Ensuring Digital Safety for Students through Legal Measures Against Hoaxes and Cyberbullying

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Abtract

This Community Service Program (PkM) was carried out at Senior High School 1 Batam to strengthen students' legal literacy and awareness of digital safety, particularly in addressing hoaxes and cyberbullying. Implemented through structured stages—preparation, execution, and evaluation—the program combined legal counseling, interactive discussions, and practical learning tools such as presentations, posters, and handouts. The results revealed that students gained improved understanding of the legal framework under the ITE Law and Criminal Code, alongside greater awareness of the risks posed by digital misconduct, including emerging threats such as deepfakes. Teachers and students confirmed that participatory and case-based methods enhanced both engagement and comprehension. Beyond immediate outcomes, the program produced sustainable outputs, including educational modules and an academic article, contributing to the promotion of responsible digital citizenship. Overall, this initiative demonstrates the crucial role of legal education in bridging the gap between legal norms and students' everyday digital experiences.

Keywords: Digital Safety, Legal Literacy, Cyberbullying

INTRODUCTION

Senior High School 1 Batam is one of the most prominent public schools in Batam City, known for its academic excellence and large student population of 1,948 across three grade levels. The school's location in Sekupang makes it an accessible institution for students from nearby areas, and many alumni continue their studies at Universitas Internasional Batam. Beyond academic achievements, the school emphasizes character building and preparing students to face global challenges. In particular, it integrates programs that enhance students' understanding of ethics, law, and digital citizenship (Alhakim et al., 2023). This context provides a strategic foundation for community service initiatives aimed at strengthening awareness of digital safety (Oetary & Hutauruk, 2021). By collaborating with the school, this program seeks to address contemporary challenges in students' everyday digital interactions.

The increasing cases of hoaxes and cyberbullying highlight urgent legal and social concerns in digital spaces. Despite the existence of the Electronic Information and Transactions Law (ITE Law), many students remain unaware of its provisions and the consequences of unlawful online behaviour (Muannas & Mansyur, 2020). Hoaxes frequently spread misinformation and create public panic, while cyberbullying causes serious psychological harm to victims. The anonymity of digital platforms complicates accountability, allowing perpetrators to act without immediate consequences (Jusnita & Ali, 2022). These challenges illustrate the limitations of legal enforcement when not supported by adequate public awareness. Therefore, preventive legal education becomes essential to equip students with the knowledge to recognize and avoid harmful digital practices (Astika & Yuwanto, 2019).

There is a clear discrepancy between what the law prescribes (das sollen) and how it operates in practice. While the ITE Law explicitly prohibits hoaxes and cyberbullying, enforcement often encounters difficulties due to technological barriers and limited institutional capacity

(Tresnawati et al., 2023). Many students do not internalize legal norms, leading to repeated violations in digital environments. At the same time, overlapping legal mandates create ambiguity in implementation and enforcement (Paat, 2020). As a result, the protective intent of the law does not fully translate into effective safeguards for vulnerable groups, particularly teenagers. This mismatch underscores the need for bridging the gap between legal norms and their application in everyday digital life (Bagenda et al., 2024).

This study seeks to address the normative and practical gaps in legal protection by conducting structured legal education for high school students. The primary objective is to enhance students' awareness of hoaxes and cyberbullying while equipping them with strategies to respond responsibly (Ramadhani et al., 2021). Specifically, the program focuses on prevention through knowledge dissemination, intervention by building resilience, and remediation by highlighting available legal remedies. It also introduces students to the relevant legal provisions that apply to perpetrators of digital misconduct (Siregar & Siregar, 2024). By linking normative legal frameworks with students' real-life experiences, the research contributes to building a culture of responsible digital citizenship. Ultimately, the program aims to strengthen both individual and institutional capacity to respond to emerging digital threats.

This research acknowledges several limitations in scope and applicability. Access to confidential data is restricted, limiting the ability to analyze certain cases in depth. Findings are context-specific to Senior High School 1 Batam and may not be entirely generalizable to other institutions. Additionally, the fast-paced evolution of digital platforms means that new challenges may emerge beyond the scope of this study. Legal enforcement also depends on broader institutional capacity, which may vary across contexts. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable academic insights and policy recommendations. It contributes to bridging the gap between law and practice while offering a replicable model for improving digital legal literacy among students.

IMPLEMENTATION METHOD

The Community Service Program was conducted at Senior High School 1 Batam from March 3 to June 30, 2025, through three structured stages. The preparatory phase involved administrative arrangements, direct observations of the school environment, interviews with key stakeholders, and the collection of supporting documentation to ensure program relevance. The implementation phase took place in April 2025, focusing on legal counseling for grade XI students using an interactive and communicative approach. Educational sessions highlighted the dangers of hoaxes and cyberbullying, legal protections under the ITE Law, and ethical digital practices, supported by engaging PowerPoint presentations, printed materials, and an open discussion forum.

The final stage in June centered on evaluation through student feedback, active participation during Q&A, and reflection activities, followed by the preparation of a comprehensive report. This report documented the program's outcomes, including scientific articles and educational outputs, serving both as accountability and as a foundation for future initiatives. The total program budget amounted to IDR 5,580,000, covering operational, educational, and dissemination expenses. Overall, the method ensured a systematic, participatory, and impactful legal education initiative tailored to strengthen students' awareness and resilience in navigating digital challenges.

IMPLEMENTATION RESULTS

Hoaxes and Cyberbullying: Legal Protection for the Digital Generation, Particularly Students

In today's digital era, technology has become deeply integrated into students' daily lives, exposing them to both opportunities and risks. Among the most significant risks are hoaxes and cyberbullying, which proliferate through smartphones, social media, school chat groups, and online games

(Sihotang et al., 2023). Adolescents, who are still in a critical stage of psychological and social development, are particularly vulnerable to these threats. Exposure to false information and online harassment often leads to declining self-confidence, depression, and other mental health challenges (Quran, 2022). Such vulnerabilities highlight the urgency of equipping students with digital literacy and legal awareness, as they represent the nation's future generation and must be safeguarded from harmful practices that may hinder their growth.
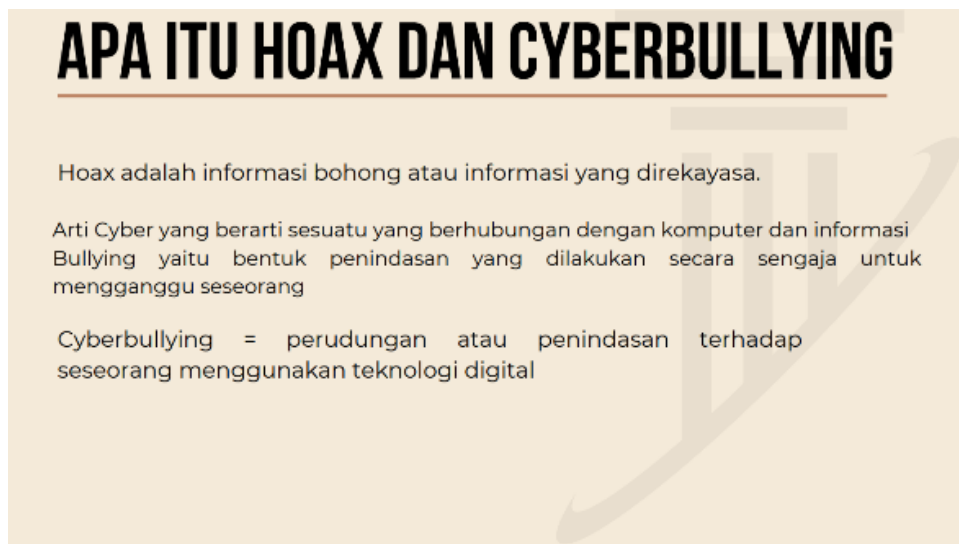
Picture 1. Materials
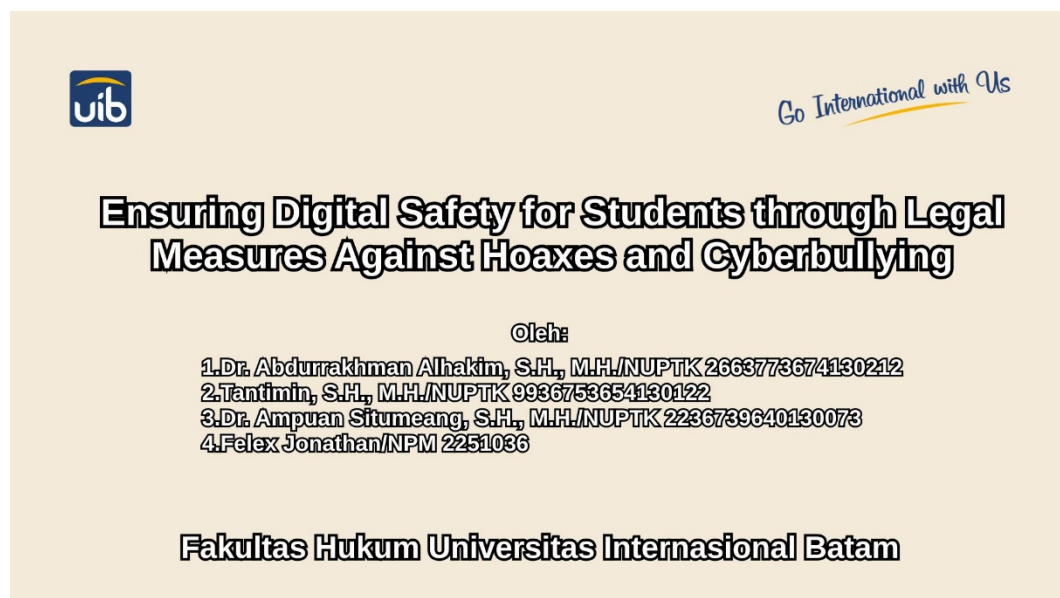
Source: Implementer

Hoaxes refer to the intentional spread of false or misleading information, often designed to manipulate public opinion, incite panic, or serve malicious personal agendas. These can take the form of text, images, or videos, and are rapidly disseminated through digital platforms (Mokhtar & Hassan, 2021). Cyberbullying, in turn, is defined as repeated aggressive behavior conducted online with the intent to humiliate or harm others. When combined, these phenomena generate significant legal and ethical challenges, as perpetrators exploit anonymity and digital tools to intimidate victims (Mokhtar & Hassan, 2021). More recently, emerging technologies such as deepfakes have further complicated this landscape by producing highly realistic fabricated audio and video content, which can be

weaponized to spread hoaxes or inflict psychological abuse. Such content often blurs the boundary between truth and falsehood, making it increasingly difficult for victims to defend themselves.

Picture 2. Materials

APA ITU HOAX DAN CYBERBULLYING

Hoax adalah informasi bohong atau informasi yang direkayasa.

Arti Cyber yang berarti sesuatu yang berhubungan dengan komputer dan informasi Bullying yaitu bentuk penindasan yang dilakukan secara sengaja untuk mengganggu seseorang

Cyberbullying = perudungan atau penindasan terhadap seseorang menggunakan teknologi digital

Source: Implementer

The consequences of hoaxes and cyberbullying are profound. They can mislead the public, disrupt social cohesion, trigger intergroup conflicts, and severely impact students' concentration and well-being. In extreme cases, victims may experience suicidal ideation or resort to self-harm. These outcomes underscore the necessity of preventive and corrective measures through legal education, digital literacy programs, and stronger institutional safeguards (Siregar & Siregar, 2024). From a legal standpoint, Indonesia already provides regulatory instruments, such as provisions under the Criminal Code and the ITE Law, which criminalize defamation, insults, and digital misconduct. However, enforcement remains inconsistent, and the complexity of online anonymity continues to challenge effective accountability.

This program has demonstrated that legal counseling for students is not merely an academic exercise but a vital protective mechanism in the digital age. By fostering critical thinking, empathy, and awareness of legal consequences, students are better prepared to navigate the digital

environment responsibly (Jusnita & Ali, 2022). The results achieved include heightened student awareness, improved ethical judgment, and the creation of educational materials—such as presentations, infographics, and printed modules—that serve as sustainable outputs for both the school and the broader community. These outcomes contribute to building a culture of responsible digital citizenship while reinforcing the role of law as a safeguard against online threats.

Implementation of Legal Counseling on Hoaxes and Cyberbullying at SMAN 1 Batam

The Community Service Program at Senior High School 1 Batam began with preparatory activities in March 2025. The preparation stage included on-site observation on March 3, 2025, from 07:30 to 09:00 WIB to assess the school's readiness and secure formal permission for the program. During this stage, the student team also coordinated with teachers and administrators to identify relevant issues faced by students. Supporting materials such as PowerPoint slides, posters, banners, and a detailed event schedule were developed to ensure effective delivery. Additionally, the team prepared a formal proposal and an academic article to complement the implementation. This systematic preparation ensured that the session would be well-structured, informative, and aligned with both academic and community objectives.

The main implementation took place on Wednesday, April 21, 2025, in class XI IPA 2, with the participation of 48 students. The session, titled "Realizing Digital Safety for Students through Legal Protection against Hoaxes and Cyberbullying," began with an introduction by the facilitators. This was followed by a discussion on everyday digital challenges, encouraging students to share whether they had encountered hoaxes or cyberbullying. The facilitators then explained how technological advancements demand responsible digital behavior, highlighting both the risks and legal implications. Special attention was given to the issue of deepfakes, which many students had not previously understood,

emphasizing their potential use in spreading misinformation and online abuse. This content was tailored to raise students' awareness and provide practical knowledge for navigating digital threats.

Picture 3. Group Documentation

Source: Implementer

The material was delivered through interactive PowerPoint presentations designed to simplify complex legal concepts and maintain student engagement. Examples of hoaxes and cyberbullying were presented to connect the discussion with real-life scenarios familiar to students. A Q&A session followed, offering students the opportunity to clarify doubts, express opinions, and share experiences. This exchange helped strengthen students' critical thinking while reinforcing the importance of digital ethics and legal accountability. The activity concluded with group documentation, including photographs of facilitators and participants, which served as both evidence of implementation and a reflection of the program's collaborative spirit. After the event, the team compiled a comprehensive report to record outcomes and provide recommendations for future initiatives.

An interview with Mr. Hanafi, Vice Principal of Public Relations at SMAN 1 Batam, confirmed the value of the program. He noted that the

counseling session provided students with essential legal knowledge to confront emerging digital challenges. According to him, students gained not only awareness of potential risks but also practical strategies to protect themselves and their peers. The program was considered effective in bridging the gap between abstract legal provisions and students' real-life experiences. It also contributed to fostering a culture of vigilance and responsibility among young learners in their digital interactions. Overall, the activity successfully strengthened students' capacity to respond wisely to hoaxes and cyberbullying in an increasingly complex technological environment.

Picture 4. Sharing Session

Source: Implementer

The evaluation stage was carried out immediately after the counseling session to measure its impact on students' understanding and engagement. Feedback was collected through direct observations, Q&A participation, and informal reflections with the class. Many students expressed that they had not previously been aware of the seriousness of hoaxes and the psychological harm caused by cyberbullying. Their responses revealed improved comprehension of digital ethics, as well as recognition of the need

for legal literacy in navigating online platforms. This stage also confirmed that interactive methods, such as discussions and real-life examples, were more effective in engaging students compared to traditional lectures. By combining academic content with participatory activities, the program succeeded in transforming abstract legal concepts into practical knowledge for students' daily lives.

Furthermore, the program generated valuable academic and practical outputs that extended beyond the classroom session. The student facilitators produced a structured set of educational materials, including slides, posters, and printed handouts, which can serve as sustainable resources for the school. A scientific article was also drafted to disseminate the findings and emphasize the importance of digital legal literacy for youth in Indonesia. These outputs demonstrate that the program not only benefited students directly but also contributed to the broader academic community and policy discourse. The integration of theory, practice, and dissemination reflects the holistic approach adopted in this PkM initiative. In doing so, it set a foundation for future collaborations aimed at strengthening legal awareness and digital safety across other educational institutions.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of the Community Service Program at Senior High School 1 Batam demonstrates the urgency of addressing digital risks such as hoaxes and cyberbullying through legal education. The preparatory, implementation, and evaluation stages were systematically designed to ensure the program's effectiveness in equipping students with digital literacy, legal awareness, and ethical responsibility. The counseling session highlighted both the legal framework, including the ITE Law and relevant Criminal Code provisions, and the practical risks posed by technological advancements such as deepfakes. Students not only learned about the legal consequences of misconduct but also gained preventive strategies to protect

themselves and their peers. This indicates that legal education can serve as an essential safeguard for adolescents, who remain highly vulnerable to digital threats.

Furthermore, the outcomes of the program extended beyond immediate awareness by producing sustainable educational materials, an academic article, and recommendations for future initiatives. Feedback from students and teachers confirmed that interactive methods, combined with real-life examples, significantly enhanced understanding and engagement. The program succeeded in bridging the gap between abstract legal provisions and practical challenges faced by students in their daily digital interactions. In doing so, it contributed to fostering a culture of responsibility, vigilance, and academic integrity among youth. These achievements provide a valuable foundation for future collaborations and emphasize the importance of integrating legal literacy into the broader educational framework to strengthen resilience in the digital era.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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