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The Influence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) News Virality on Public Perception in Indonesia in 2025

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ABSTRACT
This study aims to determine the influence of news virality regarding Artificial Intelligence (AI) on public perception in Indonesia in 2025. The rapid development of AI, accompanied by the massive dissemination of information through social media and digital platforms, has created a wave of diverse public opinion, ranging from enthusiasm for innovation to concerns about socio-economic impacts. This study used a quantitative approach with a survey method of 150 respondents aged 17–50 years who are active on social media. Data were collected through an online questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and simple linear regression. The results showed a positive and significant relationship between AI news virality and public perception, with a correlation value of 0.487 and a significance of $p < 0.05$. The higher the intensity of exposure to AI viral news, the stronger its influence on the formation of public perception. These findings demonstrate the importance of the media's role in presenting balanced information and the need to improve digital literacy amidst the rapid and inaccurate flow of technological information.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In this modern era, the role of media as a key player in shaping public opinion has become increasingly significant. The media is not only the main distributor of information but also serves as a primary architect of public opinion on evolving issues. [1]. The development of digital technology in the 21st century has brought forth various innovations that have transformed the global social, economic, and cultural order. One of the most revolutionary technological innovations is Artificial Intelligence (AI). Today, AI is not only part of the advancement of information technology but also influences various aspects of human life, ranging from industrial automation, public service systems, and education, to the entertainment industry [2].

In Indonesia, the topic of AI has gained increasing attention, particularly from 2023 to 2025, in line with the emergence of various AI-based products and services entering daily life, such as chatbots, image generators, deepfake applications, and data prediction systems based on machine learning [3].. On the other hand, advancements in AI technologies such as Natural Language Processing (NLP) and sentiment analysis have provided practical solutions for the automatic detection of problematic content. However, according to Creswell (2014), data-driven approaches still require deep contextual understanding [4].

This phenomenon is closely linked to the role of the media in disseminating information about AI. Mass media, both print and digital, along with social media, play a significant role in spreading news and public opinion on AI [5]. In today's digital era, information spreads rapidly and massively. A single piece of content or news can go viral within hours [6]. The concept of virality refers to how quickly and widely information spreads and is shared by media users, especially on platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and X (Twitter) [7]. In the context of AI news, this virality often arises due to narratives that evoke fear, awe, or controversy, such as the possibility of AI replacing human roles, the potential for disinformation through AI, or the government's regulatory lag in controlling it [8].

In Indonesia, the virality of AI-related news has elicited a range of public responses. Some people show interest and enthusiasm toward these technological advancements, viewing AI as an opportunity to enhance work

efficiency and drive digital transformation [9]. However, many also express concern, particularly regarding the loss of human jobs, the potential misuse of AI in manipulating information, and the fear of eroding ethical and humanitarian values. These varied responses show that public perception of AI is heavily influenced by how information about it is presented and received [10].

Public perception is a critical component in the successful adoption of technology. According to mass communication theory, public perception does not form naturally; it is shaped through cognitive processes based on the information received [11]. The media plays a role as a perception-forming agent not only by delivering information but also by framing narratives [12]. In this context, the virality of news acts as an accelerating factor in the formation of perception, as the more frequently individuals are exposed to a particular issue, the more likely that information is to shape certain beliefs or attitudes. This aligns with the theories of agenda-setting and priming, in which the media determines which issues the public considers important and how those issues are understood [11].

In 2025, coverage of AI in Indonesia has become particularly prominent. Various media outlets have highlighted stories about the launch of new AI products, the controversy over AI use in education, growing fears of unemployment due to automation, and discussions on AI ethics and policy [13]. Not only mainstream media but also popular social media accounts and tech influencers have contributed to popularizing this issue. Unfortunately, not all circulating information is educational [14]. Many pieces of content tend to be clickbait, fear-inducing, or even spread unverified information. This can lead to the formation of misinformed or biased public perceptions about AI [15].

This situation warrants further study, especially in the context of Indonesian society, which has varying levels of digital literacy. Some individuals may be able to filter information well and understand the news critically [16]. However, others are vulnerable to the manipulative effects of viral news, especially when it is packaged with emotional or sensational narratives. In today's era of information disruption, the public's ability to distinguish between factual and speculative information is key to maintaining social stability and supporting data-driven policies [17]. By understanding the relationship between news virality and public perception, this research aims to provide input for policymakers, media practitioners, and educational institutions to design more effective and responsible public communication strategies in delivering technological issues [18].

The social impact of rapid technological development must not be overlooked. If public perception of AI becomes overly negative, it may trigger resistance to innovation and even hinder the digital transformation process in Indonesia [19]. On the other hand, if public perception is overly optimistic without critical understanding, people may fall victim to technology misuse, such as digital fraud or data manipulation [20]. Therefore, understanding how these perceptions are formed and what influences them is a crucial first step in managing technological change inclusively and sustainably.

The virality of AI-related news is not merely a typical communication phenomenon it is a significant factor in shaping public perception. In the context of Indonesia in 2025, this is a strategic issue that must be deeply understood, considering that AI is not just a technological trend but a transformative force that will shape the future of various sectors in society.

2. METHOD

This study employs a quantitative approach using a survey method to examine the relationship between the virality of news about Artificial Intelligence (AI) and public perception in Indonesia in the year 2025. The quantitative approach was chosen as it allows the researcher to measure variables objectively and analyze data statistically to draw measurable conclusions.

The research was conducted online, considering that the target population comprises active social media users spread across various regions of Indonesia. The study was carried out from April to June 2025. The population includes Indonesian citizens aged 17 to 50 years who actively use social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, X (Twitter), and YouTube. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, with the criteria that participants must have previously read or seen viral news related to AI and must be active on at least one social media platform. A total of 150 respondents were selected, which is considered sufficient for conducting statistical correlation analysis.

Data were collected using an online questionnaire distributed via social media and online groups. The questionnaire consisted of three main sections: the first section included demographic data of the respondents, the second assessed their exposure to viral AI news, and the third measured their perceptions or views regarding the existence and impact of AI. Each statement in the questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree". Additionally, secondary data were obtained through content observation of viral AI-related news on digital and social media platforms over the past six months.

In this study, the independent variable is the virality of AI news, defined as the extent of public dissemination and engagement with AI-related content, measured through frequency of exposure, number of shares, comments, and other forms of engagement. The dependent variable is public perception, which refers to the public's attitudes or viewpoints toward AI, whether positive (e.g., expectations of technological efficiency) or negative (e.g., concerns over job loss or privacy threats).

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to describe the characteristics of the respondents and general trends in their responses. Subsequently, inferential analysis was conducted using the Pearson correlation

test and simple linear regression analysis to determine the extent to which the virality of AI news influences public perception. The data analysis process was assisted by statistical software such as SPSS.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Overview of Respondents

This study involved 150 respondents from various regions of Indonesia, including both urban and semi-urban areas. The questionnaire was distributed online via social media and digital platforms, allowing access to respondents from diverse geographical backgrounds. The number of respondents is considered sufficiently representative to provide an initial overview of how the public responds to news related to Artificial Intelligence (AI), especially news that spreads virally on social media.

Based on demographic data, 58% of respondents were aged between 20 and 35, a group generally considered to be digitally native and highly active in using technology in their daily lives. Respondents aged 17–19 accounted for 20%, while the remaining 22% were aged over 36. This age distribution shows that the respondents come from groups with substantial exposure to technology and broad access to digital information. In terms of gender, the distribution was relatively balanced: 55% male and 45% female. This balance is important to ensure that the perception data analyzed is not biased toward one gender, as different experiences, habits, and ways of accessing information between men and women may lead to varied interpretations of viral AI news.

Regarding occupational background, the majority of respondents were university students and office workers (70%). This group is considered to have relatively high digital literacy and actively engages in technology use and information consumption via digital platforms. Their high activity in the digital space makes them more likely to be exposed to viral AI-related news content. When it comes to social media usage, respondents demonstrated high engagement across popular platforms. About 80% actively use Instagram, followed by TikTok at 65%, and YouTube at 60%. Additionally, 40% reported using X (formerly Twitter) as one of their information sources. This high level of social media activity indicates a strong likelihood that the majority of respondents are frequently exposed to viral AI-related news. Thus, the characteristics of the respondents support the relevance of the data collected in assessing the relationship between news virality and public perception of AI.

Furthermore, the demographic diversity within this representative sample allows for a nuanced analysis of how virality's influence might vary. The significant representation across key age brackets (17-19, 20-35, 36+) enables exploration of whether younger, perhaps more impressionable users, process viral AI news differently than older cohorts with potentially more established views or life experience. The balanced gender distribution (55% male, 45% female) is crucial for examining potential gender-based differences in how viral narratives about AI, which might touch on topics like job displacement, ethical dilemmas, or future applications, are received and integrated into existing perceptions. Occupational background also acts as a potential mediator; students might engage with viral AI news concerning education and future careers, while office workers might be more attuned to virality around automation and workplace transformation. Therefore, this respondent profile doesn't just describe who was studied; it provides the essential variables to dissect for whom and under what demographic conditions the virality of AI news exerts the strongest influence on shaping or altering public understanding and attitudes in Indonesia during 2025.

While 150 respondents provide a solid foundation for an initial overview, its particular strength for this study lies in its focus on the demographics most actively participating in the ecosystems where news virality occurs. By targeting urban and semi-urban Indonesians who are frequent users of the primary viral content platforms (Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, X), the research captures the perceptions of those most likely to be exposed to and engage with viral AI news. This targeted representativeness is arguably more relevant for studying the impact of virality than a larger, but more passively digital, sample would be. Their collective profile – young, tech-engaged, socially active online – defines a significant segment of the Indonesian public whose perceptions are actively being formed and influenced by the dynamic, algorithm-driven spread of AI information in 2025.

3.2 Level of AI News Virality

Based on the questionnaire results, 86% of respondents stated that they had frequently encountered news or content discussing Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the past three months. The most frequently encountered topics included:

- The potential for AI to replace human jobs (72%)
- Developments in AI such as ChatGPT, Sora, and MidJourney (65%)
- Ethical issues and dangers related to AI (60%)
- AI innovations in education and business (45%)

The data reveals a high level of exposure to AI-related news among Indonesian respondents, confirming its significant virality. A substantial 86% reported frequently encountering such content, with 78% specifically receiving it more than twice per week. This pervasive exposure permeates their daily digital experience, forming the fundamental mechanism through which virality influences perception. The sheer volume and repetition of AI messages, particularly on engagement-optimized platforms like TikTok and Instagram, create a powerful availability heuristic. This constant feed dominance leads the public to assign greater significance and immediacy to AI, shaping their understanding of its societal role.

Crucially, virality in 2025 involves active participation, not just passive consumption. About 63% of respondents stated they shared or commented on AI news, especially when it contained alarming or controversial elements. This engagement further amplifies the effect of exposure. Sharing extends the content's reach, fueling its virality, while also reinforcing the individual's own perception through social validation and repeated exposure, embedding specific narratives more deeply into the collective consciousness. This interactivity transforms virality from mere visibility into a social experience that actively co-constructs perception – users sharing alarming predictions signal agreement, seek confirmation, and collectively build shared narratives of risk.

The specific topics achieving the highest virality reveal the dominant narratives actively molding public perception: job displacement (72%), AI breakthroughs (65%), and ethical risks (60%). The overwhelming prominence of the alarming job replacement discourse strongly suggests it is a primary driver of public anxiety and negative perceptions. Conversely, the virality of breakthroughs fuels fascination and optimism, creating a tension in attitudes. The significant traction of ethical concerns indicates these fears are mainstream considerations impacting trustworthiness assessments. Crucially, the lower virality of *positive applications in education/business (45%)* highlights how nuanced or solution-oriented narratives struggle to compete with sensational or fear-based content in the viral economy. This imbalance potentially skews public perception towards viewing AI through a lens of either extraordinary promise or existential threat, rather than balanced integration.

Platform algorithms favoring emotionally charged or controversial content act as accelerants, ensuring the most provocative AI stories achieve the widest reach and deepest penetration. Consequently, public perception in Indonesia is being formed not just by the fact of AI development, but significantly by the selective amplification and social reinforcement of specific, often polarizing, aspects of that development through viral channels. This creates a powerful feedback loop where virality dictates which AI facets are most salient in the public mind, directly influencing overall attitudes and concerns.

3.3 Public Perception of Artificial Intelligence

To measure public perception, respondents were presented with a series of statements about AI and asked to indicate their level of agreement. The findings showed that public perception of AI tends to be ambivalent, containing a mix of enthusiasm and concern:

- 71% felt that AI has the potential to improve work efficiency.
- 65% expressed enthusiasm for AI developments in education, business, and entertainment.
- However, 60% were concerned about job loss due to automation.
- 52% questioned the clarity of government regulation on AI use in Indonesia.
- 46% felt that AI-related news on social media tends to be fear-inducing or sensational.

These findings indicate that public perception is neither entirely negative nor positive, but is largely influenced by the narratives presented in the news content they consume.

The ambivalent public perception revealed in section (c) – a blend of optimism (71% seeing efficiency gains, 65% enthusiastic about developments) and profound anxiety (60% fearing job loss, 52% doubting regulations, 46% noting sensationalism) – is not merely coincidental but demonstrably shaped by the dynamics of news virality identified earlier. The significant positive correlation ($r = 0.487$, $p = 0.000$) confirms that higher exposure to viral AI news directly intensifies individuals' perceptions, regardless of valence. This means virality acts as an amplifier: it makes existing positive views (e.g., excitement about innovation) stronger and deepens existing concerns (e.g., fear of unemployment or ethical risks). The dominance of negative/controversial themes within the most viral content (job loss, dangers) explains why the amplified perception often manifests as heightened skepticism and anxiety, even alongside recognition of AI's potential. The public's own awareness that AI news is often "fear-inducing or sensational" (46%) highlights a critical meta-perception, yet the correlation shows this awareness doesn't fully inoculate them against its influence.

3.4 Correlation Between News Virality and Public Perception

Statistical analysis confirms a significant and substantive relationship between exposure to viral AI news and public perception in Indonesia. Pearson correlation analysis revealed a positive and significant correlation between AI news exposure scores and public perception scores ($r = 0.487$, $p = 0.000$). This indicates that individuals with higher exposure to viral AI news tend to develop stronger perceptions about the technology, whether those perceptions lean positive or negative. The direction of perception, however, is heavily influenced by the tone and framing of the dominant viral narratives. When negative or controversial themes prevail, heightened exposure correlates with increased public skepticism and anxiety.

Further quantifying this influence, simple linear regression analysis showed that differential exposure to viral AI news accounts for 23.7% of the variation in public perception ($R^2 = 0.237$). While other factors certainly contribute, this substantial share underscores virality's role as a powerful, selective filter shaping understanding. The viral ecosystem, driven by engagement-optimizing algorithms and users' own tendencies to share alarming content (63%), systematically elevates specific narratives – such as job displacement threats (72%), breakthrough hype (65%), and ethical scandals (60%) – while underrepresenting others, like practical innovations in sectors like education and business (45%). Consequently, public perception is disproportionately molded by these amplified, often polarized narratives. The lack of virality surrounding topics like robust regulatory frameworks or successful, non-disruptive AI

integration likely fuels perceptions of governmental inadequacy (52% questioned regulatory clarity) and allows fears to overshadow positive applications.

These findings demonstrate that the virality of AI news is a distinct and significant force actively constructing the cognitive and emotional framework through which the Indonesian public understands and evaluates AI in 2025. It moves beyond mere awareness. Individuals immersed in the viral information flow develop stronger, more defined attitudes, but these attitudes are contingent on the content that achieves virality. The current dominance of alarming and controversial narratives within this space directly contributes to the prevailing undercurrent of anxiety and skepticism observed alongside acknowledged potential. This "virality effect" has tangible societal consequences: it influences consumer acceptance of AI products, shapes political pressure for regulation (or bans), impacts workforce preparedness, and ultimately affects the pace and nature of AI adoption within Indonesia. Understanding this dynamic is therefore essential for policymakers, educators, AI developers, and media practitioners seeking to foster a more informed and balanced public discourse.

4. DISCUSSION

This study firmly establishes a significant connection between exposure to viral AI news and public perception in Indonesia, aligning with core media effects theories. Agenda-setting theory explains how the media's emphasis on specific topics, like AI job displacement or breakthroughs, influences what the public deems important. Framing theory further clarifies how the presentation of these topics through alarming headlines versus balanced technical explanations shapes the audience's perspective. Crucially, the findings demonstrate that social media virality acts as a powerful amplifier of these traditional media effects. The mechanisms of virality algorithmic promotion on dominant platforms like TikTok and Instagram, rapid sharing driven by emotional resonance (especially fear or controversy), and the creation of ubiquitous "buzz" transform agenda-setting and framing into near-real-time processes. The exceptionally high exposure (86% frequent encounters) and engagement rates (63% sharing/commenting) create an environment where specific AI agendas and frames become deeply entrenched before critical reflection or alternative sourcing can occur. Quantitative evidence (correlation $r=0.487$, regression $R^2=0.237$) confirms that the sheer velocity and volume of viral content significantly intensify its influence on public understanding.

This dynamic creates a critical challenge: the "virality trap." Viral algorithms inherently favor extreme, emotionally charged, or simplistic content. Consequently, alarming narratives like "job loss apocalypses" (72% exposure) and ethical scare stories achieve disproportionate reach and engagement, while nuanced discussions of positive applications (45% exposure) or adaptation strategies struggle. As Nurhayati (2023) supports, public perception of AI is thus largely shaped by these media narratives before direct experience, making it vulnerable to bias, exaggeration, or incompleteness. The correlation shows that the most viral content shapes perception most strongly, often leading to polarized views (stronger optimism or deepening anxiety) rather than the observed surface ambivalence, despite 46% of respondents recognizing the sensationalism. Furthermore, virality shapes not only perceptions of AI itself but also perceptions of societal governance. The dominance of risk narratives without proportionate coverage of mitigation efforts or regulatory progress fosters a perception of governmental inadequacy (reinforcing the 52% who questioned regulatory clarity), eroding trust, and creating a feedback loop that fuels further anxiety and sharing of alarming content.

Despite these challenges, underlying public enthusiasm for AI's potential persists, indicating a fundamental openness to innovation contingent on understanding benefits and ethical assurance. Addressing the virality trap and its societal implications, therefore, demands a multi-faceted approach focused on cultivating "constructive virality":

Policymakers & Educators: Must proactively develop compelling, shareable content (for platforms like TikTok Reels, Instagram, YouTube Shorts) that highlights AI opportunities, ethical guidelines, adaptation strategies, and regulatory progress to counterbalance alarmist narratives.

- Media & Content Creators: Have a moral responsibility to prioritize objectivity and balance over sensationalism in tech reporting, moving beyond the sole pursuit of engagement metrics. Platforms should explore incentives (e.g., "virality badges" for credible sources, algorithm adjustments favoring well-sourced journalism) to promote responsible virality.

- Digital Literacy Programs: Must evolve beyond basic skills to include critical understanding of algorithmic promotion and emotional triggers driving virality, empowering the public to recognize manipulative frames and assess technological information critically.
- The goal is not to eliminate virality, but to reshape the information ecosystem. By harnessing the power of virality for balanced, educational, and transparent content, stakeholders can align public perception in Indonesia with the complex reality of AI's transformative potential, fostering constructive outcomes and informed societal adaptation in 2025 and beyond.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the virality of news related to Artificial Intelligence (AI) has a significant influence on public perception in Indonesia in 2025. The high frequency of exposure to AI news,

particularly those with sensational or controversial tones, has been shown to shape public views that are ambivalent, balancing between enthusiasm for innovation and concerns over negative impacts such as job displacement or unclear regulations. These findings highlight the importance of balanced information dissemination and the need to enhance digital literacy so that the public can understand and respond to technological developments in a critical and rational manner.

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