

## Papua Students Media Literacy in Facing Actions of Racism in Indonesia

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### Abstract

*News of the racist incident that occurred at the Papuan Student Dormitory in Surabaya on August 16, 2019, then spread so quickly and massively, especially through social media. The purpose of the research was to find out the media literacy of Papuan students related to acts of racism. This study uses a qualitative method with data collection techniques consisting of observation, in-depth interviews, documents and focus group discussion. The results showed that racist is an act of abuse against ethnic Papuans who violate human rights and a racist is an act that violates religious teachings. Racists are considered to be degrading acts of Papuans as beings created by God who have human rights brought from birth regardless of racial, ethnic, and physical differences and no religion allows the act of harassing or insulting fellow human beings.*

### Keywords

racism; media literacy; hoax



## I. Introduction

Racism is not a commendable act. This is part of a social evil that can cause offense and conflict between humans, especially those of different ethnic groups. Cases of racism can happen anywhere and anytime, because many people think that they are better than other humans, starting from the tone of speech, physical form, cultural harassment, clothes used, skin color, hair type, and many more. Those who think they are better will show insults, laugh, say things that are not properly conveyed, and even stay away. This action certainly has a very bad impact on social relations, objects that get racism from others, feel unappreciated as human beings who have the right to life.

In Indonesia, acts of racism are not taboo, many people apply these actions both intentionally and unintentionally, just because they think they are the best, but that is a big mistake. Humans are created perfectly and certainly have their uniqueness, starting from the physical and cultural forms that were passed down from generation to generation by their ancestors. Cases of racism often occur in Papuans, especially students who are immigrants in big cities in Indonesia. Their goal to change their destiny by continuing their education is of course in tandem with the racism shown by others to them. Incidents of racism sometimes start from simple things with the concept of jokes, such as asking, is there a car in Papua? Have Papuans been wearing shirts and pants? Why are Papuans physically the same face and hair? These questions are, of course, highly disgraceful and can lead to conflict.

Not only to the attempt to give negative questions, the case of racism again rocked Indonesia at the end of 2019 which befell Papuan students in Surabaya, to be precise, starting on August 16, 2019. Students received discriminatory treatment when the siege of

the dormitory was carried out by community organizations and officials because they were accused of not appreciate the red and white flag that was previously found fallen and damaged around the student dormitory. The students in the dormitory were scorned, labeled 'monkeys' by mass organizations and officials. They were asked to leave the dormitory to take responsibility and they were taken to the Surabaya Police Headquarters to be questioned regarding the destruction of the flag they were accused of, although they were finally released that same night because there was not enough evidence.

The act of sieges and attacks carried out by mass organizations and officers at the Papuan student dormitory in Surabaya is certainly not a good thing, very inappropriate to be imitated and not based on humanitarian principles due to issuing the phrase "monkey". The mass organizations and the apparatus should first conduct an in-depth investigation by finding out clear problems without harming any party, especially Papuan students in Surabaya.

Related to information about the news of Papuan students in Surabaya, of course, there are many racial utterances that are hoaxes and provocative which are spread so quickly and massively, especially through social media. For example, the hoax that was spread by Tri Susanti at that time made a narrative that students from Papua tore and broke the flagpole. Not only that, but he also provoked and gathered the masses with the hoax "Papuan students fight citizens with sharp weapons". One of the people who came to surround the dormitory was Syamsul Arifin, a civil servant at the Surabaya City Government. At that time he cursed "monkey" to the students. In addition, a soldier named Serda Unang Rohana who during the siege shouted and kicked the boarding fence (Briantika, 2020).

Information from social media, internet, and brochures is still lacking (Tammubua and Surapto, 2020). Hoax utterances written by irresponsible sources certainly demand Papuan students in big cities such as Surabaya and Jakarta to be calmer in dealing with these problems which are disseminated through social media and news on the internet. Media literacy carried out by Papuan students basically aims to reduce the problems that occur and not be quickly provoked by provocative actions that are also in the form of racism shown by irresponsible people and can only divide the Indonesian nation.

## **II. Review of Literature**

### **2.1 Racism**

Racism is a topic that attracts the attention of scholars to be researched both in terms of law, anthropology, sociology and across disciplines. This is not only because racism is useful for the development of science, but so that human life returns to its essence, namely peaceful coexistence (Barbieri & Ferede, 2020). Another reason is because racism is so dangerous to humanity. Racism can lead to mass killings, ethnic cleansing and forced evictions by dominant groups. Differences between one group and another and the view that different groups are superior or superior to other groups, or that other groups are considered strange, are the factors behind the emergence of racism.

In Staszak's view, that the dominant group is in a position to impose its particularity on minority groups, and if there are groups outside it is considered incorrect (Staszak, 2008). The view that sees one group as different or different from the other (Otherness) is considered very dangerous and is a contemporary problem related to the organization of the type and nature of human relations because it can pose dangers to humans such as murder, segregation, and social violence such as genocide (Habash, 2019; Ayu, 2019).

## 2.2 Media Literacy

Gilster (1997) defines digital literacy as an ability to understand and use information from various digital sources. So it does not only include the ability to read, but also requires a critical thinking process to evaluate the information found through digital media. (Kurnia and Astuti, 2017).

## 2.3 Hoax

Wals (2006) in his book *Sins against Science: The Scientific Media Hoaxes of Poe, Twain and Others* quoted by Mauludi in the book "Awat Hoax". (Mauludi, 2018:308) If we search for the word hoax, even though it is fake news, the influence is quite large, it can cause widespread conflict because there are certain groups who benefit from this fake news as happened in Papua.

## III. Research Methods

This study uses a qualitative method consisting of (a), adapting the qualitative method more easily when dealing with multiple realities and (2), this method directly presents the nature of the relationship between the researcher and the respondent. Third, this method is more sensitive and more adaptable to the many sharpening of mutual influences and the patterns of values encountered (Moleong, 2012). Qualitative data collection techniques using observation, in-depth interviews, documentation, and Focus Group Discussion. Data analysis in the view of Miles and Huberman (1992: 1-2) that consists of three flows of activities that occur simultaneously, namely: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion/verification.

## IV. Result and Discussion

### 4.1 Racism as an Act of Harassment against Ethnic Papuans that Violate Human Rights

Before obtaining information about student literacy on cases of racism at the Papuan Student Dormitory in Surabaya, the researchers first explored information about how they interpreted racism itself, which was explained by John's informant as follows:

...that this racist act is an act that insults the nation, especially the Papuans, the Melanesian people who are united with the Malays (student perspective). By throwing racist words, it means degrading one's own nation. The highest human rights are degrees. When this degree is lowered both verbally and non-verbally by saying "monkey" it is a violation of human rights..." Blaming the state apparatus (Satpol PP, TNI and Polri) for using racist words that have demeaned the nation itself. This is what became the forerunner for students to sentence the state to be incapable of providing welfare to the Papuan people, starting with the existence of mass organizations accusing students of bringing down the red and white flag without any evidence." Furthermore, John's informant criticized racism in this plural country. The state should not neglect to educate the nation's children. Educating in a moral and ethical sense must be improved (Interview 7 August 2020).

In the perspective of John's informant, he has positioned the Papuan people as a harassed Melanesian nation which also means harassing the nation and violates HUMAN RIGHTS In line with Informant John's answer, Andi added an explanation of racism as follows:

“racism is a violation of human rights because it is a form of humiliation that demeans a group which automatically means degrading a nation”. (FGD, 7 August 2020)

Informant Andi immediately assessed that racism is a violation of human rights because it degrades the status of the nation. Meanwhile, informant Rudy added that racism is harassment against a group, individuals based on race. Racist is a word that attacks, is offensive, and belittles other groups. In this racist act, the TNI, apparatus, and mass organizations feel superior and more nationalistic and consider students not to love Indonesia.

An informant from the second FGD, Kelvin explained racism as follows:

“racism is a view of a certain group of ethnic groups/nations that have certain characteristics and from that, the assumption arises that groups with certain characteristics are considered to have no value in their eyes and have indeed been embedded in the mindset of Indonesians like that. They think that Papuans cannot show their creativity, they are competitive with Indonesians. That Papuans cannot show their abilities so that it is also embedded in the mindset of Papuans that they are of no value to Indonesians. With such an understanding, then indirectly, the mentality of the Papuan people does not exist.” (FGD, 18 August 2020)

The opinion of informant Kelvin was added by informant Jessie who said that Papuans were "mentally blocking". It was said that in line with what was conveyed by Kelvin, because Papuans were considered incapable, unable to do creativity, it was a mental blocking that made Papuans want to be creative. Like there's no room for movement so it's down, mental blocking arises.

Taulin Ignasius provides his explanation of racism which partially confirms the opinion of the previous informant as expressed as follows:

“If we look at human rights studies, racist acts are an indicator that there is someone who doesn't want that person to have a comfortable life, so they are terrorized with words, terrorized with actions, and sometimes even violent. As for Human Rights itself, if you look at it, yes, in Indonesia, the handling of the racist case itself has not been implemented properly. Because those who were like Milton said how at that time the names of the Papuan student friends who were arrested were displayed in the media but the main suspect, the main perpetrator was not revealed to us at all, there was no name, full name and how long was the sentence even for me, As far as I know, the sentence is not more than one year if I'm not mistaken only seven months. It is an indicator that we can see everything for the Indonesian nation if indeed the handling of racism itself is not optimal. So I don't rule out the possibility that in the future there will be another incident like this, the internet will be turned off again, there will be no further resolution, the President of the Republic of Indonesia just said we forgive only those three and it will happen again if it is not taken seriously” (FGD, 25 August). 2020).

Stela, Yestin, Mohammad, Jakson, and Milson, and Ona Roman who are private university students (PTS) in Jayapura City confirm the opinion of the previous informant. Stela and Yestin assert that racism is an act of intimidation against a tribe that has a different physical appearance, for example from the color of skin and hair. Those differences are looked down upon, considered strange, and unappreciated. One of the informants, Mohammad confirmed this opinion as stated below:

"In my opinion, racism is an act of discrimination aimed at an ethnic group or group whose purpose or impact is to corner them and there are many other racist incidents that occur in Indonesia, but what is certain is that racism is one of the exceptions that is not in harmony with being implemented. Because I think human nature is all the same. Then we in Indonesia live based on religion, belief and each religion has taught that every human being has rights and also has the same dignity in the eyes of God. That's why every human being should not have an exception, especially one that refers to skin color, ethnicity and other things." (Interview, 15 September 2020)

Other informants also expressed the same thing. Agus Aspale emphasized his understanding of racism as an act of insulting others with the names of animals and of course degrading other people. Equating other people with animals is negative behavior. Taulin Ignasius also expressed the same thing about racism which he interpreted as a way for someone to elevate himself above others based on skin color and regional origin. According to him, racism always has a negative impact because the derivative of racism is an act of discrimination against a person because of his ethnicity, skin color, even from his religion as stated by Elipa. Meanwhile, Herman Wuang focuses on racism, a kind of pollution carried out by a group of people who are not responsible for other people who are not domiciled in that place or are immigrants.

#### **4.2 Racism as an Action That Breaks Religious Teachings**

Another informant's opinion is that John associates racism with religion, especially Christianity because according to him it is not only human rights violations that occur with the following arguments:

"So being racist, not only violates human rights, but also violates the teachings of religion (Christianity) because in the holy book there is no teaching to demean other people, or other nations. One should not and should not insult people with the words "monkey". Relation to labeling or stereotypes to certain groups. It is human ethics and morals. In the riots that occurred, it was more driven by emotional factors, anger because the officers sentenced only one party because there was no evidence showing students breaking the flag at the Papuan student dormitory in Surabaya." (FGD, 7 August 2020)

As also supported by the statements of other informants such as John, Rudy, Andi which refers to the freedom of individuals given by God to be creative, carry out activities, think freely, not be confined in free-thinking, is a situation that is contrary to religious teachings that should not happen let alone be allowed to happen. just like that without any legal and open settlement. Justice is a religious teaching that all must receive and experience without being intimidated and intimidated by the apparatus, TNI, or other mass organizations. Humans are the same according to religion.

#### **4.3 Discussion**

Racism is a social phenomenon that often occurs around us and its presence is often underestimated and has no impact. Even racist actions often occur from the family environment as the smallest environment but are not realized even more tend to be used as jokes among fellow family members. However, as a behavior, of course, racism is not an act that does not have any impact on the individual who experiences it, even shifts to certain groups or ethnicities.

At a broader level, it can have national and international impacts. For this matter, there are many examples of cases that have occurred both in Indonesia and in the world.

On the other hand, racist actions can be carried out by people who are not familiar with certain groups or even know them very well. With a glance accompanied by a certain perspective that only looks at the physical aspect, it is easy for someone to say inappropriate things to them just because they are physically different.

A similar incident was experienced by Papuan students in Surabaya who received racist remarks. The incident began with the alleged destruction of the red and white flag that was thrown into the ditch around the Papuan Student Dormitory on Jalan Kalasan Surabaya. This incident provoked a response from the police and mass organizations by surrounding the student dormitory which at that time was inhabited by 43 students. At the same time, racist and intimidating speech emerged. Videos and news of the incident were widely circulated in the community which eventually resulted in the emergence of several demonstrations and protests in various areas in Papua which ended in anarchy.

This kind of racist act has often been experienced by the Papuan people on various occasions but has not been taken seriously like the incident in Surabaya. Some experts consider that many racist cases are not handled properly so that they often happen again and again. Quoting from the [jubi.co.id](http://jubi.co.id) page, Papuan researcher from Georgetown University, United States, Veronika Kusumaryati said that cases of racism against Indigenous Papuans were always repeated. The repetition shows that racism against OAP is a structural and systematic problem involving deep-rooted culture and beliefs. Veronika emphasized that racism is not an individual issue, but is rooted in the beliefs, behaviors, and everyday systems of society that consider one race to be inferior to another. In terms of racism against Papuans, the roots of this racism have been going on for a long time and cover various aspects of the state and nation in Indonesia. In fact, Indonesian nationalism can be said to be rooted in the denigration of Papuans (Ariane, 2021).

Still from the same page, another academic, Jenny Munro from The University of Queensland who has researched in Papua for more than ten years, said that Papuans have long experienced racism in Indonesia. However, the Papuan people are always required to remain silent for the sake of unity and harmony. Racism can have serious consequences. Racism causes people to be excluded from discussions about their own future. It can be used to deprive people of dignity, land, autonomy and rights. The issue of racism must be discussed openly, together, with a cool head of course. He also wrote in the online journal "The Conversation" which explained that racism by Indonesians has actually increased because Indonesians do not want to talk about what racism is, what it looks like, and what the consequences are (Ariane, 2021).

The racist case that occurred in the Papuan student dormitory in Surabaya at the end of 2019 attracted the attention of many people. This case has become a racist case that has had a major impact on the many racist cases that have been experienced by the Papuan people before. This is evident from the large waves of solidarity actions and protests from people in various regions in Papua. Not to forget also in a number of these actions the involvement of students as one of the intellectuals. This was also stated by students when interviewed in Jakarta. Therefore, this research begins by exploring students' literacy in depth about racism. There are various opinions about racism, namely racism as an act of harassment and insult to a tribe and violates human rights.

Alo Liliweri (2005) defines racism in several important points. Among them it is stated that racism is an ideology based on the idea that humans can be separated into racial groups; that the group can be arranged based on degrees or hierarchies based on intelligence or skills, abilities, and even morality. He further revealed that racism is discrimination against a person or group of people because of their race. Sometimes this concept becomes a political doctrine to claim that one race is superior to another. This



definition is in line with the opinion of most students as informants in this study, both in Jayapura and Jakarta. They considered that the racist act was an act of harassment and humiliation to ethnic Papuans that violated human rights. Racist remarks that equate Papuan students with animals are clear to them an act that has degraded the status of the Papuan ethnicity. Whereas in human rights itself, humans have the highest degree than other creatures created by God. Harassment and insults against ethnic Papuans with racist remarks occur both verbally and non-verbally so that it hurts the feelings of the Papuan people.

The opinions of the informants in this study also showed that racism implies that there is discriminatory treatment felt and experienced by students by police officers and mass organizations who carried out a siege after the red and white flag incident was found falling in a ditch around the Papuan student dormitory. Informants considered that the actions of the apparatus and mass organizations who immediately accused Papuan students in the dormitory of being the perpetrators without any dialogue or meeting to investigate the actual incident were a representation of discriminatory actions.

## V. Conclusion

Based on the results of research related to media literacy about acts of racism of Papuan students, the conclusion is that racism is an act of harassment against ethnic Papuans that violates human rights and racism is an act that violates religious teachings. The racism that occurs is considered an act that demeans the Papuan people as God's creatures who have human rights that they are born with regardless of race, ethnicity, and physical differences and no religion justifies acts of harassing or insulting fellow human beings.

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