

Government Public Relations Strategy in Countering Public Policy Hoaxes in Cyberspace

Rojab Riswan Taufik

Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik STISIP Tasikmalaya
Email: rojablepi@gmail.com

The rapid development of cyberspace has triggered the high spread of hoaxes related to public policies, which have the potential to undermine public trust in local government. This study aims to analyze the Government Public Relations (GPR) strategy of the Banjar City Public Relations Office in countering public policy disinformation in cyberspace. The research method used was descriptive qualitative with a case study approach. Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews with public relations practitioners, observations of official social media platforms, and archival documentation of cyber issue reports and clarification scripts. The results indicate that the cyber issue monitoring strategy was implemented through a combination of macro digital channels (Instagram and Facebook), micro channels (a network of information agents within the citizen WhatsApp Group), and the official complaint channel "Banjar Saber Hoaks." Meanwhile, the communication strategy execution was divided into preventive and curative approaches. Preventively, the public relations office produced creative policy infographics and promoted digital literacy through the "Filter Before Sharing" movement. Critical disinformation was effectively addressed in less than 24 hours through the visual labeling of "HOAX," the development of fact-based counter-narratives, and simultaneous amplification using a one-gate communication system. Cross-agency bureaucratic hurdles were successfully mitigated through the appointment of liaison officers in each Regional Work Unit (SKPD) to expedite data validation. The study's conclusions confirm that the harmonization of proactive and responsive preventive and curative strategies effectively minimizes the destructive impact of hoaxes and maintains public trust at the local level.

Keywords: Government Public Relations, Hoaxes, Public Policy, Communication Strategy.

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Corresponding Author:

Rojab Riswan Taufik
Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik STISIP Tasikmalaya
rojablepi@gmail.com

1. Introduction

Cyberspace has transformed into a key pillar of the modern communications ecosystem, transforming the way people access information. The advent of the internet and social media has reduced geographical distances and bureaucracy, enabling the dissemination of information in real time (Alfi et al., 2023). On the one hand, this convenience increases public participation in monitoring national issues. However, on the other hand, this free, barrier-free digital landscape creates new challenges in the form of a flood of unfiltered information (Mozin et al., 2025).

The phenomenon most threatening the stability of the digital space today is the massive spread of hoaxes or disinformation. False information is often packaged in an attractive, provocative manner, exploiting people's psychological gaps to trigger emotional reactions (Siswoko, 2017). As a result, hoaxes can spread faster than factual clarification. Freedom of expression in cyberspace, unbalanced by adequate digital literacy, ultimately creates echo chambers that foster skepticism (Zidane & Rettob, 2020).

The impact of the spread of hoaxes becomes crucial when it begins to infiltrate the realm of public policy. Public policies designed by the government for the common good are often distorted by irresponsible

parties to serve specific agendas (Dewi et al., 2024). Sensitive issues such as economic regulations, public health, and social assistance are often easy targets for information distortion. When this misinformation is widely believed, policy implementation on the ground will inevitably face significant resistance and obstacles (Judhita, 2018).

The most fatal consequence of the proliferation of public policy hoaxes is the collapse of legitimacy and public trust in the state. When mutual trust between the people and the government is eroded, strategic national programs will struggle to run optimally (Agma, 2025). This distrust also has the potential to trigger social polarization, horizontal conflict, and even political instability. Therefore, maintaining a clean cyberspace free from exposure to hoaxes is no longer merely a technical matter, but an issue of governance resilience (Suriadi, 2025).

Facing this threat, government institutions must no longer use rigid and slow conventional communication patterns. This is where the role of Government Public Relations (GPR) becomes a crucial instrument as the vanguard of state communications (Pranata & Ayuh, 2025). GPR is responsible for bridging the flow of information between policymakers and the wider public. In the cyber era, GPR's function is required to transform to become more dynamic, responsive, and adaptive to the characteristics of digital media (Yusuf et al., 2025).

However, in reality, GPR practices still frequently face various internal and external obstacles. Internally, bureaucratic slowness in issuing official clarifications often prevents the government from responding quickly to hoax narratives that have already gone viral (Azis et al., 2025). Externally, the limited reach of official government media and the low level of public media literacy exacerbate the situation. This gap in communication speed and effectiveness creates a loophole for the persistence of disinformation in the public sphere (Nasrullah, 2025).

Therefore, a comprehensive GPR strategy is needed, encompassing not only curative (handling after the event) but also preventive (preventive). GPR must be able to utilize media monitoring technology, produce persuasive creative content, and build collaborations with cyber communities. Through a structured approach, government public relations is expected to be able to reverse negative narratives and create an objective public understanding of issued policies.

The rapid development of information technology in cyberspace has transformed the way Banjar City residents access information related to public policy. However, this ease of access has created new challenges in the form of the massive spread of hoaxes and disinformation regarding regional regulations, which have the potential to undermine public trust in the local government. If left unchecked without responsive handling, this disinformation can hamper policy implementation on the ground, trigger digital chaos, and even disrupt the stability of regional governance.

Facing these threats, Government Public Relations (GPR), through the Banjar City Public Relations Office, plays a crucial role as the vanguard of state communications at the regional level. Unfortunately, GPR practices in the field often encounter bureaucratic obstacles, limited reach of official media outlets, and low public digital literacy, which hinders the release of clarifications from viral hoax narratives. Therefore, this study, titled "Government Public Relations Strategy in Countering Public Policy Hoaxes in Cyberspace," is crucial for formulating a proactive, preventative, and effective communication strategy.

2. Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods through case studies to explore the communication strategies implemented. This qualitative approach was chosen to gain a deep, holistic, and

contextual understanding of the phenomenon of disinformation management by government public relations. The researcher served as the primary instrument for data collection in the field. The subjects of this study were Government Public Relations (GPR) practitioners in Banjar City, while the research focused on the communication patterns, channels, and content used to counter public policy hoaxes in cyberspace (Rukin, 2019).

Data collection techniques utilized triangulation of sources and methods to ensure the validity of the research data. This process included in-depth interviews with key informants from public relations departments, direct observation of the agency's official social media management activities, and documentation in the form of archived clarification scripts, counter-narrative infographics, and media monitoring report data. Next, the collected data was analyzed interactively using the Miles et al. (1992) model, which includes the data reduction stage (sorting relevant data), presenting data in a systematic narrative form, and drawing conclusions to formulate an effective GPR strategy model.

3. Result And Discussion

Banjar City Public Relations Communication Channels and Media in Monitoring Cyber Issues

Banjar City Public Relations, under the auspices of the Communication and Informatics Agency (Diskominfo), faces dynamic communication challenges along with the massive migration of public activities to the digital space. As an extension of the local government, this agency is required to maintain a constant and responsive presence in cyberspace. This presence is no longer merely a means of documenting the ceremonial activities of regional leaders, but has shifted to become a strategic instrument for mapping public opinion. This opinion mapping is crucial for identifying ripples of disinformation that have the potential to disrupt regional stability.

In carrying out its cyber issue monitoring function, Banjar City Public Relations classifies its communication channels into two main categories: macro and micro social media channels. Macro channels are used to disseminate information on a large scale while capturing general public sentiment, such as the official Instagram platform and Facebook Page of the Banjar City Government. Meanwhile, micro channels focus on monitoring local digital community groups. The combination of these two channels is designed to enable public relations to detect issues, both those developing on the surface and those moving more quietly at the grassroots level.

Instagram, with the account @pemkot_banjar, has become a key pillar in monitoring daily issues due to its highly active user base, consisting of young and productive members. Through the comments section and direct message feature, Banjar City Public Relations regularly filters public feedback regarding newly released local policies. Any negative comments or repeated questions regarding a policy are identified as early indicators of public confusion. These indicators alert the public relations team that information is being blocked or deliberately misled by certain parties.

In addition to Instagram, the Facebook Page platform remains a vital monitoring tool because its user segment is dominated by the mature population in Banjar City. Facebook users at the regional level tend to be more vocal in discussing local socio-political issues and regional regulations. This platform often hosts lengthy debates about public policy, making it a rich source of data for public relations to analyze emerging narratives. Monitoring Facebook provides a more comprehensive picture of the depth of public resistance or acceptance of an issue. The Banjar City Government's official website (banjarkota.go.id) also functions as an information anchor, featuring an official complaint channel and the "Banjar Saber Hoaks" feature. This dedicated channel serves as an interactive platform where citizens can directly submit screenshots of news

or information they doubt. Through this system, public relations officers no longer passively wait for issues to spread on social media, but instead provide an official gateway for the public to actively participate in reporting potential disinformation.

To strengthen the accuracy of monitoring across these channels, Banjar City Public Relations has adopted media monitoring tools. This technology automatically tracks the spread of specific keywords related to Banjar City Government policies, such as social assistance, infrastructure development, and regional tax regulations. Through this algorithm-based system, whenever there is an unusual spike in the volume of online conversations about Banjar City, the system immediately notifies the public relations cyber team.

The implementation of this media monitoring technology allows public relations officers to conduct a comparative analysis of public sentiment, categorizing it as positive, neutral, and negative. If the analysis shows a sharp increase in negative sentiment within hours, this is a strong indication of a hoax attack or a structured smear campaign. The ability to read this analytical data changes the Banjar City Public Relations work pattern from a traditional, reactive approach to a proactive, scientific approach in mapping communication anomalies in the digital space.

However, the effectiveness of these digital monitoring tools is often hampered by technical cyber limitations, particularly regarding the spread of hoaxes on private messaging platforms like WhatsApp groups. WhatsApp's encrypted nature means that hoaxes about local public policies often replicate quickly and massively within family groups or neighborhood associations, undetected by public relations software. This closed nature of cyberspace poses a major challenge, as domestic disinformation is the easiest to trigger real panic among the public.

To address these technological limitations, the Banjar City Public Relations Department developed a humanistic monitoring strategy through a network of information agents, or human intelligence. Public Relations engaged youth community leaders, literacy groups, and neighborhood associations in Banjar City to act as the government's eyes and ears in local instant messaging groups. When these digital agents discover suspicious texts or videos circulating about city government policies that could be hoaxes, they immediately forward them to the Banjar City Communications and Information Technology Office's complaint center.

This integration of machine-based monitoring and community participation is considered highly effective in reducing early warning system time. Based on research results, the time required for public relations to identify the presence of a hoax in the community has now become much shorter. Rapid early detection is crucial for the success of subsequent response measures, because the longer a hoax remains unclarified, the more the false narrative becomes entrenched and the public will perceive it as truth.

In addition to monitoring social media and chat groups, Banjar City Public Relations also consistently scans local and national online news portals. This digital media monitoring aims to ensure that journalistic products circulating online do not slip into clickbait journalism that can distort the substance of public policy. Cooperation and monitoring of the regional press is crucial to ensuring that the flow of primary information remains within the corridors of valid journalistic codes of ethics.

The results of daily monitoring conducted by the cyber team are then compiled into a Weekly Cyber Issues Report document. This document maps issue trends, the main actors driving the narrative, the platforms with the highest hoax distribution, and recommendations for communication steps to be taken by regional leaders. This report was submitted directly to the Regional Secretary and the Mayor of Banjar City as strategic considerations to ensure that policies remain aligned with the psychological dynamics of the public in the digital space.

From the perspective of public communication theory, the choice of channels and media used by Banjar City Public Relations demonstrates an institutional adaptation to the shifting landscape of new media. Public Relations no longer positions itself as a rigid ivory tower, but rather seeks to integrate into the digital ecosystem used by its citizens. This multi-platform use ensures that the local government's monitoring space leaves no gaps for hoax producers to exploit.

Although the monitoring system established is quite comprehensive, field evaluations indicate that Banjar City Public Relations still faces the challenge of limited personnel with specialized expertise in cyber data analysis (data analysts). Most Public Relations staff still juggle field documentation and social media management. As a result, during times when the volume of disinformation spikes, the process of filtering and verifying cyber issues can experience a significant backlog.

Overall, Banjar City Public Relations' success in stemming public policy hoaxes is rooted in the effectiveness of its cyber issue monitoring phase. Through an optimal combination of official social media, media monitoring applications, the "Banjar Saber Hoaks" public complaint channel, and collaboration with local community networks, Banjar City Public Relations has successfully built an adaptive information defense barrier. This robust monitoring phase then serves as the foundation for Public Relations to execute subsequent communication strategies.

Implementing Preventive and Curative Strategies to Counter Policy Disinformation

The Banjar City Public Relations Department, through the Communications and Informatics Agency (Diskominfo), implements two main pillars of public communication in cyberspace: a preventive and a curative approach. This division is designed to ensure that hoax handling is not merely a firefighting exercise when digital chaos has spread, but also builds information immunity within the community. Through this dual approach, the Banjar City Government seeks to reduce the scope for disinformation producers, who often exploit transitional moments or the issuance of sensitive regional policies.

The preventive strategy implemented by Banjar City Public Relations focuses on strengthening digital literacy and transparently disseminating policy information before information distortion occurs in cyberspace. A concrete form of this preventative measure is the production of creative content that transforms rigid bureaucratic language into inclusive communication products. Thick and complex public policy documents are summarized into static infographics, moving videographics, and interactive live streams distributed through all official local government channels.

Through engaging and concise data visualizations, Banjar City Public Relations strives to eliminate loopholes for those seeking to distort policy narratives. When the public understands the substance, objectives, and mechanisms of a public policy from the outset, they automatically develop a stronghold of critical thinking. This cognitive immunity is highly effective in fostering healthy skepticism in citizens when they receive pieces of information or chain messages that are inconsistent with official facts from the city government.

In addition to producing educational content, this preventative strategy is also implemented through the regular "Saber Hoaks Goes to School/Community" program in Banjar City. Public Relations utilizes cyberspace to promote a filtering campaign before sharing with youth groups, women's organizations, and local community leaders. This outreach teaches practical ways to detect the characteristics of fake news, such as the use of provocative headlines, the lack of official sources, and coercion to spread messages widely on digital platforms.

Despite consistent preventive measures, the dynamic nature of cyberspace still allows for the spread of disinformation that attacks regional policies. It was at this point that Banjar City Public Relations activated

a swift, decisive, and scientifically based countermeasure strategy. This countermeasure was taken to mitigate the escalation of public panic or anger caused by exposure to false information that had already spread widely in community online chat groups.

The standard operating procedure (SOP) for countermeasures began when the cyber team identified a hoax issue with a high potential to disrupt public order in Banjar City. Public Relations immediately isolated the false narrative and labeled it with a special stamp emblazoned with the words "HOAX," "DISINFORMATION," or "MISINFORMATION" in a prominent visual format. This visual stamping is crucial in the psychology of cyber communication, allowing the public to immediately grasp the legal status of the information at a glance without having to read lengthy text.

The image or video labeled as a hoax was then accompanied by a clarifying counter-narrative containing objective facts. Banjar City Public Relations formulated a rebuttal based on concrete data, references to official regulations, and direct statements from the head of the agency or authorized official. This clarification narrative must be written using clear, concise language and avoiding technical government jargon to ensure it is easily understood by all levels of Banjar society.

Once the clarification content is ready, the next step is to simultaneously amplify the information through all public communication channels (multi-channel dissemination). Public Relations will not only rely on the main @pemkot_banjar account, but will also instruct all social media accounts belonging to government agencies, sub-districts, and urban villages in Banjar City to upload the same clarification content. This cyber siege movement is intended to ensure that the government's factual narrative can offset and suppress the spread of the original hoax.

Speed is key to the successful execution of this curative strategy. Based on the operational standards implemented by the Banjar City Communications and Information Office, the deadline for handling critical issues or releasing official clarifications is to be completed within 24 hours of the hoax being detected. This speed of response is crucial because the longer the local government delays releasing accurate information, the more likely it is that public misconceptions will crystallize online and transform into a false collective perception of truth.

To strengthen this curative strategy, the Banjar City Public Relations Office also established strategic collaborations with local journalist networks and digital media outlets operating in the East Priangan region. Each time clarification content is released, the public relations office distributes it to the press partnership group so that journalists can immediately publish it as a formal news product. This synergy broadens the reach of government information, given that digital media has a loyal readership that often extends beyond the city government's official social media following.

However, despite the successful execution of these two strategies, this study found internal bureaucratic obstacles that frequently challenge the effectiveness of public relations work in the field. When developing curative content, Banjar City Public Relations is required to confirm and validate data with the relevant Regional Work Units (SKPD) responsible for public policies affected by hoaxes. This cross-sectoral coordination process is sometimes slow due to sectoral egos or a lack of understanding on the part of some regional officials regarding the urgency of a speedy response in the cyber era.

Delays in data delivery from technical SKPDs can automatically hamper the PR team's ability to produce timely clarification content. In a cyberspace that moves at the speed of seconds, a confirmation delay of just a few hours is enough for a policy hoax to be replicated thousands of times by internet users. This bureaucratic issue demonstrates that local government cyber resilience cannot be solely the responsibility of the communications department but requires digital awareness from all regional agencies.

To address these coordination challenges, Banjar City Public Relations implemented a one-gate communication management system. Through this system, the Mayor of Banjar issued an instruction requiring each SKPD to appoint a liaison officer who is required to respond to data validation requests from the Communications and Information Department on a priority basis. This internal management policy has proven effective in streamlining bureaucratic processes and accelerating the production of counter-narrative content.

From a theoretical perspective, the combination of preventive and curative strategies implemented by Banjar City Public Relations reflects the implementation of a two-way, symmetrical public communication model. Public relations does not simply regurgitate instructions or create institutional imagery; rather, it listens to public concerns, identifies their confusion, and then formulates information responses relevant to citizens' psychological needs in cyberspace.

The success of handling policy hoaxes in Banjar City is also greatly influenced by consistent post-strategy evaluation. After an issue has been successfully suppressed, the public relations team conducts re-tracking to determine whether negative public sentiment has subsided or whether potential resistance remains. This periodic evaluation ensures that the curative measures taken truly address the root of the communication problem and restore the government's digital reputation.

An external challenge that continues to overshadow the implementation of this strategy is the digital divide, or the gap in technological understanding among the rural and urban communities of Banjar City. Some senior citizens in rural areas tend to be more likely to believe hoaxes sent through personal messaging apps and are reluctant to verify their authenticity through official government social media. This sociological reality requires Banjar City Public Relations to continuously hone their creative communication strategies so their preventative messages can penetrate the digital divide.

Table 1 Matrix Execution of the GPR Public Relations Strategy of Banjar City in Countering Hoaxes

Strategy Category	Form Content / Program	Flow & Procedures Execution	Field Obstacles	Strategic Solutions
Preventive (Immunity Cognitive)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Static infographics • Videographics moving • Broadcast direct interactive • Socialization face advance 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Simplify document policy rigid public. 2. Changing text regulations become creative visuals. 3. Hold the "Saber Hoaks Goes to School/Community" program. 	The existence of a digital divide among senior citizens in rural areas.	Campaign digital literacy movement "Filter Before Sharing" in a way periodically direct to root grass.
Curative (Countermeasures)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visual stamped image • Counter-narrative • Release regional press news 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Isolate issue hoax. 2. Giving stamp striking "HOAX" in the content fake. 3. Compiling the release fact objective without term complicated bureaucracy. 4. Amplification simultaneously across all social media city government and network journalist local. 	Slow internal bureaucracy due to sectoral ego moment data validation to technical SKPD.	Implementation one-gate communication system through Mayor's instructions with pointing liaison officer in each SKPD.

4. Conclusion

Based on the research results and discussion outlined above, it can be concluded that the Banjar City Public Relations (GPR) strategy for countering public policy hoaxes in cyberspace rests on a reliable issue monitoring system and precise communication execution. In the monitoring phase, Banjar City Public Relations successfully integrated macro digital monitoring via Instagram and Facebook with silent micro monitoring using a network of information agents (human intelligence) on instant messaging platforms like WhatsApp. Furthermore, optimizing the independent complaint channel through the "Banjar Saber Hoaks" section on the official local government website has proven to accelerate the early warning system for the emergence of local disinformation before it escalates into broader public unrest.

In the communication strategy execution phase, Banjar City Public Relations implemented a balanced, dual approach, combining preventative and curative elements. Preventively, the public relations department consistently produced digital literacy educational content for the "Filter Before Sharing" movement and packaged rigid regulatory documents into creative infographics and videographics to build public information immunity. Critical disinformation was curatively addressed in less than 24 hours by visually labeling it "HOAX," developing a fact-based counter-narrative, and simultaneously amplifying it through a one-gate communication system and regional press partnerships. This comprehensive combination has proven effective in minimizing the destructive impact of hoaxes, while simultaneously restoring the institution's reputation and maintaining public trust in the Banjar City Government in cyberspace.

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