

Digital Literacy Effort by Indonesian Churches in The Midst of Hoax Problems

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Abstract— Facing the problem of massive Hoax in the Internet realm, Indonesian Communion of Churches published a Christian Handbook for Social Media using. This is an interesting participative action on Digital Literacy. Christianity as a Religion in Indonesia embraces the internet as a phenomenon which needs a special attention. Using the perspective of Critical Literacy Theory, this article analyzes the effort of Christianity on Digital Literacy in the Internet Era. The result of this analysis is to show how Religious Institution such as Church can contribute to the problem of society by the approach of Digital Literacy

Keywords— Religion and Digital Literacy, Indonesian Churches, Hoax Problems

I. INTRODUCTION

Internet nowadays has a bigger part of human life. Internet is a large network of gadget technology which has much accessible information. [1] According to experts, it is a sign of cultural transition. It marked the transition of literary society to a digital one. This kind of society consists of organization and movement of knowledge and other cultural product which made possible by new invention of technology such as Internet, mobile gadget. This new technological advances, also influenced our social life and other part of our cultural aspects. [2] By this influence, humanity live in the ecosystem. The name of this new experience is digital ecosystem. This terminology firstly introduced by a group of researcher from Directorate General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology (DG-CONNECT). It is an institute called European Commission where its member is Francesco Nachiro, Paolo Dini and Andrea Nicolai. The structure of this digital ecosystem consists of small scale network and bigger one who connected each other. [3]

This era now is called the disruptive era, where suddenly world constantly in chaotic situation. Economic situation and political situation are increasing in the condition of uncertainty. The view differences in the social media always end up in the contestations and enormous conflicts. The conflict which hidden in the beginning, eventually appeared as a result of news in the social media. [4] At the same time, we live in the highly connected world which often called “global village”. By the condition of interconnectivity, information can be easily distorted, this is the reason why hoax was born. In Indonesian context, the problem of hoax

became a massive condition. Indonesian society is a community which use the social media in a very frequent way. According to Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jaringan Internet di Indonesia, Indonesian users of internet reached 143 million from the total of 262 million. It means that Indonesian people’s communication have a massive potential for hoax’ contamination. In this matter, Communion of Indonesian Churches published a handbook to educate its member about the problem of Hoax and why Christianity needs to counter the Hoax according to Jesus’ teachings. By any means, this religious institution are bravely enough to encounter the problem by endorsing the basic theological teaching to fight the hoax problems. This article tries elaborate the analysis of this religious institution’s effort from the perspective of critical literary in the internet realms. Starting by the short introduction of the book and straight to certain aspects of critical literary theory which fulfilled by the effort of Indonesian Communion of Churches. This article concluded that religious institution by its contextual religious teaching can be a contribution to the problem of society as well.

II. RESEARCH METHOD

This research used the method of qualitative research especially on the approach of library research. Based on the principle of Critical Literary, we analyzed this book to comprehend some concept which appear according to the principle. So we can say that this kind of research is a hermeneutical reading of the book by the perspective of Critical Literary Theory.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. About the Handbook of Social Media

The Handbook for using the social media is a book which published by Communion of Churches in Indonesia to counter the Internet using problems. The book is called Church Citizens responding the Social Media Revolution (Warga Gereja merespon Revolusi Media Sosial). The title explicitly showed that Church as a Religious Institution put a massive attention on the phenomenon of Social Media. This book was a continuation from Communion of Churches in Indonesia General Meeting in 2014, where the Churches realized that Hoax problem need a comprehensive attention. Basically, this book is a theological respond to the

problem of Hoax in the social media. Theology means that what Christian teaching can speak something to the contemporary context.

The main purpose of the handbook is to endorse peaceful approach for the using of Social Media. As a product of human genius', Social Media has a two head sword effect. One side, Social Media can be highly useful for the sake of humanity, on the other side, Social Media has potential for the growing of Hoaxes. This condition requires a certain idealism from the Church people to properly encounter the internet era. The handbook consists of some parts that mainly speaks about Christian Communication. Some basic principles became the foundation for the Church people to make action.

The book explains that since the beginning of time, society was created because of communications. Therefore, social media as a great part of internet communication era is a thing that need to be grateful for. Because in the perspective of Christianity, relationship of God can be created by communication.[5] The communication which granted by God to humanity is to naming other thing and capacity of knowing and understanding. Second principle is that Christian Communication is participative. [6] Christianity saw Digital Era was build by interconnectivity and participative action. People need to send the message by involving with other people life. Moreover, by Christian perspective, Communication means that getting involved other people suffering in order to help the coping with their problems. The third principle is Christian Communication is liberative. Since the beginning of Christianity, Jesus' teaching was based on the liberative action. By the affirmative message of Prophet Isaiah, Jesus is come to tell the message of liberation. In the basis of this teaching, Christianity gives the meaning to social media as a tool for liberation. To free other people from hoax in the internet realm. The fourth principle is that social media was created to build culture. In the cultural world, diversity was highly appreciated. Fifth principle, Christian communication endorses a prophetic virtues and against fakeness. This very virtues hopefully will be resulting an action of Truth, Justice and Brotherhood of humanity. This is the basic of prophetic action.

The book also contained the application of these very basic principles such as, selective act of friend request, because in the Digital realm hoax is very tempting, a filtered community is highly recommended so people will not easily trapped in the field of trouble. The other is, Christian people can be an interactive community not only a passive consumer. Next is, avoid exhibition of our personal life. There is no guarantee which person will have good or wicked intention on us. Securing our personal data is crucial. The other application is by knowing the criteria of hoax. An important action based on the concept of Christian communication is to realize that social media is not an exhibition room. The other thing is, if we want make selfie picture, make it an informative one. We can also make our privacy setting in our social media account will not be easily accessed, this is to avoid any other tag from any people who want to spread hoax.

B. Facing Hoax Deliberatively

The Critical literacy theory was mainly based the discourse analysis to build an awareness to everything which became unquestioned and naturalized in the internet media experience. [7] The fact that Hoax is a great problem in this Era, requires great attention for humanity. This is a very interesting phenomena, something can be called as a Hoax, because the false information is very tempting, and people who have no critical thinking will accept that information unquestionably. This Hoax problems requires a special treatment, in this matter from the perspective of Christianity, a liberative communication. The effort from Indonesian Churches to endorse its member to face the Hoax because Christianity's view of communication. Christianity saw communication as a gift from God. And the gift requires some sort of responsibility. In this matter, Church member must embrace the internet era in the perspective of liberation. It means that Hoax problems need a liberative action from Church people.

The effort of Church as a religious institution can be seen as suggestion to encounter the Hoax directly. In the handbook for social media, the implication of some concept of Christian Communication is to make report and make a community of anti-hoax. There are several indications of hoax which can be recognized by the Church member.[8] First, the message is one side, only to attack or defend one side of the people. Second, often mention many expert names as if it really comes from their opinion. This kind of suggestion is very important, because as Alan Sokal, a distinguished scientist who bombarded the science world by his Hoax joke, said we need to "pay less attention to credentials and more attention – critical attention – to the content of what is said." [9] Barbara Warnick when spoke about Critical Literacy in the Digital Era, explained that the main question to internet users and their trends is to whom actually that technology served. It seems that communication technology by its advances only served certain group of people and others are only be the consumer of it. The problem about this phenomenon is that these other people have to live "on a network of unquestioned assumptions held in common by consumers of the discourse who were drawn to it precisely because they shared its worldview." [10] It means that we face the new era of communication where people live does not based on the accuracy of data but only because of the shared worldview it contains. People belief want they want to belief. Warnick continued by this, "The use of epideictic (speech that celebrate consensually held values) rather than deliberation (speech that critically examines issues) was in itself a problem in these case studies. Epideictic can only succeed in situations where its audience is inclined to be of one mind and disinclined to weigh opposing points of view or alternate courses of action." [11]

In this very concept of Critical Literacy, we can put the Indonesian Communion of Churches' effort as a deliberative action. The handbook of social media is an encouragement of deliberative thinking for the reception of the internet era. On one of the suggestion, we can see, "Semakin banyaknya informasi yang diterima semakin sulit juga membedakan apakah berita tersebut benar atau tidak. Sebelum kita membagikan sebuah berita atau gambar

melalui media sosial, kita harus mengenal ciri-ciri hoaks, ... Untuk mengenal ciri-ciri hoaks diperlukan kekritisan sehingga tidak terpengaruh oleh berita bohong. Media sosial mempengaruhi masyarakat untuk menerima suatu kebohongan seolah-oleh sebagai kebenaran.” [12]

It seems that the effort of this religious institution can be named as a critical involvement of religious critical thinking in the social media. We called this thing by that because the main reason of the effort is prophetic way of thinking where the critical thought lies. Hoax can be fought only by critical thinking. Tempo Magazine released the statement that many interests which mainly business interest played a great role in the Hoax news.[13] Many entrepreneurs used this epideictic opportunity to endorse its business needs in the midst of Hoax. They used some religious values as a epideictic weapon to engage the society. It means that religious institution requires to be involved in this chaotic problem with its prophetic way of thinking.

C. Peace as a Counternarrative

Since the beginning purpose of the book is to be part of the peacebuilding effort of Indonesian Churches, this book actually tried to make a counternarrative. From the perspective of Critical Literacy Theory, counternarrative is one effort to see the Hoax problem. By the book, Indonesian Churches tried to fight Hoax problems by spreading the peace message. Some of the application of Christian Communication, is to be a messenger of peace. This is the real meaning of Gospel, Good words. We stop doing anything which can harm other people. Hoax is the opposite of Gospel. Therefore, fighting the Hoax is proven by spreading the peace message.

In the perspective of Critical Literacy Theory, the problem of information technology is not merely about to use it but first on how we accept it. Society now actually trapped in the middle of the two different positions about it. In one side, there is an uncritical enthusiasm for the new technology, whereas on the other side, bleak rejection of them.[14] In the context of Indonesian Society, people tend to use the social media uncritically and they often fall to the Hoax information. In the matter of fact, we can not reject technology as well.

Many narratives went around this matter because in every position, there are many interests who played on it. In this context, Indonesian Communion of Churches' effort, have a special placed. The handbook of social media suggests that Society do not have to reject the technology. But in the same time, it has to be used in the proper way. They suggest on the peace narratives. This kind of narrative can also be a counternarrative in the middle of the chaotic information world. In fact, narrative is the only weapon. And what kind of narrative which lived in it also determined what kind of world it is. Narrative approach has become an effective approach in this kind of field since long ago, as Peter M. Kellent said,

Conflict, conflict transformation, and peacebuilding are inherently narrative enterprise. Specifically, if we accept the notion of Homo narrans- that humans are fundamentally storytelling animals...[15]

Basically, hoax is a narrative as well. In order to counter that kind of narrative, Indonesian Communion of Churches by the encouragement of Christian Communication basis

chose to spread the peace narratives. Because Social Media is connecting the whole world, we need to use it to spread the message of love and peace. By this book, Indonesian Communion of Churches encouraged all the Christians to wrote something that can be a blessing to other people.

IV. CONCLUSION

As the analysis of Indonesian Churches' effort to counter the Hoax problems come to its temporary end, there are some conclusions we can draw. First, Religious Institution can also be an active part of the struggle of Hoax problems. By using its own theological basis, apparently religious institution such as Church community can encourage its member to involved critically in the problem of Hoax. Second, religious institution can be an alternative community in the digital realms as well. As we saw in the analysis, critical way of thinking is one of the main tools to encounter the hoax problem which bravely embraced by the Church. It means that by standing as a community of anti-hoax, Church as a religious institution became an alternative community. Third, religious community effort to endure peace among the people of internet is one instance on how to embrace the digital realm. Being a religious person means to bring peace wherever we go, even to the digital world.

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