always reliable. They are, more often than not, unreliable. A Katadata Insight Center (KIC) survey showed that 30% to 60% of internet users in Indonesia were exposed to hoaxes. Still, only 21% to 36% recognised the information as a hoax (CfDS, 2021). The development of hoaxes in Indonesia is increasing with increasingly massive internet penetration. Nowadays, hoaxes have succeeded in infecting various groups and have become everyday consumption, including in the digital world (Fitriani, 2020).

In an increasingly digitally connected world, digital literacy has become crucial for participating actively and successfully in a technology-based society. Digital literacy has functions to bridge available literature sources and its role in meeting society's information needs (Setianingsih et al., 2023). In the same way, literate individuals can negotiate printed texts through reading and writing. Savvy technology users can consume and produce digital compositions. There are many cognitive processes at work, from consumption to production, when readers are immersed in digital content (Spire et al., 2017). Digital literacy can change people's misconceptions and lead them to a new, more realistic life paradigm. In this way, society can find, process, communicate, and evaluate information according to its portion (Aida, 2023).

At level one of digital literacy, digital competence, a person must master the basic skills, concepts, approaches, and actions when dealing with digital media. At level two, digital use, someone can apply applications for productive/professional purposes, such as using digital media for business, teaching, social campaigns, etc. Meanwhile, at the top level, digital transformation, someone can use digital media to innovate and be creative for the wider community (Sarumaha et al., 2022).

Digital literacy itself is an essential key in the fight against hoaxes. Therefore, digital literacy is critical for every individual to have. By understanding and having good digital literacy skills, individuals can be more crucial in receiving information spread in cyberspace and be able to distinguish valid information from hoaxes. This condition is critical in preventing the spread of hoaxes, which can harm many parties.

CONCLUSION

Different government organisations respond to hoaxes in varying ways, both in terms of content and intensity. Some organisations seem unconcerned and are not bothered by hoaxes, especially those whose activities are less related to the general public. However, the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (*Kemenkominfo*) plays the most central role in representing the government in combating hoaxes. It maintains the main site that contains all government rebuttals to hoaxes, particularly those targeting the government.

The main challenge for the government is ensuring that its rebuttals and corrections are known to the public. The recurrence of similar or identical hoaxes on social media indicates that many people are not aware of the rebuttals available on the government's

website. Therefore, it is essential to communicate these rebuttals and fact-checking efforts through social media.

The Indonesian government, particularly *Kemenkominfo*, cannot combat the spread of hoaxes alone. They have collaborated with various organisations and media corporations. However, they must expand public engagement to disseminate their anti-hoax information actively. A comprehensive strategy is needed to boost public engagement, encompassing recruitment, training, and, most importantly, continuous monitoring and appreciation of individuals who actively combat hoaxes.

This research provides an overview of several noteworthy findings regarding the role of government websites in responding to hoaxes through news and press releases. Firstly, distributing news and press releases from Ministry/Agency websites in response to hoaxes plays a dominant role for *Kemenkominfo*. This Ministry stands out with the largest number of news distributions and press releases, significantly surpassing other Ministries/Agencies. *Non-Kemenkominfo* Ministries/Agencies issued only 53 documents containing denials of hoaxes, indicating a relatively passive role in responding to hoaxes. Secondly, *Kemenkominfo* emerged as the spearhead in hoax prevention, producing approximately 905 news articles and press releases in response to hoaxes from 2020 to 2022. *Kemenkominfo* plays a crucial role as the government's public relations arm in combating hoaxes. Thirdly, several Ministries/Agencies have actively countered hoaxes by providing substantial responses through news reports and press releases. Fourthly, digital literacy emerges as a pivotal factor in preventing and addressing the spread of hoaxes in society. Alongside digital literacy skills, the willingness to apply these skills to debunk hoaxes is crucial. Lastly, some Ministries/Agencies exhibited varying levels of responsiveness when targeted by hoaxes, with categories ranging from less active to passive responses. Ultimately, *Kemenkominfo* has taken the lead role in hoax prevention.

Indonesian government websites have played a crucial role in combating hoaxes. This role highlights the growing importance of digital literacy in enabling active and successful participation in a technology-based society. Nevertheless, the synergy between the government and society is still needed to overcome the hoax problem in Indonesia. Apart from the government, the public must also take action to obtain accurate and reliable information and take action against fraud in their communities. Therefore, the Indonesian government website can effectively combat fraud and encourage digital literacy in society. However, support and active participation from all levels of society are also necessary to create a safer and higher-quality environment in the digital world.

Like research in general, the content analysis of news and press releases in this research also has limitations that must be considered. One of the limitations of this research is that the data used only comes from content analysis of news and press releases on the Indonesian government website, which was chosen as the object. Meanwhile, other data sources still have not been used as analysis material in this research. Another limitation is the research method used. Although the method used in this research is considered a valid approach, there is a possibility that the information obtained may not fully align with reality in the field. The limitations of this research must be considered to ensure that the results of further research are more comprehensive and accurate.

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APPENDIX 1

Table 1: List of Ministry/Agency websites as units of analysis

Num.	Name of Ministry/Agency	Website
1.	Coordinating Ministry for Political, Legal, and Security Affairs (<i>Kemendikpolhukam</i>)	https://polkam.go.id/
2.	Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs (<i>Kemenko Perekonomian</i>)	https://www.ekon.go.id/
3.	Coordinating Ministry for Human Development and Culture (<i>Kemenko PMK</i>)	https://www.kemenkopmk.go.id/
4.	Coordinating Ministry for Maritime Affairs and Investment (<i>Kemenko Marves</i>)	https://maritim.go.id/
5.	Ministry of the State Secretariat (<i>Kemensetneg</i>)	https://www.setneg.go.id/
6.	Ministry of Home Affairs (<i>Kemendagri</i>)	https://www.kemendagri.go.id/
7.	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (<i>Kemenlu</i>)	https://www.kemlu.go.id/
8.	Ministry of Defense (<i>Kemenhan</i>)	https://www.kemhan.go.id/
9.	Ministry of Religious Affairs (<i>Kemenag</i>)	https://www.kemenag.go.id/
10.	Ministry of Law and Human Rights (<i>Kemenkum & HAM</i>)	https://www.kemenkumham.go.id/
11.	Ministry of Finance (<i>Kemenkeu</i>)	https://www.kemenkeu.go.id/
12.	Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (<i>Kemendikbudristek</i>)	https://www.kemdikbud.go.id/
13.	Ministry of Health (<i>Kemenkes</i>)	https://www.kemkes.go.id/
14.	Ministry of Social Affairs (<i>Kemensos</i>)	https://kemensos.go.id/
15.	Ministry of Manpower (<i>Kemnaker</i>)	https://kemnaker.go.id/
16.	Ministry of Industry (<i>Kemenperin</i>)	https://kemenperin.go.id/
17.	Ministry of Trade (<i>Kemendag</i>)	https://www.kemendag.go.id/
18.	Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources (<i>Kementerian ESDM</i>)	https://www.esdm.go.id/
19.	Ministry of Public Works and Housing (<i>Kementerian PUPR</i>)	https://www.pu.go.id/
20.	Ministry of Transportation (<i>Kemenhub</i>)	https://dephub.go.id/
21.	Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (<i>Kemenkominfo</i>)	https://www.kominfo.go.id/
22.	Ministry of Agriculture (<i>Kementan</i>)	https://www.pertanian.go.id/
23.	Ministry of Environment and Forestry (<i>KLHK</i>)	https://www.menlhk.go.id/
24.	Ministry of Marine and Fisheries (<i>KKP</i>)	https://www.menlhk.go.id/
25.	Ministry of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Regions, and Transmigration (<i>KemendesPDTT</i>)	https://kemendes.go.id/
26.	Ministry of Agrarian Affairs and Spatial Planning/National Land Agency (<i>Kementerian ATR/BPN</i>)	https://www.atrbpn.go.id/
27.	Ministry of National Development Planning/National Development Planning Agency (<i>Kementerian PPN/Bappenas</i>)	https://www.bappenas.go.id/
28.	Ministry of State Apparatus Empowerment and Bureaucratic Reform (<i>Kementerian PANRB</i>)	https://www.menpan.go.id/
29.	Ministry of State-Owned Enterprises (<i>Kementerian BUMN</i>)	https://bumn.go.id/
30.	Ministry of Cooperatives and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (<i>Kemenkop dan UKM</i>)	https://kemenkopukm.go.id/
31.	Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy/Tourism and Creative Economy Agency (<i>Kemenparekraf/Barekraf</i>)	https://kemenparekraf.go.id/
32.	Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection (<i>Kementerian PPPA</i>)	https://www.kemenpppa.go.id/
33.	Ministry of Investment/Indonesian Investment Coordinating Board (<i>Kementerian Investasi/BKPM</i>)	https://www.bkpm.go.id/
34.	Ministry of Youth and Sports (<i>Kemenpora</i>)	https://www.kemenpora.go.id/

Source: Ministry data comes from Presidential Decree Number 32 of 2021 concerning Amendments to Presidential Decree No. 68 of 2019 concerning the Organization of State Ministries

APPENDIX 2

Table 2: Results of downloading news and press releases from 34 ministries/agencies

Num.	Name of Ministry/Agency	Number of News/Press Releases
1.	<i>Kemenkominfo</i>	905
2.	<i>Kemensekneg</i>	80
3.	<i>Kementerian PANRB</i>	54
4.	<i>Kemenkopolkham</i>	42
5.	<i>Kemendikbudristek</i>	37
6.	<i>Kemenko PMK</i>	36
7.	<i>Kementerian PPPA</i>	32
8.	<i>Kemenag</i>	29
9.	<i>Kemenlu</i>	22
10.	<i>KKP</i>	14
11.	<i>Kemenkes</i>	12
12.	<i>Kemenkum & HAM</i>	10
13.	<i>Kemnaker</i>	9
14.	<i>KLHK</i>	9
15.	<i>Kemensos</i>	8
16.	<i>Kementerian BUMN</i>	7
17.	<i>Kemenpora</i>	6
18.	<i>Kemenko Perekonomian</i>	5
19.	<i>Kemendagri</i>	5
20.	<i>Kementerian ESDM</i>	4
21.	<i>Kementerian PUPR</i>	4
22.	<i>Kementerian ATR/BPN</i>	3
23.	<i>Kementan</i>	2
24.	<i>KemendesPDTT</i>	2
25.	<i>Kemenkop dan UKM</i>	2
26.	<i>Kemenko Marves</i>	2
27.	<i>Kemenhan</i>	1
28.	<i>Kemenkeu</i>	1
29.	<i>Kemendag</i>	1
30.	<i>Kemenparekraf/Barekraf</i>	1
31.	<i>Kemenperin</i>	1
32.	<i>Kemenhub</i>	1
33.	<i>Kementerian PPN/Bappenas</i>	1
34.	<i>Kementerian Investasi/BKPM</i>	0
TOTAL		1348

Source: Primary data