

Analysis of Government Legitimacy Through Hoax Handling by the Department of Communication and Informatics of West Java Province

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Abstract

The increasing spread of hoaxes in West Java shows that addressing disinformation remains a challenge in public information management. Although the Government of West Java Province, through the Department of Communication and Informatics, has established Jabar Saber Hoaks as an official channel for information clarification, its contribution to building public trust and strengthening government legitimacy still needs to be examined. This study analyzes government legitimacy through hoax handling using a rational-legal legitimacy perspective, which includes bureaucratic rationality, procedural legitimacy, public trust, and institutional transparency. Data were collected through interviews, observation, and documentation involving nine informants consisting of the Head of the Department of Communication and Informatics of West Java Province, the Head of Public Information and Communication Division, two Jabar Saber Hoaks staff members, and five members of the public. The results show that the legitimacy of the Government of West Java Province through hoax handling has been established relatively well. This is reflected in systematic division of tasks and coordination, the implementation of fact-based verification procedures, public trust in the information provided by Jabar Saber Hoaks, and information transparency through various communication and reporting channels. The government's communication strategy also supports institutional transparency through the use of various digital platforms, simplified information presentation, and the provision of opportunities for public interaction. However, hoax handling still faces several challenges, including the rapid flow of information, developments in digital technology, the complexity of verification processes, limitations in field investigation, uneven publication reach, and varying levels of digital literacy among the public. The efforts undertaken include strengthening collaboration, improving human resource capacity, developing digital communication strategies, and promoting digital literacy. This study concludes that hoax handling is one form of government function that contributes to the formation and maintenance of the legitimacy of the Government of West Java Province in the digital environment.

Keywords: government legitimacy, rational-legal legitimacy, hoax handling, Jabar Saber Hoaks, Department of Communication and Informatics of West Java Province.

INTRODUCTION

West Java Province is more susceptible to the spread of hoaxes compared to other regions. This vulnerability is driven by its large population, high internet penetration, socio-political heterogeneity, and massive social media usage. As Indonesia's most populous province, West Java is also a hub for digital political communication dynamics, causing public issues to circulate and be consumed by the public very rapidly. This situation is reflected in official data from *Jabar Saber Hoaks* (JSH)—an initiative under the West Java Provincial Communication and Informatics Agency—which indicates

a significant rise in the number of hoax cases over the past three years.

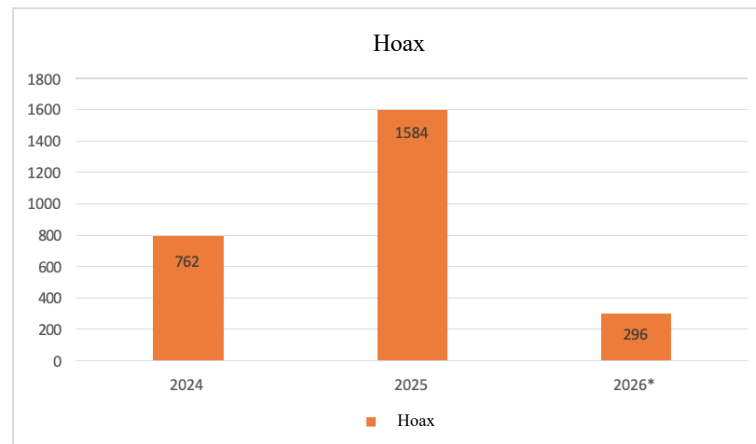


Figure 1.1 Comparison graph of the number of hoaxes, 2024–2026

Source: saberhoaks.jabarprov.go.id/info/

In 2024, 762 hoax cases were recorded; this figure doubled to 1,584 cases in 2025, and—based on the latest data (*) from April 26, 2026, cited from the Jabar Saber Hoaks website—296 verified hoax cases have been recorded (Jabar Saber Hoaks, 2026). Furthermore, the JSH report indicates that Facebook and WhatsApp remain the primary channels for dissemination, while TikTok and YouTube have seen an increase as new mediums for spreading disinformation. Presented below is data regarding hoax clarifications and topics identified as hoaxes in 2025, a period dominated by news concerning public figures, crime, and politics.

Table 1.1 Hoax Clarifications for 2025

No.	Topic	Total
1	Figur	426
2	Kriminalitas	412
3	Politik	217
4	Ekonomi	120
5	Hukum dan Regulasi	83
6	Kesehatan	63
7	Bencana Alam	53
8	Lainnya	37
9	Musibah	33
10	SARA	32

Source: saberhoaks.jabarprov.go.id/info/

Data from Jabar Saber Hoaks indicates a significant rise in verified hoax cases, climbing from 762 in 2024 to 1,584 in 2025 more than doubling the figure. Meanwhile, as of April 26, 2026, 296 hoax cases have been recorded, representing approximately 18.7% of the total cases seen throughout 2025. This situation suggests that the spread of hoaxes persists; if this trend continues consistently through the end of the year, the number of hoax cases in 2026 could potentially match or even surpass the 2025 figures. These findings highlight that addressing hoaxes remains a challenge requiring serious government attention to safeguard the quality of public information in the digital space.

Although the West Java Provincial Government established Jabar Saber Hoaks as an official channel for information clarification, the platform is not yet fully recognized or evenly utilized by the public. Jabar Saber Hoaks is a hoax-handling service created by the West Java Provincial Government, serving the entire region as mandated by the West Java Governor's Decree Number 700.05/Kep.1261-Diskominfo/2018. Public reports submitted to Jabar Saber Hoaks are unevenly distributed, while monitoring results reveal a shift in the geographic concentration of detected hoaxes.

This is notable given that the service targets the entire population of West Java the most populous province in Indonesia which also boasts high internet usage rates. The current situation indicates that the government-provided hoax-handling channel has not yet optimally reached all areas of the region. This situation indicates challenges in disseminating information about the Jabar Saber Hoaks service and encouraging public engagement with the information-clarification mechanisms provided by the government. It suggests that the challenge of addressing hoaxes lies not only in the availability of clarification services but also in how information about these services is communicated to the public.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Political Science

Politics is fundamentally the study of power and the processes involved in managing collective life within a system of government. Harold D. Lasswell characterized politics through the concept of "who gets what, when, and how," thereby emphasizing that politics concerns the distribution of power and resources within society (Shahreza, 2018). David Easton defined politics as "the authoritative allocation of values for society." According to Miriam Budiardjo in *Fundamentals of Political Science* as cited in Siti (2022) politics comprises several interconnected key elements that explain how a political system functions within a state, as follows:

- 1) State
- 2) Power
- 3) Decision-making

Legitimacy

According to Suchman (cited in Mulianto & Fikri, 2018), legitimacy is a generalized perception or assumption that an entity's actions are appropriate, proper, and consistent with the value systems, norms, and beliefs prevailing in society. Coicaud (cited in Mulianto & Fikri, 2018) views legitimacy as a form of recognition regarding the validity of a power in exercising governance. Meanwhile, König and Wenzelburger (cited in Camico, 2024) explain that legitimacy constitutes a political relationship between the rulers and the ruled, reflecting public acceptance of the authority being exercised. Legitimacy is subsequently explained more systematically by Max Weber through three main types, namely:

- a. Traditional legitimacy is based on long-standing customs and traditions.
- b. Charismatic legitimacy stems from belief in the leader's personal qualities.
- c. Rational-legal legitimacy rests on a system of formal rules that are rational, impersonal, and structured.

Max Weber posited that the legitimacy of power can stem from three primary sources: tradition, charisma, and legal rationality.

Hoax

Wardle and Derakhshan (2017) explain that "information disorder" is a broader framework for understanding information-related disruptions in the public sphere. They categorize it into three main forms:

- a. misinformation: incorrect information shared without the intent to cause harm
- b. disinformation: incorrect information deliberately created or disseminated to achieve a specific effect
- c. malinformation: accurate information used to cause harm to a specific party.

Hoaxes can be defined as information disseminated deliberately and misleadingly with the aim of manipulating public perception (Sarjito, 2024). Hoaxes typically appear in the form of fake news created with specific intentions, such as influencing public opinion, provoking emotions, or inciting social unrest (Solihin et al., 2025).

METHODS

This study focuses on government legitimacy regarding the handling of hoaxes by the West Java Province Communication and Informatics Agency (Diskominfo), employing an interpretive

paradigm and a descriptive qualitative approach to understand the experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of relevant actors concerning the government's efforts. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with nine purposively selected informants comprising the Head of the West Java Diskominfo, the Head of the Public Information and Communication Division, two West Java Anti-Hoax Task Force staff members, and five members of the public who met the criteria of being social media users with experience regarding hoax information while secondary data were gathered from laws and regulations, official Diskominfo documents, publications, and relevant literature and prior research. Data collection involved interviews, observation of the hoax handling and clarification processes as well as government public communication, and the review of documentation such as reports, publications, clarification content, and regulations. The researcher acted as the human instrument, supported by interview and documentation guidelines, while the analysis focused on bureaucratic rationality, procedural legitimacy, public trust, and institutional transparency. Data were analyzed interactively through the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification; data validity was tested via triangulation of sources, techniques, and time by comparing information across informants and cross-referencing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation. The research was conducted at the West Java Province Communication and Informatics Agency, spanning stages from preparation and data collection/analysis to the drafting of the research report.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This study analyzes the legitimacy of the West Java Provincial Government regarding the handling of hoaxes by the West Java Communication and Informatics Agency (Diskominfo Jabar), based on interviews with nine informants, observations, and documentation. The findings were analyzed through the four dimensions of rational-legal legitimacy proposed by Nurcahya (2025): bureaucratic rationality, procedural legitimacy, public trust, and institutional transparency.

Government Legitimacy Through the Handling of Hoaxes by the West Java Province Communication and Informatics Agency

1. Bureaucratic Rationality.

The handling of hoaxes is integrated with public information management and supported by a division of roles among leadership, the Public Information and Communication Division (IKP), and Jabar Saber Hoaks. The process follows a systematic workflow, ranging from identification and verification against official sources to the drafting of clarifications and final publication. Coordination with regional government agencies (OPD), technical bodies,

fact-checking networks, and internal databases reinforces operational order and accountability. The public views the service as sufficiently responsive, although the quality of presentation and the reach of publications still require strengthening.

2. Procedural Legitimacy

The handling of hoaxes is guided by regulations and standard operating procedures (SOPs), emphasizing accuracy, objectivity, and transparency. Information is evaluated based on data and credible sources, without bias toward the parties involved. The majority of the public views the clarifications as relatively neutral and fact-based, although differences in perception persist regarding certain issues.

3. Public Trust

Verified, consistent information backed by clear sources encourages the public to use Jabar Saber Hoaks as a reference. Public reports and interactions across digital channels also indicate growing engagement. However, trust is not yet uniform, as some members of the public still compare government information with other sources.

4. Institutional Transparency

Transparency is achieved through websites, social media, mass media, WhatsApp, and complaint channels. Clarifications are presented using simple language, infographics, and clear references. Challenges remain, however, as not everyone is familiar with Jabar Saber Hoaks, and the reach of its publications is not yet optimal.

Factors Supporting the Realization of Government Legitimacy Through the Handling of Hoaxes

A key supporting factor is multi-stakeholder collaboration involving government agencies, the media, fact-checking communities, academia, law enforcement, and the public. Other factors include the quality and consistency of human resources, leadership support and team cohesion, structured work systems, and the ability to adapt to digital technologies. Regarding the public, optimizing platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, X/Threads, and other digital channels is considered essential for broadening the reach of clarifications in a manner tailored to user characteristics.

Obstacles and Efforts to Strengthen Government Legitimacy through the Handling of Hoaxes

The primary obstacles include the disparity between the speed at which hoaxes spread and the time required for verification, the complexity of manipulative content including AI-generated material and the uneven distribution of digital literacy and publication reach. Efforts to strengthen the response involve enhancing the capacity of officials, fostering cross-sector collaboration, utilizing diverse digital channels, and promoting public digital literacy. Communication strategies must be adaptive and responsive without compromising accuracy.

Discussion

The discussion links the findings to Weber's (1978) theory of rational-legal legitimacy and Nurcahya's (2025) concept. The four dimensions of legitimacy demonstrate a complementary relationship in explaining how the handling of hoaxes strengthens the legitimacy of the West Java Provincial Government.

Legitimasi Pemerintah Melalui Penanganan Hoaks Oleh Dinas Komunikasi dan Informatika Provinsi Jawa Barat

1. Bureaucratic Rationality

The division of tasks, hierarchy of authority, formal procedures, coordination, and data-driven administration reflect the characteristics of a rational bureaucracy. Mechanisms for identification, verification, clarification, and publication demonstrate systematic information management. These findings align with Weber (1978) and Nurcahya (2025), although service quality and the scope of publication require optimization.

2. Procedural Legitimacy

Adherence to SOPs, fact-based verification, coordination, and the delivery of accountable results demonstrate that authority is exercised in accordance with established procedures. These findings align with Grimmelikhuijsen et al. (2020) regarding the importance of clear, consistent, and fair procedures. Public perception must still be taken into account to maintain objectivity.

3. Public Trust

Clarification based on evidence and traceable sources fosters trust. The use of Jabar Saber Hoaks as a reference supports the findings of Chen et al. (2023) and the OECD (2021) regarding the importance of consistent, evidence-based, and digitally effective government communication.

4. Institutional Transparency

Official channels, open avenues for clarification, and spaces for participation demonstrate transparency. These findings align with Alessandro et al. (2020), Sastrawan and Rahmawati (2025), Wirtz and Birkmeyer (2024), and Xia and Zhang (2026), indicating that transparency is effective when information is of high quality, clear, easily accessible, and usable by the public.

Factors Supporting the Realization of Government Legitimacy Through the Handling of Hoaxes

Three key supporting factor groups are cross-stakeholder collaboration, human resource professionalism and structured work systems, as well as information consistency and public

participation. The combination of internal and external factors shapes a public communication ecosystem that strengthens the credibility of Jabar Saber Hoaks and public acceptance of official information.

Obstacles and Efforts to Strengthen Government Legitimacy through the Handling of Hoaxes

Obstacles include the disparity between the speed at which hoaxes spread and the pace of verification, the complexities of verification in the era of digital technology and AI, and suboptimal levels of digital literacy and information reach. Necessary measures include enhancing the capacity of officials, adopting adaptive public communication, fostering collaboration with the media, academia, and fact-checking communities, diversifying social media channels, and strengthening digital literacy.

CONCLUSION

Research findings indicate that the West Java Provincial Government has successfully established a solid level of legitimacy through the West Java Communication and Informatics Agency's handling of hoaxes. This success is evidenced by rational bureaucracy, consistent work procedures, relatively high public trust, and information transparency across various official communication channels. These conditions are supported by structured work mechanisms, competent human resources, inter-agency coordination and collaboration including with fact-checking organizations consistent information verification, and the use of digital media to disseminate clarifications. However, efforts to further strengthen legitimacy face challenges such as the rapid spread of hoaxes outpacing verification processes, the evolution of artificial intelligence (AI) technology, limited publication reach on certain platforms, and disparities in public digital literacy levels. Therefore, a more adaptive government communication strategy is required involving the optimization of digital media, expanded collaboration with diverse stakeholders, and enhanced public education and digital literacy to ensure that hoax clarifications reach a wider audience and further reinforce the legitimacy of the West Java Provincial Government.

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