Analysis Of The Impact Of Fake News On Society

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Abstract:

The issue of fake news is not new but has become more prevalent in recent times due to the widespread use of the internet and smart phones. Many people tend to share news without verifying its authenticity, leading to the spread of false information. This problem has been further exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, where misleading news has contributed to widespread panic and confusion. Given the serious consequences of fake news, the need to limit its dissemination on social media platforms has become increasingly critical. Therefore, a study has been conducted to understand people's perspectives on this issue. The study aims to analyze qualitative data, such as people's opinions and attitudes towards limiting the spread of false information on social media. Through this study, we hope to gain valuable insights into how individuals perceive the problem of fake news and what measures can be taken to prevent its spread. By understanding people's viewpoints, we can develop effective strategies to combat the spread of false information and promote greater awareness about the importance of fact-checking and responsible sharing of news. According to the study's findings, self-regulation might not have the desired impact on preventing the spread of false information. However, one possible strategy that may be used to stop fake news from spreading on social media platforms is to plan efficient campaigns to increase social media literacy. Therefore, this specific study might help in the decision-making process when it comes to implementing regulatory measures to stop the spread of false information on social media.

Keyword: Fake news, Social media, media literacy

INTRODUCTION

In today's world, social media plays a crucial role in shaping people's lives and influencing their culture, economy, and worldview. Social media platforms have become a new kind of venue where individuals can share their thoughts, opinions, and ideas with a vast audience. It provides a unique opportunity for people to interact with each other, relate to others' experiences, and mobilize around a cause. Social media has transformed the way we communicate, enabling us to easily ask for and provide guidance, connect with like-minded individuals, and engage in meaningful conversations .One of the most significant advantages of social media is the ability to transcend national boundaries and cultural barriers. It has eliminated the traditional communication barriers and made it easier to connect with people from all over the world. Social media has opened up new avenues for cross-cultural exchange and understanding, which is essential in today's globalized world.social media has become an integral part of modern-day life, and its influence is undeniable. It has transformed the way we communicate, interact, and share information, and has opened up new possibilities for cross-cultural exchange, economic growth, and social change. In recent years, social media has emerged as a powerful tool for communication, allowing people to connect with friends, family, and even strangers from all over the world. However, as with any technology, social media also has its downsides. One of the most significant costs associated with social media is the spread of fake news.
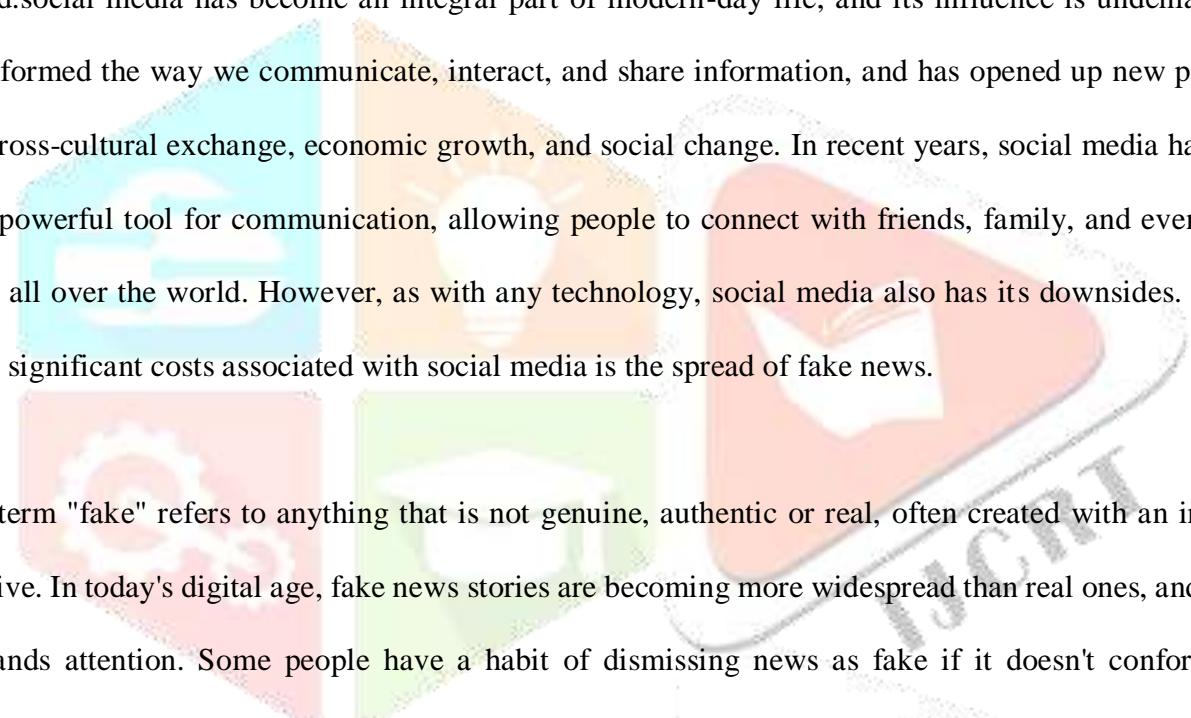
The term "fake" refers to anything that is not genuine, authentic or real, often created with an intention to deceive. In today's digital age, fake news stories are becoming more widespread than real ones, and this trend demands attention. Some people have a habit of dismissing news as fake if it doesn't conform to their worldview. The emergence of digital technology has forced us to change the way we create, consume and curate news. As a result, we need to be vigilant and discerning in our approach to news and information. Due to the sheer volume of content on social media, it has become increasingly challenging to tell which news is genuine and which is fake. In some cases, fake news is created intentionally to spread propaganda, mislead the public, or promote a particular agenda. In other cases, it may simply be the result of poor journalism or a lack of fact-checking.

The spread of fake news can have devastating effects on people of all ages. It can cause panic, confusion, and even harm in certain situations. For example, fake news about the COVID-19 pandemic has led some people

to take dangerous or ineffective treatments, while others have refused to follow public health guidelines. Overall, while social media has many benefits, it is essential to be aware of the risks associated with the spread of fake news. It is crucial to take the time to verify the information you see on social media and to be cautious about sharing or believing content that seems suspicious or too good to be true.

1.Number of fake news in Resent times.

1.Video Captures Dying Woman Being Molested (The Hindu)

An eight-second video clip that was making the rounds on social media seems to be the basis for the story. Several Twitter users criticized the status of women in the nation and expressed sadness at this particular crime's depravity. The Hindu apologized strongly and claimed that it has removed its piece "Dying woman molested, video shows" from all of the English newspaper's web platforms. The apology blamed the article on the organization's "failure to live up to journalistic norms." Journalist **Vedika Chaubey's** story from October 1st claimed that a cellphone camera footage captured a bystander abusing a woman as she was about to pass away during the stampede at Mumbai's Elphinstone Road station on September 29

2.The new Rs 2,000 note is deemed the best money in the world by UNESCO.

Fake news as spread as the Rs 2000 note has been certified as the " best currency in the world " This message, shared widely on WhatsApp and other social media platforms, claimed "Dr. Saurabha Mukherjee, head of cultural awareness department of UNESCO announced in the media. The BBC reported that "thousands" of Indian Whatsapp users had " forwarded the message"

3.ISIS may utilize the images from WhatsApp profiles for terrorist purposes.

For security reasons, "sisters" and "moms" were asked to remove their profile images on WhatsApp in a reportedly sent from the commissioner of police in Delhi. According to the message that was forwarded, these photos were purportedly susceptible to being used maliciously by the terrorist organization Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), whose hackers could easily obtain the virtual identities of residents by using the information they collected. The message also said that the CEO of WhatsApp had asked users to follow this procedure for a period of 20 to 25 days while their team improved the security aspects of the messaging service. The message was endorsed by an individual identifying themselves as AK Mittal, the commissioner

of police for Delhi; however, the phone number referenced in the message has now been placed on the "blacklisted" list of True caller, a user identification app.

4.Kalamasserry blast: 53 cases including one against Union minister registered across Kerala for spreading   fake   news

The Chief Minister of Kerala, announced that 53 cases had been filed throughout the state in relation to the dissemination of false information on social media in an attempt to incite communal feelings about the explosion at a Christian religious gathering in Kochi, Kerala, in October of last year. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said that the Left government considers attempts to encourage hatred in the state a serious issue in response to a question posed by MLA M Naushad in the Assembly. Cases have been filed against Rajeev Chandrashekhar, the Union Minister and leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), several other BJP officials, certain online news portals, its editors, two Malayalam television channels, and its reporters, among other people, the Chief Minister informed the Assembly. According to the Chief Minister, 69 social media connections were taken down in accordance with different IT Act regulations. According to Vijayan, the head of state police has given orders to keep an eye on social media in order to prevent the dissemination of false information and take necessary measures. On October 29, 2023, explosions occurred during a Jehovah's Witness meeting, leaving eight persons dead. On the last day of a three-day prayer conference, they had convened. More than fifty individuals were hurt in the several explosions that occurred at the international convention center in Kalamassery. Additionally,some suffered grave injuries.

5.A man from Kerala is being charged for spreading false information about the Nipah virus on social media

A 40-year-old man has been charged by Kerala police with spreading false information on social media about the deadly Nipah virus outbreaks in the state. Anil Kumar, a newspaper agent who lives in Koyilandi, was the target of a case filed by police Friday night. "He had been spreading false information about Nipah on social media. **He said in the post that "**pharma companies created a fake narrative around Nipah**,"** according to a senior police official. Police said that he removed the post after it went viral and others began to voice their

concerns. Invoked include, among other things, Section 505 (1) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) as well as relevant sections under the Kerala Police Act. The IPC's Section 505 (1) addresses the crime of spreading rumors that are likely to incite panic or fear in the public. The allegation states that the accused stated in a social media post that the Nipah virus, which has infected four people in the state and claimed two deaths thus far, was a "narrative" manufactured by pharmaceutical corporations.

6.Fake News: A young protestor from Sabarimala was taken into custody by the Kerala government

There is a story circulating on social media claiming that the girl in the photo above was taken into custody by the Kerala government. The Hindu Hindutvam Facebook page shared the photo along with a statement suggesting that the young girl was "fighting" against the Supreme Court's ruling that permits menstruating women to enter the Sabarimala shrine. Many people have shared the same photo and story on Facebook and Twitter. Another Facebook group, Wise Indian Tongue - WIT, also shared the image with the caption "Baby arrested". It is important to note that this story is not confirmed and may not be true. We discovered that the identical image was uploaded on Sharestills.com after using the Google reverse image search engine. As per her online profile, Akshara Kishor is a young artist who has contributed to multiple Malayalam films and television shows. We were unable to locate any media stories about her detention by the government of Kerala. Any legal proceedings against her would have been widely reported in the local and national media due to her popularity as a kid artist. In addition, her official Facebook page is updated every day. As claimed on social media, there are no posts regarding her arrest on this page either. As a result, the story circulating on social media is false. Recently, there has been a lot of false information about Sabarimala.

7.**Fake news spreads across social media in Kerala, causing more panic**

Amidst the flood crisis in Kerala, a plethora of fake news has been circulating on social media platforms, intending to spread panic and insecurity among the citizens. There was a fake message circulating around claiming that all major dams in Kerala, including the Idukki dams, had reached maximum capacity and that the shutters were about to be opened. However, the Kerala State Electricity Board (KSEB) clarified that this was not true. In fact, all the dams in the area, including Idukki, Pampa, Kakki, Sholayar, Idamalayar, Kundala, and Mattupetti, had only been filled up to around 30% of their full capacity. KSEB requested that people living in these regions should not believe these rumors. There is a widely shared audio clip on WhatsApp claiming that the Mullaperiyar dam is about to collapse, which is spreading misinformation about the flooding.

The short clip suggests that the dam is leaking and that the Ernakulam area will drown in three hours. The anonymous person in the tape claims to have received this information from a friend in the Prime Minister's Office, and urges listeners to tell their friends and family to leave as soon as possible. However, there is no evidence to support these claims and it is important to rely on verified information sources during natural disasters. The Secretary of Kerala Water Resources, Tinku Biswal, has written to the state police to urge them to take action against those spreading baseless rumors which are causing unnecessary panic.

8.Fake army officer spreads fake news in the society

The Indian Army has denounced a video circulating on social media, in which a civilian is seen impersonating an army officer. The video shows a man dressed in army camouflage falsely claiming that Pinarayi Vijayan, the chief minister of Kerala, had ordered the army to stop rescue operations in the flooded areas. The video became popular in India over the weekend and was widely shared on social media and closed WhatsApp groups. The Indian Army responded to the fake video on Twitter, calling it "disinformation" and clarifying that it was the work of an "imposter".

9.Warning: fake news! False viral post on WhatsApp regarding a new "red tick"
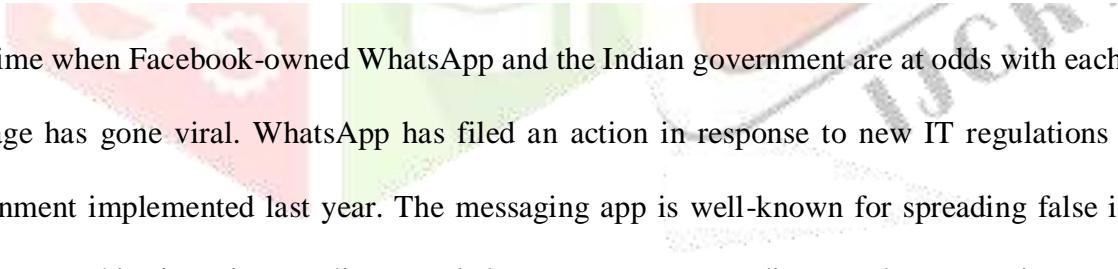
At a time when Facebook-owned WhatsApp and the Indian government are at odds with each other, the fake message has gone viral. WhatsApp has filed an action in response to new IT regulations that the Indian government implemented last year. The messaging app is well-known for spreading false information and fake news. This time, it was discovered that a message spreading on the messaging app contains false information about WhatsApp itself. The notification claims that some modifications have been made to WhatsApp's functionality. The warning goes on to say, "Two blue ticks, and one red tick means the government can take action against, while three red ticks will mean that the government has started court proceedings against you." The communication is entirely fraudulent in its content. Last year, a similar three-red ticks message went viral before being disproved. Currently, there is a conflict between Facebook-owned WhatsApp and the Indian government, and a fake message is spreading on the platform. WhatsApp has taken legal action against the new IT regulations that the Indian government introduced last year. The company specifically opposes the traceability clause included in the new regulations. Moreover, the viral message

circulating on WhatsApp claims that the platform has implemented new communication guidelines to comply with the Indian IT regulations. WhatsApp chats are still private and end-to-end encrypted, meaning that no one, including governments, can read any user's messages - therefore, WhatsApp is not yet compliant with the new regulations.

10.Did Pakistani MPs Chant "Modi Modi" in the House? No, they are calling for "voting."

Several news outlets, including India TV and Times Now, along with right-wing website On India and several social media accounts, shared a video of the Pakistani parliamentary sessions held on parliament. They attempted to create a false claim that the parliamentarians were chanting "Modi, Modi." However, BOOM found out that opposition MPs were shouting "Voting, Voting" to demand a vote on an anti-government motion. It was discovered that Indian mainstream and social media misrepresented these shouts as support for Modi in the Pakistani parliament. During a session of the Pakistani parliament, opposition supporters chanted "voting, voting" to demand a vote on a resolution against the administration that Khwaja Asif had delivered. In response, supporters of the administration taunted the opposition with the derogatory chant "Modi ka jo yaarhai, Gaddarhaigaddarhai" (meaning "Modi's friends are traitors"), which prompted the use of Modi's name. However, the news editor of Dawn denied the existence of any pro-Modi slogans, stating that they had observed the proceedings and confirmed that no such chants were uttered.

II) Laws and Regulation to Curb Fake News in India

2.1 There is no specific law against fake news in India. Free publication of news flows from Article 19 of the Constitution guaranteeing freedom of speech.

2.2 If the **Press Council of India**, a regulatory organization, determines that a newspaper or news agency has broken journalistic ethics, it has the authority to warn, admonish, or censure the newspaper, the news agency, the editor, or the journalist, or it might disapprove of the conduct of the editor or the journalist.

2.3 The **News Broadcasters Association (NBA)** is an industry group for independent television news and current affairs organizations. It investigates complaints about electronic media in a self-regulatory capacity.

2.4 The **Indian Broadcast Foundation (IBF)** is responsible for investigating complaints about the programs that broadcasters have aired.

2.5Broadcasting Content Complaint Council (BCCC) admits complaints against TV broadcasters for objectionable TV content and fake news.

2.6 Certain sections of the **Indian Penal Code (IPC)** could be used to curb the spread of fake news. To combat the spread of false information, sections 153 (which prohibits incitement with the intention of causing unrest) and 295 (which criminalizes acts that insult the religious beliefs of any community) can be invoked.

2.7 According to **Section 66 of The Information Technology Act, 2000**, an individual may face up to three years in prison, a fine of up to five lakh rupees, or both if they dishonestly or fraudulently commit any of the acts listed in Section 43 (damage to computer, computer system).

In case people or organizations are affected by fake news, they can file a **civil or criminal case for defamation** as a means of protecting themselves. Defamation suits are recognized under IPC Sections 499 (defamation) and 500 (punishment for defamation), wherein the offender shall be liable for simple imprisonment for a maximum period of two years, or with a monetary fine, or both.

III)Objectives of the Study:

The following objectives are set for the current study.

3.1 The first objective is to analysis the opinions of individuals who are spreading misinformation.

3.2 The second objective is to analysis how the usage of social media platforms by its users has led to the spread of fake news during the Covid-19 pandemic

3.3 The third objective is to investigate the possibility of implementing measures to control the spread of false information on social media platforms in India.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

I have decided to use in-depth interviews as the qualitative research method for my project, as it involves asking questions to gather data. We conducted a Interview with Mr. Mukesh Mohankumar, a former TV presenter and radio host who has experience in the media. Our goal was to gather information about the effects of fake news on society. During the interview, Mr. Mohankumar shared his concerns and opinions regarding the spread of false information. He explained that the term "fake news" can have different meanings. Sometimes a source may be phony, or there may be a high chance of misinterpretation. Mr. Mohankumar also noted that people tend to share news stories that align with their opinions and interests. Unfortunately, some

media outlets may spread false information because it is attention-grabbing, appealing, or has the potential to destabilize society.

Interview questions

1)How can fake news impact people's beliefs and actions?

Answer Fake news can sway people's views with inaccurate or misleading information, leading to division, less trust in media, and impacting decision-making.

2)What impact does fake news have on public opinion and political discourse?

Answer: Fake news undermines democracy by spreading conspiracy theories and distorting political discourse.

3)How can individuals distinguish between fake news and reliable information?

Answer: Being able to assess sources critically, verify claims with multiple sources, cross-check information, and being aware of biases is key to discerning between credible sources and fake news.

4)Should governments regulate false information? If yes, how?

Answer: The issue of government control over the spread of false information is a continuous debate. Some advocate for regulation, while others prioritize free speech. Regulations must strike a balance and avoid censorship.

5)Have you ever personally believed or shared fake news?

Answer: Yes, I have encountered fake news and may have inadvertently believed or shared it before realizing its falsehood..

Interview conducted with students from a private college in Coimbatore

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather information. The participants were young adults, between the age group of 16 to 20, we collected data from three students. We selected this age group because we thought that individuals in this range would be more interested in the news. We selected participants from a private school in Coimbatore.

Interview 01

1.Does reading fake news confuse students or worry about what is true?

Answer: Reading fake news can cause students to feel confused or worried about what is true.

2.Can fake news change students' minds about important issues such as politics or health?

Answer: Fake news might make students change their minds about politics or health.

3.How do students know whether something they read online is true or fake?

Answer: Students try to know if something they have read is true by checking other sources and thinking critically.

4.Does fake news encourage students to argue more about what is right or wrong?

Answer: Fake news might encourage students to argue more about what is true.

5.Do students think it is important to stop fake news from spreading and do they try to do anything about it?

Answer: Some students think it is important to stop fake news, and they may try to tell others when something is not true.

Interview 02

1.Could you please provide information on websites commonly used by students to spread false information?

Answers: Students often encounter false information from sources, such as partisan blogs, sensationalist news websites, and social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter.

2.How do academic institutions handle the problem of teaching students media literacy and fake news?

Answer: To address the problem of fake news, educational establishments include media literacy instruction in their curricula, host seminars and workshops on digital literacy, and encourage critical thinking activities.

3.What effects does fake news have on students' political beliefs and actions?

Answer: By influencing students' opinions of political candidates, parties, and ideologies, fake news can have an impact on their political attitudes and behaviors. This can have an impact on voting behavior and civic engagement.

4.To what extent do students from various educational environments consume false news?

Answer: While the amount of fake news that students consume varies depending on the type of educational institution, research suggests that a sizable percentage of students often encounter fake news, especially through social media and online news sources.

5.What are the possible long-term effects of fake news consumption on students' civic responsibility and critical thinking abilities?

Answer: Fake news harms critical thinking, civic engagement, and trust in democracy, thus making engaged citizenship difficult.

Interview 03

1.How does exposure to fake news affect individuals' trust in the media and information sources?

Answer: Exposure to fake news can significantly erode individuals' trust in media and information sources, leading to skepticism and cynicism towards news outlets and other sources of information.

2.How do students perceive and interpret fake news compared with traditional news sources?

Answer: Students often perceive fake news differently from traditional news sources, and many rely on social media platforms for news updates. However, they may struggle to discern between credible journalism and sensationalized or misleading content.

3.How does fake news influence student trust in media and information sources?

Answer: Fake news can undermine students' trust in media and information sources, leading them to question the reliability of news outlets and platforms. This erosion of trust has broader societal implications beyond the classroom.

4.What strategies can students adopt to verify information and resist the spread of fake news in their peer groups?

Answer: Students can adopt various strategies to verify information and resist the spread of fake news, including fact-checking, consulting multiple sources, and critically evaluating the credibility of the information before sharing it with others.

5.How many of you believe in fake news seen online and where do you usually find it?

Answer: We saw fake news online, mostly on social media and unreliable websites.

Interview Analysis 01

During our conversation, we delved into the issue of fake news and its impact on society. We explored the different ways in which fake news affects people, public opinion, and political discussions. We also discussed methods for distinguishing reliable information from false information. Let's now review the key points we covered. The speaker underscored the significant impact of fake news on people's beliefs and actions. They

highlighted how inaccurate or deceptive information can affect people's perspectives, leading to disagreements, eroding confidence in the media, and corrupting decision-making. This shows an awareness of the psychological and social outcomes of misinformation. Fake news has been identified as a crucial element that has negatively impacted democracy and has distorted political discourse. The respondent has emphasized that fake news serves to promote conspiracy theories while impeding constructive debates. This observation underlines the wider repercussions of misinformation on the public's perception and the effective functioning of democratic institutions. The interviewee acknowledged the ongoing debate around government regulations of false information. They emphasized the importance of legislation that balances the need to combat misinformation with respect for free speech values while avoiding excessive censorship. This demonstrates a nuanced understanding of the challenges involved in regulating false news. During our interviews, we asked participants why they believed fake news exists. They mentioned that fake news is created for various reasons, including profit, attention-seeking, harming others, exaggerating and distorting news, abusing power, manipulating public opinion, concealing the truth, creating chaos, calming society, and for entertainment purposes. The way people access news has been greatly influenced by the Internet and social media. However, different age groups may consume news differently based on their requirements and interests. As per a survey, young individuals do believe in fake news fastly. They gave a variety of reasons for not watching the news, including lack of interest, mistrust of the media, being upset over depressing news, and time constraints.

Interview analysis 02 &03

During the interview, we explored the impact of fake news on students' emotions, beliefs, behaviour, and attitudes toward tackling disinformation. The interviewees' comments provided valuable insights into this issue. One of the interviewees highlighted that fake news can make students feel confused or worried about the accuracy of the information they come across. This indicates the emotional impact that disinformation can have on individuals and may result in a lack of trust in media sources. It has been acknowledged that fake news can have a significant impact on the views of students regarding important topics like politics and health. This highlights the importance of cultivating critical thinking skills to deal with the complexity of online information, as false information can easily shape the ideas and perceptions of young people. The respondent emphasized the value of examining multiple sources and using critical thinking skills to distinguish between reliable and inaccurate information found online. This proactive approach to media literacy equips students

with the necessary tools to evaluate the credibility of the material they encounter, the interviewee highlighted that the spread of false information could worsen student discussions concerning what is true. This statement underlines the fact that false information can create conflict and division among peers, which can have negative effects on social relationships and collaborative learning settings. Moreover, the interviewee pointed out that students hold varied opinions on the significance of stopping the spread of false information. Although some students understand the importance of dispelling false information and taking steps to rectify it, others may not share the same level of interest or understanding. This implies that there is a need for more awareness and education on the topic so that students can better comprehend the importance of verifying information and avoiding the spread of false information. it was brought up that students have different opinions on the importance of stopping the spread of false information. While some students understand the significance of dispelling false information and take steps to correct it, others may not share the same level of interest or understanding. This highlights the need for more awareness and education on the topic so that students can better grasp the importance of verifying information and avoiding the spread of false information. Overall, the interview provided valuable insights into the multifaceted effects of fake news on students. These effects range from psychological reactions and changes in beliefs to interpersonal relationships and attitudes toward dispelling false information. To enable students to navigate the digital realm effectively and ethically, educators and stakeholders should prioritize critical thinking, media literacy, and proactive methods of checking information

CONCLUSION

During times of crisis, misinformation can spread rapidly, causing harm to the world economy. The current COVID-19 pandemic has led to a significant increase in the amount of fake news being created and shared. With the widespread use of smartphones and low-cost internet connection, false news reports appear every second on social media platforms. People posing as medical professionals, statisticians, and other experts create and spread false information, leading society towards dire circumstances. The objective of the current study is to understand the measures that can be taken to prevent the spread of fake news on social media. The investigation has produced some interesting conclusions. It appears that people who use cell phones more frequently also tend to transmit fake news more frequently. Additionally, these individuals are also more likely to be against national policies or regulatory bodies that could help prevent the spread of fake news throughout India. These findings may support the Social Identity hypothesis, which suggests that individuals

may intentionally spread fake news in order to maintain their social status within a community. The fake news may originate from various social media networks. The majority of the respondents believe that distinguishing between fake and genuine news is almost impossible. In today's world, where media is everywhere, media literacy refers to the ability to comprehend and interpret information amidst an overwhelming amount of it, and also to avoid creating incorrect meanings from it. The majority of respondents to the survey claim that Indians lack media literacy. Therefore, effective government campaigns, programs, and social media initiatives are essential for developing a media-literate society

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