Fake News During the COVID-19

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Abstract. In recent years, the COVID-19 pandemic has been going viral world-wide; in the meantime, there is also more and more fake news being made by people every day. In this paper, we mainly discuss what caused these phenomena to happen. Furthermore, this work will study the negative effect of this fake news.

Keywords: COVID-19 · fake news · social media

1 Introduction

In the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak, the global epidemic of COVID-19 has strained everyone's nerves. All people on earth are susceptible to "Novel Coronavirus." There is a lot of misinformation about the epidemic spreading on the Internet, which increases public panic and is not conducive to the control of the epidemic [1].

Error messages include many aspects. For example, there have been rumors of novel Coronavirus treatment and former US President Donald Trump's claim that people can drink a disinfectant to treat COVID-19. This is very harmful to people's health, and people may be injured or even killed if they believe this kind of false information. Some false news also causes panic, such as COVID-19 patients have been to xx supermarket, XX cinema. Facebook offers a tip for disinfecting masks: Microwave them for three minutes. The suggestion was widely circulated in the US, with New Hampshire's fire chief calling it "a terrible idea" in a Facebook post and urging people to stop [2].

The spread of misleading information about the virus has led the World Health Organization (WHO) to warn of an ongoing "infodemic" or an overabundance. (World Health Organization, 2020b; Zarocostas, 2020). Because social media is a reliable tool for spreading unfiltered content (https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aao2998), unfiltered information or news is misleading and tends to skew public feedback. Information is everything in our current society today. We are living in the so-called information society' (Manuel castells,2010).

Therefore, through a theoretical framework, a conceptual and analytical approach, combined with a scientific methodological inquiry [3, 5]. We will discuss why there is so much fake news during the pandemic and try to find out how to identify fake news, know more about the negative impacts of fake news, and reduce the spread of fake news on social media.

We use Google Scholar as our primary source of literature database for the methods. Search keywords: Fake news, social media, Covid 19 [6–9].

2 Characteristics and Example

What is fake news? What are the types of fake news? Fake news is false or misleading information presented as news. Claire Wardle has defined seven types of fake news: satire or parody, faulty connection, misleading content, wrong context, impostor content, manipulated content, and fabricated content. (Claire Wardle, 2017) These definitions and types are based on two dimensions: levels of facticity and deception [10].

So, what are some of the unverified news stories during the pandemic? From the beginning, at the height of the outbreak, it was not clear what caused the coronavirus. But some media outlets have begun to report that the coronavirus outbreak is caused by humans eating wild animals -- bats. Most people believe this because it seems so reasonable. "Indeed, bats were linked to a few highly pathogenic human diseases, supporting this hypothesis. Some of these well-characterized bat viruses, including Rabies virus, henipaviruses, CoVs, and filoviruses, pose a great threat to human health." (Yi Fan, 2019). It is a fact that bats host many viruses, but this news has never been proven to cause COVID-19 [11].

In the face of COVID-19, some places have resorted to herd immunity. "Herd immunity," as a concept in immunology, is used to describe the resistance to spreading a contagious disease within a population or herd. (Topley and Wilson, 1923) Historically, there have been viruses that have been eradicated by herd immunity, such as smallpox and rinderpest. However, many people spontaneously implement herd immunity without scientific confirmation and deliberately infect the novel coronavirus, such as gathering large numbers of people and going out without wearing masks. The result is also clear: herd immunity is not working in the face of COVID-19. Instead, the number of infections soared [12].

3 Causes of False News in the Context of New Media

First, from the perspective of communication subjects, news and information transmission patterns have undergone significant changes under the current background of new media. Due to the popularization of internet technology. New media and "we media" communities and platforms have emerged in an endless stream, providing diversified communication subjects and channels for information, changing the pattern that audiences could only receive information from traditional mainstream media in the past [13]. In the era of conventional mass communication, traditional mainstream media is an important medium to publicize the party's line, principles, and policies, unidirectional in touch. In the Internet era, the audience can freely choose the communication subjects and channels suitable for their reading habits or preferences. However, the low threshold of information transmission and speech expression of some media, especially new media, is one of the reasons for the emergence of false news. For example, the blind pursuit of timeliness. Under the background of the information explosion, releasing news information for the first time has become a magic weapon for some news media to win in the competition. However, while pursuing timeliness, they sacrifice the authenticity of news at the cost of quickly releasing information without verifying the authenticity other example is the profit-seeking psychology of the news media. Under increasingly

fierce competition among various media, some news media or news practitioners, driven by interests, adopt or even fabricate fake news to obtain an "eyeball economy."

Second, from the perspective of communication objects, news and information transmission patterns have undergone significant changes. At the same time, the audience has changed from passively receiving news and information to being able to select the information they need and release information through "we media." In this era of"all journalists," "everyone has a microphone" makes user-generated news occupy an important position in the traditional news production mode [14]. User-generated news does have irreplaceable advantages in improving news timeliness and gathering materials, but it lacks specific supervision. User production is prone to rationality and uncertainty in information sources, time, place, and explicit content. Anonymity is a significant feature of the internet; Internet users in the Internet society are prone to weaken self-control and to gain attention; some netizens will create false news and information, but also because the network real-name system development is not mature, the relevant departments to the lack of regulation, the comments by netizens make false news, such as the exhibition time "celebrity death" of events occurring in the network.

Thirdly, Social Media Literacy (SML) can be defined as a particular set of practical, intellectual, and emotional abilities required for social media users to create content or detect fake news posts (Robin Mansell, 2015). Why can't people identify this fake news? I think one of the reasons is the decline in SML. The study proves that stressful quarantined people adopt irrational, spontaneous reactions in sharing false information without paying much attention to their accuracy [1]. Similarly, when people see fake news during quarantine periods, they overreact and exacerbate their panic. When they are stressed, they don't have the patience to recognize whether the information is true or false [15].

During the pandemic, many people could only stay at home in isolation, doing nothing, and their online time increased significantly. Literacy is vital for the new generation of digital content consumers who spend most of their daily surfing online. For most of this new cohort, digital life has replaced the real world with its face-to-face conflicts, constraints, and pleasures. Therefore, we must improve the media literacy of netizens. Some media literate people can post comments or articles in the comments section to help others identify fake news.

4   The Negative Impact Caused by False News

First, fake news means that it does not respect the laws of news dissemination. Truth is not only the life of information but also the essence of information. If we don't respect the truth of the information, we don't respect the law of news communication, so we can't do the work of news theory well. The Party Central Committee has permanently attached great importance to the news on the Work; General Secretary Xi Jinping February19.2016 news on the work conference on the importance of the information on the Olympics mentioned a matter of governance, the height of the country, the formation of the information on the work of the "event view". Stressed the information on the responsibility and mission of the work. Authenticity is the cornerstone of news reporting and

the untouchable bottom line in socialist journalism.[2] As with a building, if the foundation is not strong, the building will collapse. And once news reports lose authenticity, news on the work to adhere to the party, the people will be all in vain [16].

Secondly, the spread of fake news during the pandemic is not conducive to epidemic prevention and control. The premise of preventing the rebound of the epidemic is to report truthfully, report truthfully, obeys arrangements, and obey authority. While concealing the epidemic is to leave the epidemic prevention requirements behind. If the abnormal situation is covered, it will cause the illusion of "the epidemic is far away from me" to the public, making the public neglect to take precautions. Meanwhile, it is not conducive to the development of information flow. Concealing the itinerary and reporting the epidemic will keep the people in the dark, detrimental to epidemic prevention [17].

Thirdly, fake news can easily lead to misjudgments, more seriously for society, that even impact social stability. Especially for some significant events, disaster events, and national policy adjustments to do false propaganda, it is easy to cause social panic and disrupt the regular social order. For example, in 2011, the nuclear radiation caused by the Earthquake in Japan caused seawater pollution and sea salt pollution, and the online media in China appeared to have false information that China's salt resources were also polluted, which caused Chinese people to scramble for salt frantically and once caused social panic.

Fourthly, false news will reduce the authority of public power departments. If rumors are not clarified in time, they can become erroneous, forming conspiracy theories and eventually reaching uncontrollable levels. When the influence of words is too significant, the government's voice is bound to be weakened, increasing the public's distrust of the government and reducing the authority of the public administration in the public mind. When dealing with rumors, the public authorities adhere to the principle of being responsible for the truth and adopt the method of investigation first and announcement later. However, Weibo, WeChat, Zhihu., Douban, and other contents are mixed with various interfering information, which will increase the difficulty of refuting rumors and prolong the time of denying rumors.[3]

5 Conclusion

In conclusion, we need to improve our ability to recognize fake news. When we find the situation about drawing up epidemic information or spreading fake news, we can take these measures appropriately. First, strengthen our legal awareness and bring more participation in the publicity of the law through WeChat, radio, and other forms to do advertising for social residents or netizens. Second, report the illegal behavior of fabricating or spreading false information promptly. In short, truth is a cornerstone and the life of news; it is the basic principle followed by the work of news theory. False news is the disease of the news work. The attack and prevention of false news is a heavy and long way to go; it needs news on the workers' efforts and needs the support of the whole society to maintain and promote the development of news public opinion toward a benign direction.

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