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Analysis of Public Distortion of Police Tasks That Impact Post-Truth Information

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Abstract: The post-truth phenomenon has altered public communication patterns, where emotions and personal opinions often overshadow objective facts in shaping societal perceptions. This condition significantly impacts law enforcement institutions, particularly the Indonesian National Police (Polri), which frequently become targets of information distortion in digital spaces. This study aims to analyze how public distortion of police tasks develops in the post-truth era and its effects on legal legitimacy and social stability. Using a normative juridical method, this research reviews relevant legislation, including Law No. 2 of 2002 concerning the Indonesian National Police, Law No. 1 of 2024 concerning the Second Amendment to the Electronic Information and Transactions Law (UU ITE), and Police Regulation No. 1 of 2021 regarding Community Policing. The findings indicate that public distortion often appears as misrepresentation of police actions, dissemination of disinformation through social media, and misinterpretation of legal procedures. Triggering factors include low public legal literacy, dominance of online media algorithms, and conflicts of interest between the public and authorities. This distortion has legal and social implications, ranging from defamation to disruption of investigation processes. Therefore, a responsive strategy is required from Polri through strengthening public relations, synergy with the Ministry of Communication and Informatics (Kominfo), and cross-sector collaboration in building a healthy, data-based information ecosystem. The study concludes that an adaptive and educational legal approach is key to addressing the post-truth challenges faced by the police institution

Keywords: Post-Truth, Public Distortion, Police, Disinformation, Law Enforcement

INTRODUCTION

The post-truth phenomenon has become a part of the dynamics of modern information, where emotions and personal opinions dominate more than objective facts in shaping public perception (Pebrianto, 2024). In the digital era, the spread of information is no longer controlled by official institutions but is widely disseminated through personal channels, social media, and online platforms that accelerate communication flow (Fauzi, 2023). When truth becomes relative because it is shaped by perception, society often accepts information that aligns with

their beliefs rather than based on data validity. This creates a fertile environment for disinformation and misinformation, which ultimately blur the line between fact and opinion (Diantini, 2025). This situation triggers public uncertainty towards institutions, including the police.

Social media has become the primary channel for spreading narratives that are not always rooted in truth but rather in emotion and personal perception (Rahmadhany, 2021). In the context of police duties, many incidents on the ground are recorded in fragments and widely shared before procedural truths can be clarified. Video clips or photos can be used to build negative public opinion without considering the context or applicable legal rules. Such distortions create unfair social pressure on law enforcement officers who carry out their duties based on positive law (Lusia Sulastri, 2023). As a result, public trust in the police can erode due to perceptions built on biased and incomplete information.

The police's duty to maintain order and enforce the law is highly vulnerable to the influence of public narratives formed through social media (Alfian, 2020). As part of the criminal justice system, the police have the obligation to act according to the law and professional ethics (Darmadi, 2024). However, in the post-truth context, their actions are often judged first in the digital space before the legal process runs (Gunawan, 2021). The law enforcement process becomes unclear due to public opinion interventions that sometimes do not understand the legal framework governing officers' actions. Consequently, officers become hesitant, the public becomes skeptical, and the law loses its function as an objective mediator.

The term post-truth in scientific literature refers to a social condition where objective facts have less influence in shaping public opinion compared to emotions and personal beliefs (Purba, 2023). This phenomenon does not stand alone but arises alongside the increase in instant and unfiltered digital information consumption (Aminudin, 2022). Social media users tend to believe information that reinforces their beliefs without verifying the source or accuracy of the content. This situation weakens society's critical reasoning against legitimate legal facts and institutional procedures that should be the reference (Maryani, 2025). Within the legal framework, this phenomenon disrupts social stability by replacing legal truth with emotional truth.

It is important to distinguish between information, disinformation, and misinformation to understand the complexity of this issue clearly. Information is data or facts delivered accurately and verifiably (Effendy, 2023). Disinformation is the deliberate spread of false information to mislead, while misinformation occurs when false information is spread without malicious intent (Kurniawan, 2024). These three forms spread widely in the digital space and are very difficult to quickly distinguish, especially for people lacking adequate digital and legal literacy. In the context of police duties, misunderstanding these classifications of information can lead to erroneous public assumptions and even endanger the safety of police personnel.

Legally, every individual has responsibility in delivering or spreading information in public spaces, especially if the information potentially affects public order (Tazmi, 2025). In communication law, information dissemination cannot be separated from the principle of caution because the consequences can broadly impact public opinion and legal stability. Law Number 1 of 2024, as an amendment to the Electronic Information and Transactions Law (UU ITE), regulates restrictions and prohibitions against spreading false news, slander, and information that can cause hatred or hostility (Rohayanti, 2024). This regulation emphasizes that freedom of expression in digital spaces remains bounded by legal responsibility to protect public interests. Law is not only a repressive tool but also a social protection mechanism from the destructive impacts of disinformation (Khamim, 2023).

Legal communication theory teaches that law plays a role in regulating the flow of information, especially regarding public opinion towards state institutions (Suherman, 2020). When information is conveyed without a proper basis, the law serves to set ethical and legal

boundaries to prevent social communication chaos (Cangara, 2023). In an open digital world, legal communication becomes increasingly important because society interacts directly with legal symbols such as police officers. Failure to understand this legal communication will result in conflict, misunderstanding, and ultimately create distrust in institutions that should maintain order. The police, as the spearhead of the legal system, must be both the subject and object of correct, transparent, and accountable communication.

Conceptually, the duties and authorities of the Indonesian National Police (Polri) are clearly regulated in Law Number 2 of 2002 concerning the Indonesian National Police. Polri's main functions are to maintain public security and order, enforce the law, and provide protection, guidance, and service to the community (Arif, 2021). These duties require professional actions based on applicable law and within strict ethical corridors. In carrying out its functions, Polri often faces dilemmas when lawful duties are perceived as repressive merely because they do not align with public perception. This phenomenon indicates the importance of harmonizing formal law and public expectations through effective education and communication.

Community policing, as regulated in the Chief of Police Regulation Number 1 of 2021, strengthens a preventive and participatory approach to maintaining public security. The community is encouraged to actively participate in creating a safe and conducive environment, not just as a security object. This approach becomes crucial in facing the post-truth era because collaboration between officers and society can balance deviant narratives (Saliro, 2025). If society understands Polri's duties and responsibilities correctly, the tendency to distort information will decrease. In this context, community policing is not only a security strategy but also a democratic instrument and legal education.

The relevance of this topic grows stronger when considering the tension between freedom of expression and legal stability amid the surge of opinions formed in digital spaces. The police are at the forefront of maintaining this balance, while also being the target of various narratives circulating in society. Without a proper legal and communication approach, information distortion will continue to erode the legitimacy and credibility of state institutions. Strengthening legal capacity, information literacy, and understanding of police duties is an urgent necessity in facing post-truth challenges. Through a structured and law-based approach, society and institutions can jointly uphold truth as the primary foundation in national life.

METHOD

This study uses a normative juridical method, an approach that relies on analysis of applicable positive legal norms, legal doctrines, and legal principles relevant to the issues under study. The main focus of this method is to examine primary legal materials such as legislation, as well as secondary legal materials such as academic literature, scientific articles, and legal expert opinions. This approach is chosen because the issues raised are closely related to the applicability of laws regulating the duties and authorities of the Indonesian National Police and the legal impact of spreading deviant information. In implementation, this research systematically analyzes several important regulations, including Law Number 2 of 2002 concerning the Indonesian National Police, Law Number 1 of 2024 as the second amendment to Law Number 11 of 2008 concerning Electronic Information and Transactions, and Chief of Police Regulation Number 1 of 2021 concerning Community Policing. In addition, this method also examines legal responsibility aspects in digital communication based on norms in Law Number 39 of 1999 concerning Human Rights. This study does not use empirical data because it is conceptual and theoretical in nature, so the analysis results focus on logical and systematic legal arguments to explain how information distortion in the post-truth era can be analyzed from the perspective of laws applicable in Indonesia

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Public Distortion of Police Duties

Misrepresentation of police actions on social media has become one of the most common forms of public distortion. Visual documentation such as videos or photos that spread widely often do not show the event in its entirety, but only fragments that give the impression the officers are committing violations. Viewers who lack legal or procedural context easily form the opinion that such actions are deviant or excessive. In many cases, however, officers act in accordance with the applicable laws and standard operating procedures. This situation creates a biased narrative that harms the police institution's image in the public eye.

Misinterpretation of legal and operational procedures further aggravates the distortion. Many people do not understand how arrest, investigation, or other law enforcement actions must be conducted according to legal standards. This ignorance causes them to judge police actions based on subjective moral standards rather than positive legal benchmarks. When officers use proportional force in response to resistance, the public may perceive it as excessive violence. Yet, Article 16 of Law No. 2 of 2002 grants the police the authority to use physical force in a graded manner according to the situation's needs.

The spread of factually unbiased opinions on social media strengthens negative perceptions of the police. Opinions built on emotions or personal experiences easily go viral and are believed by many. Such narratives often fail to consider balanced information or the right of reply from the police. Over the long term, the accumulation of negative opinions can generalize the police institution as repressive, even though not all actions reflect violations. The digital space, which should be a medium for two-way communication, instead turns into a platform for unilateral judgment.

The low level of legal literacy among the public is a fundamental root of the distortion. Understanding of legal rights and obligations remains low, even among active social media users who spread information. This ignorance creates a large gap in distinguishing between legitimate legal actions and those violating rights. Legal literacy is not just about memorizing laws but understanding the context and procedures of law enforcement. When this literacy is absent, the public easily falls for unfounded and emotional narratives.

The role of online media and social media algorithms worsens the situation by prioritizing emotionally engaging content over factually accurate ones. Controversial, sensational, or accusatory content against state institutions tends to receive more attention. Algorithms amplify the exposure of such content without verifying its truth, so the public is only exposed to one-sided narratives. This creates an echo chamber effect where the same information is repeatedly circulated, strengthening distortion without space for legal clarification. The presence of rapid sharing features also causes the verification process to lag behind the speed of dissemination.

Conflicts of interest between the public and law enforcement are also a potential source of distortion. The police are tasked with safeguarding public interest through law enforcement, while individuals or groups may have particular interests that are disrupted. For example, in cases of illegal evictions or actions against anarchist organizations, officers are required to act firmly, but the affected community might distort the narrative into a form of oppression. This narrative is then spread as a form of state injustice, even though there is a legal basis for the action. Personal interests that conflict with the law are often wrapped in emotionally strong victimization frames.

From a legal perspective, public distortion in the form of spreading false information can be sanctioned under Law No. 1 of 2024, the second amendment to Law No. 11 of 2008 concerning Electronic Information and Transactions (ITE). Article 28 paragraph (3) explicitly prohibits anyone who intentionally and unlawfully spreads information aimed at inciting hatred or hostility towards individuals or groups based on ethnicity, religion, race, or inter-group

relations (SARA), or that can cause social conflict. False information about police actions can fall under this category if proven to cause public unrest or disrupt public order. The application of this article must still consider the principle of caution so as not to arbitrarily restrict freedom of expression.

The right to information is part of human rights as guaranteed in Law No. 39 of 1999 on Human Rights, particularly Article 14 paragraph (2), which states that everyone has the right to seek, obtain, possess, store, process, and convey information. However, Article 70 of the same law emphasizes that in exercising rights and freedoms, everyone must comply with restrictions imposed by law for the recognition and respect of the rights of others as well as for morals, order, and the public interest. This means that spreading information that attacks the reputation of institutions or individuals without basis can violate others' human rights, including the right to reputation. Freedom cannot be used as a shield to spread lies.

Systemic public distortion against the police can also be subject to administrative sanctions by law enforcement or authorized institutions. Sanctions can include account blocking, warnings from the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (Kominfo), and reports to the police if criminal elements are found. In some cases, accounts spreading disinformation related to police actions can be taken down pursuant to the Ministry of Kominfo Regulation No. 5 of 2020 on Private Electronic System Providers. These efforts serve as preventive steps to minimize further spread that can worsen public security and order.

Legal actions taken against public distortion must still adhere to the principles of justice, proportionality, and accountability. Law enforcement against disinformation perpetrators must be based on strong evidence and transparent legal processes. The public also needs to be educated about the importance of filtering information before spreading it to avoid legal traps that can harm themselves. The police institution must actively build responsive and informative public communication channels as a form of institutional accountability. The combination of legal approaches, digital literacy, and institutional openness is an important step in confronting public distortion in this complex post-truth era.

Analysis of the Impact of Post-Truth on the Indonesian National Police Institution

Post-truth information becomes a serious obstacle for law enforcement carried out by the Indonesian National Police (Polri) institution because it disrupts public perception of the legitimacy of legal actions. When baseless information is believed more than official data, the legitimacy of the legal process becomes shaky in the eyes of society. This directly affects the drastically declining level of public trust, even before the facts are fully presented. In such situations, law enforcement officers often have to face high and disproportionate social pressure. This disruption is not merely communication-related but touches the essence of justice itself.

Viral cases on social media often show how investigation processes or law enforcement actions can be interrupted by false information pressure. The presence of video recordings or narratives that are deliberately edited causes the public to prematurely judge ongoing legal actions. For example, when an arrest is recorded and viral without complete explanation, a strong public reaction may push for a temporary halt of the investigation for clarification purposes. This causes the effectiveness and continuity of law enforcement to be disturbed. Such situations create a dilemma between maintaining order and meeting the emotional expectations of the public.

The Public Relations Division of Polri plays an important role in addressing the disinformation challenges that threaten the police's reputation and performance. The public relations function is not merely about issuing press releases but also responding quickly to issues developing on social media. A fact-based communicative approach must be prioritized to correct public misunderstandings. This division is also required to be adaptive in facing

changing patterns of public information consumption, which now rely more on digital platforms. The use of planned digital communication strategies is part of the effort to maintain public trust based on rationality rather than emotion.

The Multimedia Division of Polri also strengthens the public relations role by utilizing various visual media to deliver clarifications or legal education. The production of engaging and easily understood digital content is part of the strategy to suppress the influence of post-truth. Content published through official channels such as Polri's Instagram, YouTube, or Twitter can help the public understand legal processes transparently. Polri's direct involvement in digital public conversations shows that the institution is not passive in facing erroneous accusations. This openness of information becomes one of the main instruments in restoring the institution's credibility in an era of information disruption.

Internal Polri policies have also been directed to systematically and coordinately handle the challenges of disinformation. One concrete step is strengthening the cyber unit under the Criminal Investigation Agency (Bareskrim) Polri to monitor and take action against accounts spreading hoaxes or provocative information. In addition, the development of standard operational procedures related to public communication in crisis situations is also being developed so that the institution's response is not reactive but based on data and analysis. Strengthening the capacity of Polri members in digital communication is also an important agenda in institutional reform. All these aim to ensure that Polri personnel can respond professionally to information dynamics and not get trapped in negative narratives.

The government, through the Ministry of Communication and Informatics (Kominfo), also plays a role in combating disinformation related to Polri's duties. Kominfo Regulation No. 5 of 2020 on Private Electronic System Providers provides the legal basis for Kominfo to take down digital content that violates the law or contains hoaxes. This authority includes requesting digital platforms to close accounts or remove content that harms the public interest, including trust in state institutions. Polri can synergize with Kominfo in reporting and verifying misleading content to the public. This synergy shows an inter-institutional approach in maintaining national information stability.

Coordination between Polri and Kominfo also includes digital literacy programs aimed at the broader public. Socialization about the dangers of hoaxes, ways to verify information, and legal responsibilities in spreading digital content are part of preventive strategies. This campaign is carried out not only through conventional media but also through digital platforms reaching younger demographics. By increasing public awareness of the importance of accurate information, it is hoped that distortion against institutions such as Polri can be minimized. Education becomes the foundation for building a society that is not easily provoked by post-truth.

Cross-sector synergy is also expanded to civil society organizations, academics, and media monitoring institutions. Polri needs to establish cooperation with independent institutions to increase transparency and accountability in handling public issues. Involvement of credible third parties can assist in fact verification, digital data analysis, and providing feedback on communication strategies applied. This inclusive and collaborative relationship will create a healthy and unbiased public oversight mechanism. In this context, Polri does not work alone but becomes part of an integrated information ecosystem.

Handling the impact of post-truth on Polri requires a multidimensional approach that does not rely solely on legal power. Strengthening communication strategies, enhancing digital capacity, and cross-agency cooperation become the main pillars to comprehensively address this phenomenon. The information world today is very dynamic and easily changes, so adaptive and data-based responses are highly needed. Polri, as a state institution, must continue building legitimacy through transparency, professionalism, and active public involvement. This is a rational response to the irrational challenges brought by the post-truth era.

CONCLUSION

Public distortion of police duties in the context of the post-truth era is not merely a communication issue but a serious challenge to legal integrity and social order. This phenomenon shows how misrepresentation of information can create negative perceptions that disrupt law enforcement processes, weaken public trust, and even hinder institutional work. Police duties based on positive legal principles are often overshadowed by emotional narratives systematically formed through social media. This distortion occurs due to low public legal literacy, high consumption of instant information, and algorithmic bias from online media that prioritize sensational content. Therefore, serious and comprehensive efforts are needed to respond systematically to this challenge, both through law enforcement against spreaders of false information and through educational and transparent public communication strategies.

To face the challenges of the post-truth era, Polri and all related stakeholders need to build a collaborative approach involving state institutions, media, the education sector, and civil society. Public policies targeting the improvement of digital literacy and community empowerment in sorting information become key to strengthening national information resilience. In addition, the Polri institution needs to continuously innovate in building a proactive, responsive, and data-based public relations system to dampen misleading narratives that can worsen public perception. Active involvement of Kominfo, independent supervisory bodies, and social organizations must be directed to support a healthy, fair, and law-based information environment. In conclusion, public distortion amid the flow of post-truth must be answered with synergy between law enforcement, education strengthening, and responsible use of information technology.

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