User behaviour and hoax information on social media case of Indonesia

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Abstract The present study examines the influence of user behaviour on the propagation of deceptive information on social media platforms within the Indonesian setting. It specifically focuses on the ramifications of such behaviour on political, health, business competition, and environmental matters. The beginning of the study highlights the gravity of the dissemination of hoaxes on social media platforms, attributing it to the algorithms that prioritise information that is engaging, frequently characterised by provocative or sensationalised headlines. The methodology section discusses how we adopted a mixed-methods approach to examine both quantitative data from social media metrics and qualitative data from user interviews. Additionally, network analysis was used to identify disinformation dissemination across platforms. The findings suggest that hoaxes spread quickly because they grab users' attention better than real information. Our research also shows that these fraudulent schemes can increase social strife, anger, and prejudice against certain groups or people, tarnishing their social standing. Our research shows that in democratic nations like Indonesia, where freedom of expression is important, incorrect information is often used for electoral gain. Our analysis shows that users need better digital literacy to handle this issue. Training people to spot fake news is one way to combat the growing problem of disinformation.

Keywords:hoax; media user behaviour social media studies

INTRODUCTION

Social media platforms have become an indispensable component of our everyday existence, functioning as a medium for interpersonal communication, distribution of information, and provision of amusement (Burns, 2017; Valenzuela et al., 2019; Weng, 2018; Zhou & Wang, 2014). The utilisation patterns observed on these platforms are shaped by a variety of factors, including the innate human need for social connection, the demand for up-to-date information, and the inclination to articulate personal thoughts and viewpoints (Aistrope, 2016; Enke & Borchers, 2019; Susilo & Putranto, 2018). These platforms provide users with a means to participate in debates encompassing a wide range of topics, spanning from minor subjects to significant societal matters. Nevertheless, this participatory setting also presents possibilities for

misuse, including the dissemination of fraudulent material(Mayes, 2017; Rohlinger & DeLucchi, 2021; Romero et al., 2011).

The proliferation of deceptive or inaccurate information has become progressively pervasive in the contemporary era of digital technology(Pang et al., 2016; Suryandari & Lutviana, 2020; Watkins & Lee, 2017). This phenomena may be ascribed to specific user behaviours, notably a deficiency in the ability to differentiate between credible and unreliable sources of information. In the absence of these skills, individuals may inadvertently disseminate inaccurate information that first appears convincing but lacks empirical support or originates from unauthenticated sources.

Furthermore, several individuals demonstrate a lack of concern when it comes to confirming the trustworthiness of their sources prior to disseminating news (Imhoff & Lamberty, 2020; Saidah & Rusfian, 2020; Susilo et al., 2021). This behaviour may arise from a limited understanding of the consequences associated with disseminating false information or, alternatively, it may be attributed to a lack of attentiveness.(Ong & Tapsell, 2022; Pérez-Escoda et al., 2021) The aforementioned conduct enhances the scope and influence of deceptive schemes, as they are distributed without undergoing prior verification of their accuracy(Pérez-Escoda et al., 2021; Susilo et al., 2021).

Confirmation bias is an additional component that influences individuals to display a disproportionate affinity for information that aligns with their preexisting opinions or beliefs, irrespective of its veracity(Agatha et al., 2023; Yasir et al., 2019). This cognitive bias has the potential to impair individuals' judgement and prompt them to endorse and disseminate deceptive material that reinforces their preexisting beliefs without critically evaluating its veracity.

The dissemination of hoax material is intended to deceive readers through the presentation of false narratives that are strategically crafted to elicit robust emotional responses (Saidah & Rusfian, 2020; Susilo et al., 2021). Like false news reports and deceptive posts, hoaxes generate a climate of apprehension among recipients, prompting them to engage in activities influenced by deceitful information. The increasing impact of social media on public opinion and behaviour necessitates the cultivation of responsible usage habits among users and developing of critical thinking abilities for engaging with online material .

According to Mastel's National Fraud Outbreak Survey, there are many types of fraud. The false reports that the public often receives are false reports carried out by or about the government, social and political fraud about Racist/discrimination, health fraud, food and drink fraud, fraud and financing, and many more fake news. (Mastel.id, 2017). Hoaxes are critical information that misleads human perception by spreading false information but is considered valid. It is not surprising that the intensity of fake news and hoax news on social media is so viral on social media (S. Y. Yuliani et al., 2020).

Fake news is information that is misleading and dangerous because it misleads public perception and conveys false information as truth. Fraud is ready to negatively impact the image and credibility of many people (Rubin et al., 2015) (Chen et Al, 2014). News that contains false or inaccurate facts and is presented as valid facts. This category is also known in the research community as half-truths (Zannettou et al., 2019)

Currently access to social media is very easy for everyone, but the next challenge is the potential for huge positive and negative impacts. Freedom of opinion is often misused by irresponsible parties, especially in the spread of hoax news (Almas Zakirah, 2020). Every time new news appears, hoax information is discovered.

During the first quarter of 2023, the Ministry of Communication and Information has identified 425 hoax issues circulating on websites and digital platforms. This number is higher than in the first quarter of 2022 which reached 393 hoax issues. In January 2023, the AIS Team of the Directorate General of Information Applications of the Ministry of Communication and Information identified 147 hoax issues. In February 2023 there were 117 hoax issues and in March 2023 there were 161 hoax issues (Kominfo, 2023).

The spread of fake news or hoaxes is a serious challenge in democratic countries that guarantee freedom of opinion and expression. Democracy is one way of administering the state as a power organisation that guarantees recognition of human rights for the implementation of democracy. That is why, in understanding democracy comprehensively, you must also understand human rights, and vice versa. Human rights and democracy are actually not new issues. Almost all countries in the world now claim to be democratic countries and also respect human rights. Democracy can be the owner of sovereignty.

The issue of misinformation and deceptive content among the younger population in Indonesia has been a prevalent topic of investigation in numerous scholarly publications. According to the study conducted by Suyanto, et al (2019) there is a notable vulnerability among young persons, specifically those in the age range of late teens to early twenties, towards the influence of disinformation. The susceptibility observed in individuals can be attributed to a deficiency in media literacy skills, resulting in difficulties in distinguishing between reliable information and deceptive content(Suyanto et al., 2019).

Suyanto, et al (2019) conducted a study among Indonesian students to provide deeper insights into this topic. The researchers discovered that a significant number of pupils had a lack of ability to discern deceptive information on the internet, a deficiency they attributed to insufficient instruction in digital literacy. The study additionally unveiled that students who were susceptible to misinformation frequently disseminated it among their peers, thereby inadvertently facilitating its propagation.

In addition, Ong & Tapsell, (2022) conducted an examination of the psychological factors associated with this event. It was found that cognitive biases, such as confirmation bias, exerted a substantial influence on the dissemination of disinformation within the Indonesian youth population. This observation implies that there may be an innate human inclination that is intensifying the issue(Ong & Tapsell, 2022).

Shifting our focus to the socio-cultural consequences stemming from the prevalence of fake news and hoaxes in Indonesia, the study conducted by Suyanto, et al (2019) sheds light on the manner in which misinformation can intensify pre-existing cultural divisions or give rise to fresh conflicts within communities. This phenomenon undermines the overall societal cohesion and erodes the trust that exists among the various ethnic groups comprising Indonesia's diverse populace.

According to Susilo et al (2021), disseminating misinformation can significantly alter public perception of critical matters, including health crises and political events(Susilo et al., 2021). The researchers conducted a study to investigate the responses to COVID-19 misinformation disseminated on online platforms. Their findings revealed that individuals who acted upon inaccurate health advice experienced personal suffering and hindered the collective endeavours aimed at effectively addressing the pandemic.

Furthermore, the impact of fabricated news and deceptive information on political discussions has been observed(Saidah & Rusfian, 2020). Saidah and Rusfian (20200 conducted a study that elucidated the impact of misinformation on public opinion during election times, highlighting its potential to introduce distortions in democratic systems and compromise the integrity of political processes.

As information technology develops, the spread of hoaxes or fake news is often carried out in cyberspace. The provisions regarding hoaxes are regulated as acts that contain false and misleading information that results in consumer losses. The formulation is regulated in Article 28 paragraph (1) of Law Number 11 of 2008 concerning Information and Electronic Transactions which states "Every person intentionally and without right spreads false and misleading news which results in consumer losses in Electronic Transactions". Therefore, this article will review User Behaviour and Hoax Information on Social Media in the Indonesian context. This research contributes to helping solve the hoax problem which often becomes a problem for social media users in Indonesia.

METHODOLOGY

The principal methodology employed in this study was the quantitative descriptive approach. This methodology centres on the acquisition of quantitative data in order to elucidate a certain occurrence and furnish a precise depiction thereof. The data for this study was obtained through the utilisation of questionnaires, a widely employed instrument in quantitative research owing to its capacity to acquire standardised data

from a substantial sample size of persons (Neuman, 2003). Questionnaires were disseminated to students enrolled at multiple universities in Medan City, so guaranteeing a heterogeneous sample of responders that accurately reflects the broader student populace.

The sample technique utilised in this study was quota random sampling. This approach integrates components from both quota and random sampling methodologies. Initially, specific quotas or proportions are established according to pertinent factors that hold significance for the research, such as university affiliation and year level. Subsequently, a random selection process is employed to assure impartial representation of responses within each quota category. The data acquired were subsequently analysed using frequency distribution analysis, enabling us to get insight into the distribution of responses across various categories or possibilities within the questionnaire items. This feature offers a comprehensive representation of the distribution of replies, making it particularly valuable for analysing categorical variables such as demographic data or multiple-choice questionnaire answers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The demographic characteristics of the participants indicate a predominantly youthful population, consisting mainly of individuals enrolled in higher education institutions. A notable percentage, specifically 35.7%, consisted of individuals who were 19 years old, whilst individuals aged 18 constituted a comparatively lesser proportion at 14.3%. A significant proportion of the participants, including 50% of the entire sample, were found to be above the age of 20. The wide range of ages represented in this group suggests a variety of viewpoints and experiences that may impact their comprehension and awareness of deceptive or inaccurate information.

Regarding the awareness and comprehension of hoax or fake material, a significant majority (92.9%) of respondents expressed their familiarity with the criteria that define such content. The substantial proportion indicated in the data implies that a majority of students possess a considerable level of knowledge or have received formal instruction regarding the characteristics and detrimental consequences associated with hoaxes and misinformation in the contemporary era of digital communication, wherein the dissemination of false information is readily facilitated.

Nevertheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that a minority (7%) of individuals have confessed to lacking a complete understanding of the concept of a hoax or misleading information. Although the numerical value of this segment may appear insignificant to individuals with expertise in the subject, it actually represents a vulnerable population that is very susceptible to manipulation through the dissemination of incorrect data or news reports. The little understanding exhibited by individuals suggests a specific focus for educational initiatives aimed at improving the general digital literacy of university students in Medan

City.The next data is the question of how often they get hoax information on social media. Respondents stated that 57.1% answered that they often get hoax information and 42.9% rarely get hoax information. Regarding how to find out whether the information received was a hoax or not, 85.7% of respondents answered by finding out the truth of the news themselves, and 14.3% said they got it from friends or family.

The next data, when asked how much they trusted/convinced the information found on social media, 64.3% of respondents answered they believed the information found on social media, and 35.7% answered they did not believe the information obtained from social media (See Figure 1).
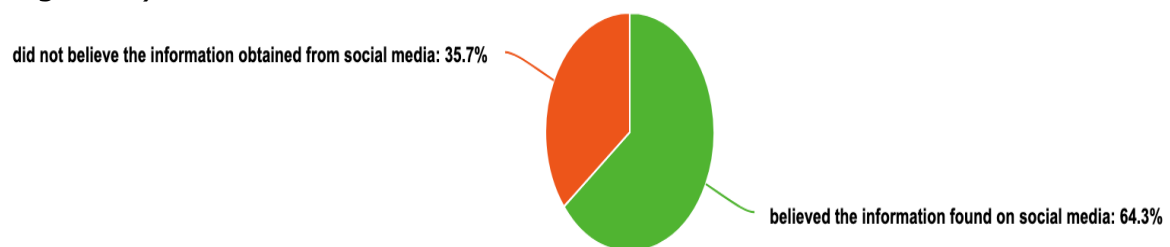

did not believe the information obtained from social media: 35.7%

believed the information found on social media: 64.3%

Figure 1. Trusted/convinced degree the information found on social media
Source: Data Processed by Author (2023)

One notable discovery derived from the study was that a substantial proportion, specifically 71.4% of participants, had inadvertently engaged in the dissemination of fraudulent material. This observation highlights the widespread occurrence and nuanced nature of misinformation found on social media sites. Despite possessing knowledge about the characteristics of a hoax, a significant number of participants inadvertently succumbed to the dissemination of inaccurate information.

Conversely, a notable proportion of participants, specifically 28.3%, asserted that they had either never disseminated or only sporadically propagated such erroneous information. Although the number of individuals who demonstrate prudence and discernment in sharing internet content is very small compared to those who inadvertently spread misinformation, this phenomenon is nonetheless promising.

The study also examined the frequency with which participants verified the credibility of their sources of information. A majority of respondents (57.1%) acknowledged engaging in this behaviour occasionally, while 21.4% asserted that they consistently adhere to this practise prior to disclosing any information on the internet. A lesser percentage (14.3%) indicated frequent verification, although it is noteworthy that 7.1% admitted to never engaging in source verification.

Regarding the origin of the information accessed by these individuals through social media, it was determined that WhatsApp emerged as the predominant source, accounting for 42.9% of the cases. Instagram was the second most preferred platform, with a usage rate of 35.7%. In

contrast, TikTok and Twitter were less favoured, with usage rates of only 14.3% and 7.1% respectively.

When queried about the accountability for upholding precision in social media content, 50% of the respondents opined that the onus lies on both individuals and governmental bodies, as well as social media platforms, to preserve authenticity in digital interactions.

Regarding the response to seeing deceptive information, a majority of participants (64.3%) opted for non-engagement or refrained from commenting on such postings. This trend may suggest a feeling of resignation or a perceived lack of agency in combating the pervasive influx of disinformation in their social media feeds.

Nevertheless, a portion of individuals demonstrated a proactive approach. Approximately 28.6% of respondents engaged in commenting on misleading posts, presumably with the intention of rectifying misinformation or alerting others. Additionally, a smaller yet significant proportion (7.1%) went to the extent of reporting such posts, indicating a heightened sense of civic responsibility in upholding integrity within online platforms.

Hoax Phenomenon in Indonesia

Data on internet and social media users in Indonesia according to the Indonesian Ministry of Communication and Information (Kemenkominfo) has reached around 132.7 million people, this of course must be addressed as a potential for good progress in the exchange of information and opinions. However, it turns out that on the other hand, the presence of the internet opens up as much space as possible for the presence of information or fake news about an event that is disturbing the public. Data from the Ministry of Communication and Information states that there are around 800,000 sites in Indonesia that are indicated to be spreading false information. The internet has been misused by certain individuals for personal and group interests by spreading negative content that causes unrest and mutual suspicion in society (A. Yuliani, 2017). In total, from August 2018 to March 31 2023, data from the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology Team found 11,357 hoax issues.

In the present circumstances, there has been a notable prevalence of health-related hoaxes, primarily influenced by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. The Ministry of Communication and Information has found a significant number of 2,256 instances of hoax issues within this particular category. Despite the ongoing move towards an endemic phase, the proliferation of misinformation pertaining to the Covid-19 pandemic remains prevalent across all channels of communication. The spectrum of misinformation encompasses a variety of falsehoods pertaining to the virus itself, as well as misleading narratives regarding vaccine endeavours.

Furthermore, a substantial quantity of deceptive information exists pertaining to the health advantages associated with specific botanical specimens or therapeutic substances. Hoaxes of this nature can have significant detrimental effects since they have the potential to induce individuals to place their trust in therapies that lack efficacy or, in more extreme cases, to forgo essential medical care due to unfounded assertions. This underscores the pivotal significance of precise and reliable health information in safeguarding public welfare amidst a worldwide health emergency.

Government policy is another significant subject that encompasses hoax concerns. From August 2018 onwards, the Ministry has identified a total of 2,075 occurrences of these deceptive claims. Frequently, such instances entail the utilisation of counterfeit accounts that assume the identities of both national and regional government officials, with the intention of disseminating misleading information pertaining to governmental policy.

The existence of these deceptive reports might lead to substantial bewilderment among those who depend on authoritative sources for information regarding policies that have a direct influence on their daily existence. Moreover, these actions have the potential to erode trust in official government communication platforms and may pose a threat to public order if left unattended.

The Ministry's AIS team has discovered 1,823 instances of fraud, making it the third most prevalent category for hoax concerns. The main focus of this article pertains to phishing endeavours and deceptive hyperlinks that are specifically crafted to deceive individuals into divulging confidential personal information or money particulars.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that fraudulent activities use mobile numbers, whereby unwary individuals are manipulated into transferring funds or divulging sensitive information using mobile communication channels. Instances of fraudulent activities have the potential to result in significant monetary damages for individuals, thereby compromising their privacy and security.

In light of the prevalent issue of widespread hoaxes across various domains, the Ministry of Communication and Information has undertaken proactive measures by issuing clarifications about circulating hoaxes and concurrently implementing content-blocking mechanisms to counter misinformation.

The proactive strategy outlined here seeks to mitigate the dissemination of these detrimental falsehoods, which have the potential to inflict significant harm across different societal domains. These include the impact on personal health decisions influenced by misleading medical assertions, the confusion arising from deceptive narratives in government policies, and even the substantial financial losses incurred due to intricate fraudulent schemes.

Hoax from a Democratic perspective

Indonesia, being a democratic country, has a dynamic and heterogeneous media environment. This encompasses various forms of media, such as electronic, print, and internet platforms, which produce a substantial volume of news information on a daily basis. The presence of freedoms pertaining to thought and the press has played a significant role in fostering the diverse landscape of news production. Nevertheless, the existence of these liberties also presents difficulties in terms of the dissemination of deceitful information and fabricated news.

The proliferation of news material across multiple channels frequently results in the occurrence of overlapping stories, leading to potential misunderstanding among audiences. The occurrence of this overlap has the potential to result in the dissemination of disinformation, especially in the realm of online reporting, when adequate fact-checking and verification measures are not used.

Online media platforms have garnered significant scrutiny as a result of their involvement in the dissemination of hoaxes or false information. The online platform's accessibility and rapid information dissemination capabilities render it highly conducive to the rapid proliferation of disinformation. The vast quantity of available content poses a significant challenge for users in distinguishing between credible information and deceptive stuff.

The proliferation of fabricated news not only poses a challenge to the freedom of the press, but also strays considerably from fundamental journalistic tenets, including the values of veracity, impartiality, fairness, and public responsibility. The integrity of journalistic ethics is undermined when misinformation is disseminated under the pretence of credible news.

Furthermore, this matter extends beyond the realm of media, posing a significant threat to the democratic process in Indonesia as it has the capacity to manipulate public sentiment through the dissemination of misinformation. In a democratic society that promotes and esteems the principle of free expression, the proliferation of false news has the potential to corrupt public debate and bias individuals' viewpoints on significant matters of societal concern.

Economic considerations frequently exert a substantial influence on this matter as well. Sensational or contentious narratives have a tendency to garner greater reading or audience, hence resulting in increased financial gains for media organisations. This phenomenon provides a motivation for certain media platforms to prioritise sensationalism at the expense of accuracy, hence intensifying the dissemination of false information.

From a political standpoint, hoaxes or false information can be utilised as instruments for propaganda or disinformation campaigns with the intention of undermining adversaries or influencing public opinion towards specific policies or candidates. Indonesia's commendable dedication to preserving freedom of expression may be compromised by

the proliferation of hoax news if adequate measures to counteract its dissemination are not implemented. These falsehoods not only contravene journalistic principles but also have the potential to disrupt democratic processes within the country's vibrant democracy.The hoax content circulating is mostly colored by additional comments from social media users. Comments embedded in hoax content that is shared show a person's interpretation of the text as well as the interests of the creator and disseminator of the content. For example, images edited with false statements reflect hatred towards certain figures or institutions (Utami, 2019). It is not always stated what interests they support or agree with, but it is obvious that they use these hoaxes to attack opponents or parties they don't like.

The correlation between user behaviour and the dissemination of false material on social media is undeniably substantial. The emergence of digital platforms has facilitated the rapid dissemination of knowledge at an unprecedented rate. Although there are advantages to this phenomenon, it also presents a potential hazard as the dissemination of inaccurate or deceptive information can quickly reach extensive populations. As a result, the dissemination of inaccurate information has the potential to shape public sentiment, provoke feelings of alarm or bewilderment, and perhaps exert influence on democratic mechanisms.

The involvement of social media users is of paramount importance in this particular context. Each person who disseminates information plays a role in its dissemination. Hence, it is crucial for individuals to engage in a thorough assessment of the web content they come across before to disseminating it. This process include assessing the credibility of sources and corroborating information with reputable sources.

Furthermore, users must exercise greater discretion in determining the content they choose to post. Additionally, social media sites should adopt proactive strategies to combat the propagation of hoaxes. Possible measures to address the issue could encompass the integration of resilient algorithms capable of identifying and highlighting probable instances of deceitful information, the provision of tools for users to verify facts, the suspension of accounts that persistently disseminate misleading content, or the explicit labelling of unverified or contentious material.

Nonetheless, the task of countering disinformation encompasses more than just reactive strategies; proactive prevention efforts are as crucial. It is imperative for platforms to actively foster digital literacy among their user base by providing educational resources on the identification of hoaxes and the potential harm associated with their dissemination.

Governments also play a crucial role in reducing the adverse effects of hoaxes on society. One potential approach to address the issue of misinformation is the implementation of legal measures to regulate the dissemination of false news. Additionally, collaboration with technology companies may be pursued to enhance content moderation

practises. Allocating resources towards research endeavours aimed at comprehending and countering misinformation could also prove beneficial. Lastly, conducting public awareness campaigns focused on promoting responsible utilisation of social media platforms represents another viable strategy.

In the context of Indonesia, the Ministry of Communication and Information has implemented measures aimed at tackling this matter. These measures involve the establishment of communication channels via which individuals can report potential instances of misinformation. These channels include email (aduankonten@kominfo.go.id), Twitter (@aduankonten), and WhatsApp.

These stories are thereafter subject to investigation in order to determine their legitimacy. If proven to be false news, they may be publicly identified as such, thereby alerting other internet users to their status. This serves the dual purpose of halting their further dissemination and ensuring that those responsible are held liable for their actions.

This method serves as an illustration of how successful collaboration among users (who identify and report questionable content), platforms (which offer reporting tools), and governments (who take action based on these complaints) can be in combating the dissemination of hoaxes on social media.

Nevertheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that the task of addressing fake news is an enduring struggle that demands persistent commitment from all parties concerned. This includes individual internet users who must exercise caution in their online sharing practises, as well as governmental entities that must enforce regulations to counter the spread of misinformation while fostering digital literacy among their populace.

Hence, it is imperative to establish a continuous and cooperative partnership among all these entities, with each fulfilling their respective responsibilities, in order to effectively mitigate the adverse consequences resulting from the dissemination of false information. This collaborative effort is essential for cultivating a digital atmosphere that promotes meaningful dialogue, rather than perpetuating deceptive narratives.

CONCLUSION

Upon careful examination of the facts and extensive deliberation on the ideas offered, it becomes apparent that the widespread dissemination of fraudulent information poses a substantial obstacle to society, particularly in a contemporary context where social media platforms have assumed a central role as major outlets for accessing information for a considerable number of persons. The concern at hand is not alone to the dissemination of inaccurate material, but also to its potential to evolve and influence the environment for the expression of diverse viewpoints on these platforms. The improper utilisation of these

platforms has the potential to result in misinterpretations, disputes, and even inflict harm onto people or collectives. In summary, it is incumbent upon each individual to assume responsibility in addressing the proliferation of disinformation. The process commences with individual responsibility, wherein each individual must exercise discernment in the context of disseminating information on the internet. This principle may be applied to our homes and immediate communities, where it is important to cultivate an atmosphere that prioritises the appreciation of truth and the development of critical thinking skills. The paramount importance is in the enhancement of digital literacy, encompassing not only technical proficiencies but also ethical deliberations.

The implications are evident: in the absence of adequate literacy, individuals may unwittingly serve as channels for misinformation, thereby posing potential harm to society as a whole. This can manifest in various ways, such as the dissemination of health-related falsehoods that jeopardise lives, the propagation of government-related fabrications that foster discord, or the perpetration of fraudulent schemes resulting in financial losses. Furthermore, it is imperative for conscientious individuals engaging with social media to incorporate the practise of filtering and cross-verifying material as a habitual component of their online endeavours. Users should properly utilise resources, such as fact-checking websites, to verify information. Finally, there is a pressing requirement to cultivate human resources who possess expertise and discernment in the utilisation of social media platforms. These individuals would place a higher emphasis on the distribution of valuable information rather than engaging in the propagation of false or detrimental stuff. The adoption of responsible use practises is expected to have a dual effect: mitigating the prevalence of misinformation and fostering a more favourable digital ecosystem that promotes constructive discourse instead of discord.

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