



Report On

**The Pandemic Infodemic: Navigating and Combating
Disinformation on Social Media**

By

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Submitted To:

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The Pandemic Infodemic: Navigating and Combating Disinformation on Social Media

Application for Approval of Dissertation

Dr. Towfique E Elahi

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Subject: Application for submission of my dissertation for approval

Dear Sir,

I have accomplished my dissertation **The Pandemic Infodemic: Navigating and Combating Disinformation on Social Media** as a course requirement for my under-graduate programme.

I have tried my best to put my work with honesty to cover all facets about the subject which I have been given.

I believe that this dissertation has inflamed both my information and my involvement. I hope you will assess my report seeing the limitation of the study. I shall be very obliged if you kindly receive my project. Your kind approval is requested

Sincerely

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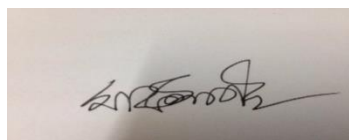
Faculty of Humanities and Social Science

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Letter of Approval

This is to certify that **Raida Tasnim Islam** with identity number: **163-24-580** has done her Bachelor project titled, ‘**The Pandemic Infodemic: Navigating and Combating Disinformation on Social Media**’ under my supervision and guidance. The study has been undertaken in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Social Science (BSS) in Journalism and Mass Communication at Daffodil International University

The study is expected to enrich research materials in the field of Journalism and Mass Communication and in future studies related to media campaigns.



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Last but not the least, I must express my very profound gratitude to my parents and to my friends Chelsy Veronika Rema, Nahida Akther Upoma for unfailing support, space and encouragement throughout my study and through the process of researching and writing this project. This accomplishment would not have been possible without them.



Declaration

I hereby declare that this report entitled as **The Pandemic Infodemic: Navigating and Combating Disinformation On Social Media** has been carried out under the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science, Daffodil International University in accomplishment of the requirement for the Degree of Bachelor's in Social Science. I have collected this project based on the researcher's findings from various literature, internet findings to the best of my acquaintance and belief original and the result of my study. This has not been submitted in part or full to any other institutions for any other degrees. I even certify that there is no plagiarized content in this dissertation paper.

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Abstract

The widespread broadcast of misinformation in social media platform has recently acknowledged a lot of attention in abstract and general way. While the problem of fabrication in social media has been intensively studied, there are seemingly different definitions of this problem. This project examines the misinformation delusion on social media specifically in a pandemic time. For this purpose, a survey was made for this and participated around 10-15 people and shared their thought. Data and other information taken from the internet, research, articles etc. In this survey, the main aim was to consolidate the observation and investigate the optimal views of participated audience.

Firstly, introduced the misinformation menu fracture of how the small things become viral within minute, as people are using social media a lot, they do dependent in this particular media platform. And the discussed the problem of having in mind of misinformation can create a havoc to a knowledge part, because COVID-19 is the currently most sensitive topic, people's emotions are mixed with this, but having said that the misinformation are crating the draft to getting the real information. In this way the social media users, readers and audience as well as the social life also getting affected.

Contents	
Application for Approval of Dissertation	iii
Letter of Approval	iv
Acknowledgment	v
Declaration	vi
Abstract	vii
Chapter One	1-7
Introduction:	2
Aims and objective:	4
Research Question	5
Chapter Two:	8-19
Literature Review	9
Data Analysis:.....	15
Chapter Three	20-23
Result.....	21
References	22

Chapter One

Introduction:

Fake news or hoax news or disinformation, there's a lot more ways to call this subject which can mislead the readers' way. Fake news or disinformation is a form of consisting deliberate news or information spread via traditional news media or now days ongoing hype 'Social Media'.

So, what is social media and how does it play to misleading the news? Well, Social media is a digital platform like Facebook, twitter, YouTube etc. An interactive computer mediated technology that carry creation of sharing of information, ideas, creativities, career interest and much more. It's a network eventually which connects all human beings to into one. That's the real motto of being of Social media, gather the human beings for the information and share. But how does it mislead? It's an idea that creates a hub of news like the real news so that people cannot identifies the between 'Real or Fake'. It's a foil play among people to people. If a social user reading about a news or information, it is likely he/she will believe the news, he/she would not bother to justify the information whether it's a real information that he/she having or it's a fake. Then he/she likely to share the information so that others can see then others would do the same. That's how the social media does play the mislead game.

It's come from one way, spread from any one media or people then within of minutes gets spread to thousands of people.

Misinformation on social media is not a new problem as in 2020 but we never felt the impact so strongly as in 2020. 2020 is officially declared as pandemic year because of 'CORONAVIRUS'. A virus which birth from china now leading to the whole nation and created the havoc into people's lives. WHO (World health organization) officially declared this virus is as pandemic? This year misinformation has contributed to the death of thousands from coronavirus, the problem of combating incorrect health advice has seemed insurmountable. Misinformation, fake news, disinformation whatever we called it, this is the main topic, main subject of this project to discuss. How much an information could create the scene into lives, that's the main discussion of here. As we use the social media as our main media to be connected, to talk and to share, how an information on social media as disinformation does then spreads it to the brain like virus. That's the same game has played with Coronavirus. As we know, Coronavirus can be deadly but it can be stay away if human beings take some precautions. But it's not possible to go and tell every house about the

precautions that should take and shouldn't take. So, we use the media to as our book to get the knowledge, but what would be result if we know the news and maintain the rules but later comes out as a fake news or disinformation. Like, Coronavirus spreads from a mosquito bite, when coronavirus rises, some media took the social media to tell that coronavirus does spread from a mosquito bite. But no, it's a false information that created a havoc to people's brain, because stopping mosquito it's an impossible job. Later on, because coronavirus birth country is China, some local media published that it started because Wuhan (city of China) eat bat, dog meat, pig's meat, fry cockroaches, this might cause of the rises of this virus. After hearing or reading this information people took the social media (Facebook, twitter, YouTube) and lashes out to the unknown people, they raised voice to ban Wuhan and its people without knowing the real reason. But later on, after doctors' effect and research on this virus, they told to the world that this virus surely is deadly and it does not spread from such things but with touches of people to people, cough etc. See the difference here, a simple information became such big and reached out to the thousands within minutes with the help of social media and created the place of misinformation that nobody took the risk of investigation, people thought that this information is right and we should share it as much as we can and aware others but they didn't think the result that what it would be the result. In this matter media like broadcasting, newscast played with only minimal information. Social media has always been the platform of discussing, sharing the news with one to others. Every coin has a double part, so does social media, if it does carry an authentic news, so it's possible to carry fake news as well. During this time of pandemic, surely social media played an important role. But social media also created the way of spreading the fake news, misleading the information as well. It is no wonderer that having a social media platform we as an audience are getting the benefits but on the other note the spreading of misinformation especially with a sensitive topic that leading us for an unknown situation. A lot of people specifically from rural area, who are not users of social media, the does hear what others say in that way it possible the misinformation are spreading into their brains and not getting exactly the benefit that they deserve. So, in a way and out misinformation is negative fact that getting larger day by day and spreading the bad interaction.

We are in what some have called the second information revolution The first information

revolution began with the spread of the written word through the press. Now, in this second information revolution, a digital transformation is shaping how citizens around the world interact with each other. We are facing an unprecedented global expansion in the ways we share, access and create information that is presented in many forms—one of which is social media.

Disinformation, Health and Social Media In a globalized world, the spread of hoax content on health-related topics in social media and the customs in which it binges have lately been discussed in depth Misinformation and disinformation—misinformation as wrongness and errors and disinformation as a untruth created on determination and the spread of it by malicious individuals (human or bots)—gain thrust from the wish to find an answer to a precise ailment or illness by - COVID-19 patients or their relatives, who unintentionally contribute to spreading misleading information.

Aims and objective:

The aims and objectives of the research is as follows:

- ❖ To find out the misleading information in relation to Covid-19 in various Social Media
- ❖ To understand how does disinformation impact the social media users.
- ❖ To understand how such misinformation has been disseminated widely in social media.
- ❖ To raise awareness about crosschecking necessities about disinformation
- ❖ To understand the importance of transparency among social media and users.

Research Question

The projects examine the following research question:

- ❖ How and to what extent disinformation about Corona pandemic has been flooded in social media?
- ❖ What is the impact of such disinformation on social media users?
- ❖ How covid-19 news misguiding psychologically?
- ❖ Research on the interfere between human and animal touch
- ❖ What are the environmental factors? which have a detectable effect on the transmission of the virus?

Methodology:

The research has followed a survey method. A structured online questionnaire was developed to conduct the research, and some random oral interview to conclude the methodology of pandemic Infodemic. This methodology also concluded by several online research papers, interviews and opinions of experts.

As the topic of this project is based on misinformation and how its affecting people's mind. The title of this project called The Pandemic Infodemic: Navigating and Combating Disinformation on Social Media. The main core intention of this project is to find audience reaction about the misinformation, how they are getting affected. The area I am focusing is currently ongoing pandemic situation COVID-19. As this evolve with people's emotions because as per current amount 719k approx. and the quantity is going day by day. Behind reason of choosing this subject to identify the causes of how people getting affected by a simple information.

On March 11th, 2020, WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom officially characterized the spread of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) as a pandemic. COVID-19 is a respiratory illness/infectious disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2).

Globally, the narratives of misinformation are dominated by personal, negative, and opinionated tones, which often induce fear, anxiety, and distrust of institutions. A recent study that analyzed the credibility of sources publishing articles online that may reach global audiences concludes that for the specific case of online health information and content on social media, people are more concerned about the veracity and credibility of the information source and tend to spread less misinformation about health. One possible explanation given by the authors is that people generally do not read health information for entertainment but rather search for information.

Documentation of Social Media Interactions as Key to Spreading or Combating of disinformation. Social interaction appears to be the main technique of understanding how disinformation or mislead spreads over social media. Diverse studies have been led to classify by who and how

Covid-19 disinformation gratified is sponsored in social media. In the case of Twitter, different types of malevolent actors covering both automated accounts and human users, mainly trolls, have been recognized. It is very difficult to detect whether there is a human or a bot behind a profile. However, all of them produce distorting effects that may be critical to messages from public health systems.

Social Media	Keyword	Data Collected
Twitter	Misinformation, Hoax Misleaders Covid-19	12,965 tweets 200 tweets 4052 tweets
Facebook		100 posts per day and 10,118 corresponding comments 3000 posts over the month and corresponding 20958 comments
YouTube	Vlog, personal experience Hoax	Uncountable videos

Chapter Two:

Literature Review

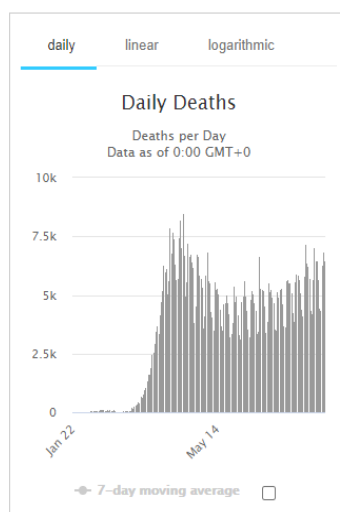
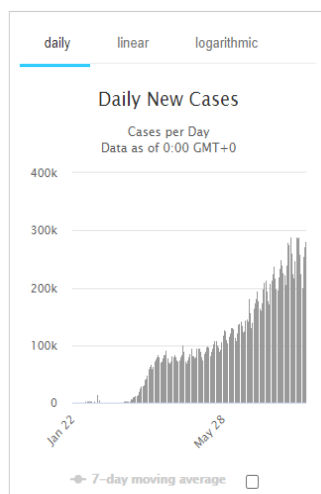
The period info is defined by the Oxford dictionary as facts as long as or learned about something or someone. The other forms of information are defined by Oxford dictionary as under:

- Misinformation is false or inaccurate information, especially that which is deliberately intended to deceive.
- Disinformation is false information that is intended to mislead, especially propaganda issued by a government organization to a rival power or the media.
- Propaganda is defined as information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote a political cause or point of view.

The three explanations have small changes and the most significant fact is they involve the propagation of false information with the intention and capability to mislead at least some of the users.

Coronavirus or scientifically known as COVID-19, has been on the news, media platform and also the other site since March of 2020. So, what is Covid-19 actually? Covid-19 is the disease that caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus. The first corona activate cases were found in march 2020 and since then the cases are upgrading day by day. It's been already over the 6 months and the cases trolled up to 2 lakhs in the Bangladesh and the death case over 3 thousand. In the modern, 21st century era, worldwide are facing a pandemic, where everything is so reachable in this time. Researchers, doctors and other scientists are always on the edge to find the cure of any disease or problem, it is the time that anything can be possibly done in the meantime. But after reaching into the 6 months, researchers, scientists are facing the failure to find the accurate cure of COVID-19.

This time period has taught to world that anything can be done but not everything. During this period, social media has become the main platform getting the news about covid-19 or coronavirus. But every coin has 2 parts, so as social media. Where social media is trying to pull every string to deliver the information to every possible human being, on the other hand the misinformation also arise. As per this project, my core intention to find the misinformation that brings problem



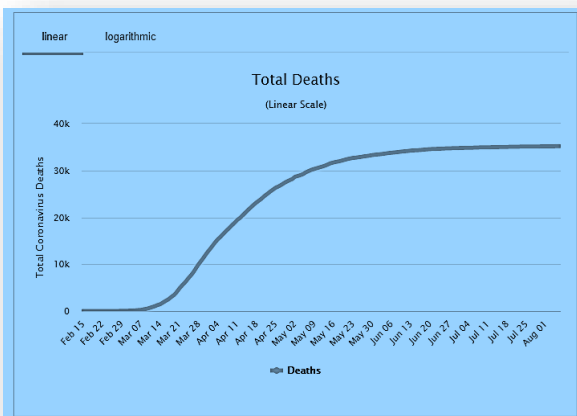
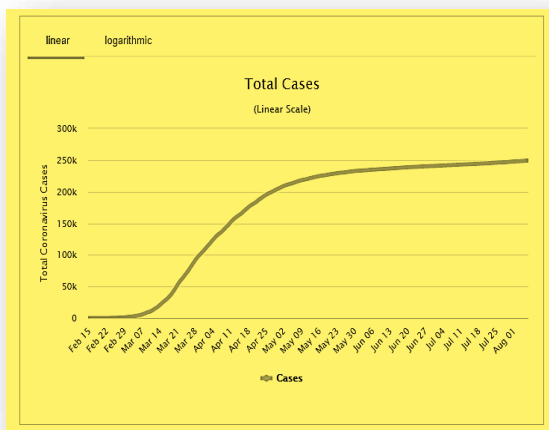
knowledge breaks into human brains. Misinformation is such a negative phrase that can easily attract people and it made with such possibility that sometimes it become impossible the real color of false news and true news. As per Statista, estimated 3.6 billion people are now using social media, so the measured could be one information can reach out to the millions of people within hours of day. Since the march, the covid-19 came into human interaction, a lot of scam used the subject to spread misinformation, which affected really bad until the organization like WHO (World Health Organization) stepped up to the news so that people can be aware of the real threats ongoing. After that, people started to acknowledge the difference between an information and a misinformation.

Before going to the further discussion, let's take a moment to know the background story of this coronavirus, shortly known as COVID-19. On December, 2019, China reported to WHO that people of living in Wuhan are facing pneumonia with unknown reasons, after days of speculation with this unknown reason that people are facing unwillingly, doctors of Wuhan, China were on the edge to find the reason of the unnamed causes. On the start of 2020, Doctors reported

that to WHO and warned about the aftermath of the result. This virus can be deadly and can be spread into human beings within seconds. It is impossible to find how and where the virus in injecting into human bodies. After month of preparation about this case as deaths were unstoppable, China had to create a full pledged hospital within 10 days so that people can take medication and cured, WHO finally reveled to world this VIRUS as COVID-19 and declared world is in stake of deadly virus. It's a pandemic. Over this course, within in a week, affected cases were uploading very fast and so as the deaths. Government urges to people stay in the home to avoid the human interaction and thus called it an Isolation. Every way of transport in city like buses, cars, bikes were stopped to roaming and even international flights were stopped their services. Countries workers, shops, departments were shut down to just prevent the virus. People started to loosing job as well as losing the life to the virus. Everyday become the new challenge to lead the lives. Most Country like Italy were the one of affected and death cases. Everyday people were

losing lives like 7 to 10 thousand. And like up to 15 to 20 thousand of people were affecting daily by this virus. It was not less than a massacre

If we see the internet the upgrading charts of COVID-19 cases, we can relate to the fact of living in the 21st century of pandemic facing. Social media are on excite level to this pandemic situation, millions of people are sharing their side of story in every bit that how they are observing the situation. Doctors and nurses were and are giving their services nonstop.



These two photos are the chart of according (<https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/italy/>) to this website of Italy's total cases and deaths till now and as we can measure by watching both photos how the cases and deaths were

trolled up day by day. In the middle of this everything media were facing the fake news scam every day. Many social scam frauds took the advantages of this pandemic and try to spread the information, because social media is the easiest way to reach people, so they choose the social platform like Facebook, twitter, YouTube and others. The scam was that this virus is nothing but just rumor, governments wants to dominate the people etc. People without any judge mentality started believing the information and started to share what they believe is correct.

People started even video by non-accurate things about government, about coronavirus. These things were affecting people's brain who are less believer with no eyes of questioning. There is no space of question that Social media has been the biggest evolution of 21st century, but as I said before even every coin has two parts. Millions of news are getting shared but the misinformation is playing its cards. If a simple knowledge could make your brain subtract then a simple misinformation could drag human brain into out of nowhere.

There's a lot of definition of misinformation and it can be spread in a various way. A misinformation could be a spam, a rumor (verified, unverified) and fake news. As per academic source, misinformation largely hints to the fake or inaccurate news. The key line is whether the information created deliberately or it's an intentional case, like in starting of 2020, when COVID-19 are approaching slowly to the media, some users believed that this virus was intentionally spread to threat the human being. And this news was published with capital word in some local news chain of Wuhan. But this is not true information. Second, it took like minutes to spread this information because China are habituated of eating insects, bat etc. The virus could spread from that. So, ban that part of people who are responsible for the virus and people are suffering, as we see, it is also a fake or disinformation that people could reach out within minutes and believed the fact without and clarification or justification. Let's discuss the section of how the misinformation spread through media to human's brain.

- Purposely Spread Misinformation
 - Some information does spread as purposely to provoke the users. There are usually writers and synchronized groups of spreaders behind the scam
- Urban legend
 - Urban legends are purposefully spread the fabrication that is related only for entrainment

- Unconfirmed News/information
 - A piece of information can be defined as unconfirmed information until its confirmed from trusted source. Like, When WHO (world health organization) verified the news of COVID-19 as a fatal virus, thus it's a pandemic. Until WHO verified it was just an information without any verification. And social media users were using the information for only trolling

- Rumor
 - Simple exposed spoken information can be correct and can be incorrect too. It's depends on the info. Like, when coronavirus approached it was headlining that china have lost up to 10 thousand lives in a day, but this was rumor only which wasn't verified.

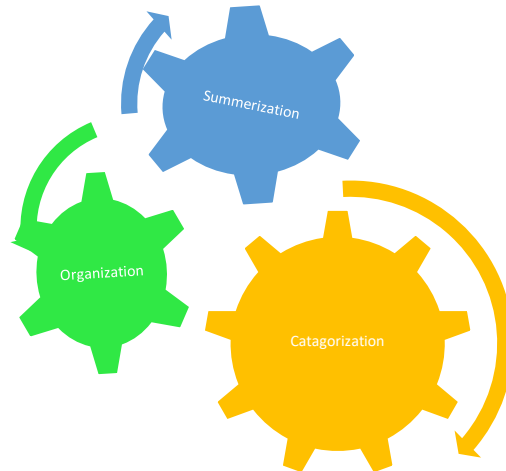
These things look simply to read but in reality, it causes havoc for the media users. They often get confused of believing the fact of which information is real and which is misinformation.

Accuracy of the information is one of the important measures of quality of information. Honest mistake in the spread of inaccurate information is misinformation, whereas when the intention is to deceive the recipient, it is disinformation. In [4], authors have outlined the main features of disinformation.

- ❖ Propaganda is often the product of a carefully planned and technically sophisticated deceit process.
- ❖ Disinformation may not come directly from the source that intends to deceive.
- ❖ Misinformation is often written or verbal communication to include doctored photographs, fake videos etc.
- ❖ Disinformation could be distributed very widely or targeted at specific people or organizations.
- ❖ The intended targets are often a person or a group of people.

Social networks with its liberty of appearance, lack of sifting machines like studying and editing available in old-style publishing business coupled with high degree of lack of liability have become an important media for spread of misinformation. Summarily, the dissemination of different versions of information, viz misinformation, disinformation and propaganda involve the spread of false or inaccurate information through information diffusion process involving users of social networks where all the users may not be aware of the falsehood in the information. We have used the term misinformation to denote any type of false information spreading in social networks.

Data Analysis:



Doing the data analysis first three needs important is

- Summarization
- Organization &
- Categorization

To analysis the result it is important to discuss these things. As earlier in the question session I had prepared a survey to get the results of my project which known as ‘[The Pandemic Infodemic: Navigating and Combating Disinformation on Social Media](#)’. My intention was to get the idea of audience that what they think about this pandemic and during this pandemic the misinformation off course came in front, how they react or handling the misinformation about the sensitive things. My whole data is my survey, because most of the result is analyzed by this survey. I have prepared a bunch of question to set the survey so that audience feel free to answer their thoughts.

And in every question, I have got sufficient answer of all the question. Like, in the survey there my first question was which social platform they use most? 100% was the answer audience use the FACEBOOK as their daily social media. They prefer Facebook as their day to day media because its easy to connect and share. Then the next question was like do you influenced by getting any information on social media about Corona Pandemic? I tried to combine the question because my subject is related with COVID-19, so the question is hinting the area. 33.3% audience answered

said that they do get influenced by the information on social media. And similarly, another half 33.3% even numbers do not get influenced to the information.

The most answerable question was that ‘do you get any misinformation about COVID-19’ 88.9% percent out of 100 audience answered that they get misinformation about covid-19. If it’s not covid-19, other’s more issue which carry the misinformation does affect to the audience’s brain. Now will discuss some major fact of misinformation data which contains the meaning of how these things get spreads.

- Manipulation of Misinformation:

As we know that misinformation does get spread from spreader organization, who foil the information very likely to the real one.

Traditional methods primarily emphasis on their disproportionate suspicious content and web topology, which obviously remoteness themselves from regular operators.

- Manipulation of Networks:

Since many users survey back when they are followed by someone for the sake of civility, fabrication spreaders could find a decent numeral of links with authentic operators.

- Manipulation of Content:

It’s calms for a distortion propagator to print a substantial portion of content from valid accounts.

- Profiles manipulation:

Also be straight applied to classify a misinformation diffuser.

- Links to URL:

It shown in the studied, which shortest normal users to sites through URLs.

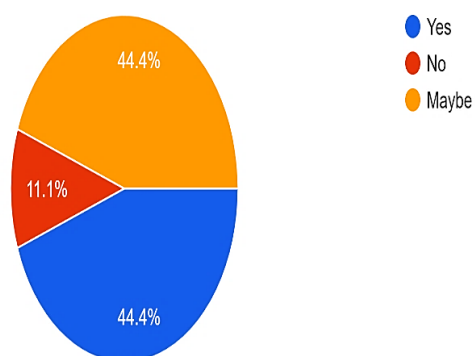
My next question was to target the thought of that ‘Does they feel questionable or judgmental if they see any misinformation on social media’. So, the majority answered, 44.4% of people they said Yes, and same number said that Maybe. It means same measure of audience said that they feel questionable when they see something suspected, misinformation, fake news but even number of audiences they are in ‘Maybe’ situation. This answer could be in the yes and no too. And only

11.1% audience said that they don't feel. This was major side to notice, they don't try judge any question if they see any information in the social media, they don't try to validate the information whether the fact is true of false.

Then I tried to saturate the question in different angle, I asked some misinformed question to see the audience results. Such as, 'can humans become infected with a novel coronavirus of animal sources' the majority of answer was no, 44.4% audience said that this is fake information. Coronavirus does not spread through animal interaction. Other hand 33.3% audience said that Yes, it spreads through animal. See the difference of the result, half of the majority does say no but another half said yes. It means they got influenced by the misinformation.

My question was getting 'influenced'. So, my question was 'Does they get influenced by getting any information on social media about Corona Pandemic' it was a relatable question to CORONAVIRUS. Surprisingly 50% audience think that they do and other 50% thinks that they

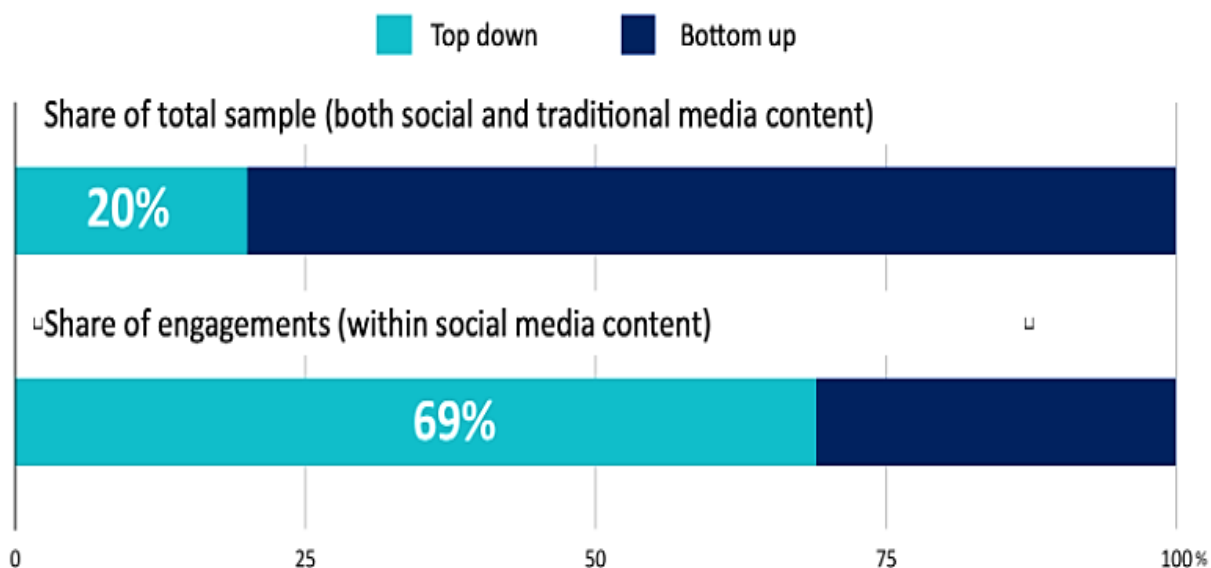
don't. This question came out with even number of possibilities.



Those are some factors I have tried to highlight with valuable argue. The main idea was to get the majorities thought about social media use and misinformation infusing about the

pandemic by creating this survey, internet enquirers and random oral interviews.

We have analyzed the cognitive process of adoption of information from studies in psychology. The difficulties associated with distinguishing between misinformation, disinformation and true information have been highlighted by most of them. The inherent beliefs of a user play a very important part in accepting news items and fractionation of cyber space is a consequence of this aspect of human mind.



This is by far total conclusion of top to bottom share of encouragement in social media users. High-level politicians, celebrities, or other prominent public figures produced or spread only 20% of the misinformation in our sample, but that misinformation attracted a large majority of all social media engagements in the sample. While some of these instances involve content posted on social media, 36% of top-down misinformation also includes politicians speaking publicly or to the media. As an example, the New York Times and others have recognized that President Donald Trump has made a amount of false announcements on the topic at events, on Fox News, and on Twitter. While our statistics do not capture the reach of misinformation spread via TV, top-down misinformation on social media accounted for 69% of total social media engagements.

The Process of diffusion of information is more effectively understood using metrics like Gini coefficient. If we consider retweets as a measure of adoption of information, differences in adoption behavior would indicate differences in perceived credibility of information on social media about COVID-19. Misinformation or disinformation are context specific and hence responses of users assume great significance. If information from a certain source is accepted as credible uniformly by a large number of users, quite possibly that source is credible. On the other hand, if there are variations in the acceptance levels, the simple explanation is apparent non credibility of messages of the source. Similarly, if most of the users receiving users do not repropagate information from a source also, his credibility is low. However, this result is also acceptable, as we are unable to detect misinforming tweets which have been decided by the

collective intelligence of the network users to be non-credible. Would segregate communications which are repropagated otherwise by a substantial section of users, which has the probable to create a certain professed level of social consensus. By deploying our proposed framework at the client end, we give better efforts regarding social concord and trustworthiness of. study suggests that misinformation about COVID-19 comes in many different forms, from many different sources, and makes many different claims. It frequently reconfigures existing or true content rather than fabricating it wholesale, and where it is manipulated, is amended with simple tools.

Chapter Three

Result

As discussed from the start all the early possibility of spreading the misinformation could bring the knowledge break. Because social media is free place, everyone like scam organization get the liability of spreading the information. On the other hand, social media have permitted for buzzes and fake information to blowout to a large group of people speedily.

So as the coronavirus daily spreading so does the misinformation. Academics across to the world are endeavoring to understand the epidemiologic power of fake information, collecting data that could advise approaches for disputing its binge.

So, stopping the misinformation spread, because there's a lot of beings out there who are not contacting very much with social media and stuff, so they most of the time believe what others say. So, UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) has come forward to do the job so people can prevent themselves from coronavirus so as the disinformation. Because a simple information can bring life at stack. UNESCO's organizations are helping rural peoples to understand what this virus actually is.

As earlier we discussed that how unregulated social media platforms like Facebook, twitter, YouTube are presenting a health risk by putting online a series of misinformation. On this saying, Facebook said that they have banned and removed thousands of thousand information to just to prevent the spread of misinformation about COVID-19.

So, come to the point now how to stop these misinformation Infodemic: as the misinformation are as much there like the real information, to prevent them audience, readers are need to be solid about the information that they are reading, they have to judgmental on sensitive issue like covid-19. Thus, we can prevent the misinformation to become another pandemic of social media and prevent too created the havoc into audiences' brain.

Prevention is better than cure. The binge of misinformation can be prohibited if users are enabled to make correct decisions and cross checking while retweeting, sharing the messages, they receive. It will also stop to deceived by psychologically and would help to abate the knowledge gap.

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