

## EMOTIONAL TONES (ANGER, FEAR AND EXCITEMENT) LEADS TO THE PROPAGATION OF FAKE NEWS: LITERATURE REVIEW ON COVID-19 INFODEMIC

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### Abstract

Emotions play a supreme role in switching human behavior. People mostly pay attention to the news that may contain emotional content, because it holds the ability to grab and attract the reader's attention towards that content. This current study is based on the factors or emotional tones which may lead to propagate fake news during the pandemic COVID-19. Qualitative research method is used to conduct this research. This research finds out how emotions lead to dissemination of fake news and how people process that information. Specifically, our focus is on emotions like fear, joy, anger, and excitement, which are likely to play a significant role in the dissemination of cabal theories about COVID-19 vaccine. Fake news captures readers' attention more swiftly than real news. It mostly contains emotional language, which may lead readers to trust on fake news rather than real news.

### INTRODUCTION

In an era dominated by digital connectivity, the spread of information, both accurate and misleading, has become a knotty aspect of social media dynamics. Information is exchanged so fast that it raises a major challenge, dissemination of fake news. (Brennen et al., 2020). Fake news might seem like a “New” issue but it most certainly is not. There are so many factors which contribute to the virality of misinformation or fake News.

Emotions play a vital role in shaping human behavior. Emotional content (Joy, Fear, anger & excitement) can grab audience's attention easily and influence them to share that content (either positive or negative). Researchers proposed that unintentional sharing of false news can be highly motivated when building relationships with people (Duffy et al.,2019).

Similarly, those factors which urge people to share real news including relevance & emotional impact are the same that make fake news to be aired (Duffy et al.,2019). Studies show people tend to respond higher favorably to those news accounts containing emotionally charged material. This is how the sharing of falseness or misinformation could be intensified and its impact on society. (Barrios, J. (2018) This current research article investigates and dissects the emotional tones associated with the sharing of false news similar to the COVID-19 vaccine. (Koozie et al.,2020). By scrutinizing the emotional landscape surrounding such misinformation, we seek to identify patterns and tendencies that contribute to the virality of false narratives. Specifically, our focus is on emotions like fear, joy, anger, and excitement, which

are likely to play a significant role in the dissemination of cabal theories about COVID-19 vaccine. It also address the function of emotional tones and how it promotes people to propagate fake news. The basic aim and objective of this study is to explore:

The factors that contribute to propagate misinformation, during supersensitive era COVID-19.

The reasons behind this, how people tend to believe in fake news, are rapidly related to COVID-19 instead of real news.

This current study based on some research questions like,

RQ1: Whether or not emotional tones play a significant role for spreading false or misinformation regarding COVID-19?

RQ2: what are the elements that are associated with the sharing of fake news related to COVID-19 Vaccination?

RQ3: How emotional tone (anger, fear, excitement) is more linked with the sharing & spreading of false or misinformation?

### Literature Review

#### Propagation Of Fake News and Psychological Mechanism Behind Emotional Tones

Fake news have different forms, ranging from normal news with textual and perceptible information, to totally make up content with more peculiar claims just to convert readers attention from real news towards fake news. (Vosoughi S., Roy D'Mario S. 2018). Unreliable/Fake News isn't a spick peculiarity, people generate money by using particular kind of websites. Social media handlers assist as a catalyst for misinformation or fake news. Fake news serves as a 'Clickbait', its primarily a web content, containing most of the time an advertising content for the sake of emolument with fetching and thrilled description just to grasp the people's attention. (Bakir, V., & McStay, A. (2017).

Fake news grasps readers' attention more swiftly than real news. It mostly contains emotional language, which may lead readers to trust on fake news rather than real news. Previous research shows that certain emotional language in content or news may prevent readers from cross-checking reality. (Bakir V., & McStay A. 2018). But, there's an emotional intelligence, a psychological concept could attenuate

this effect. People with high emotional intelligence can check reality and detect fake news. One of the captivating countenance of media is the quickness with which they share news to be the first one of sharing "News Headline", this kind of news sharing is well suited for those users who want to be informed with new and fresh content. (Bakir, V., & McStay, A. 2017). But, on the other side it may be ill suited for those users who think and analyze the news critically. It is clear that emotionally charged material can grasp readers attention and interest easily (Bakir V., & McStay A. (2018). During COVID-19 era a misinformation was aired that COVID-19 is spreading out because of 5G. People started to trust that news because of a fear of death. People are more concerned about their lives. (Yufan Chen. (2020)

Previous literature from cognitive psychology shows that emotional content is processed promptly even in the absence of attention and it(emotions) may lead towards decision making & judgment. One can deal with emotional content by having certain kinds of characteristics. These may include the ability to check and perceive the reality linked between the context and emotions separately. Psychologically, these interdependent skills may be in terms of lower order process (experiential-emotional intelligence), and higher order process (strategic-emotional intelligence EQ). (Stephanie et al., 2021). Proliferation of misinformation related to covid-19 and 5G are predominantly coherent with psychology of people. Websites specifically know the interest and attentiveness of the people and their political progressive beliefs by sharing wrong information and topics that may just help reader financially. These websites know their audience specifically & about their interest, also know how to get their attention regarding that specific topic (Yufan Chen. 2020). Most of the websites use multiple sources and mix both true and false news, cite reliable links and make the news worthy and scientific. People start considering that it is real news while they are just sharing it as a rumor or misinforming the audience. Later on, that news spread and shared so widely even they took it seriously and that may proliferate a certain kind of fear among people. The same happened in the case of covid-19 vaccination (Spreen, 2020).

**Anger, fear and excitement amplify misinformation's**

Earlier Studies indicated that wrong news is likely to outspread faster than right information (Vosoughi et al., 2018). Another research revealed both positive and negative emotions drive people to share fake information and they lack the ability to differentiate wrong and real news concerning health related false information, (Martel et al. 2020) .

Featherstone and Zhang (2020) found in an analysis misleading news regarding vaccines tends to evoke fury. (Kumar et al.,2020). Experimented emotions related tweets of Covid-19 over three days during March 2020 and discovered those tweets with good feelings surpass those with bad emotions. Furthermore, it was noted that a significant number of tweets demonstrate certainty and very few tweets exhibit happiness with positive sentiments.

Among tweets with bad feelings the prominent emotion was fear while surprise was minimal common. The Covid19.The Covid19 pandemic's portrayal of a pathogen warning. Convergent research proved that political conservatives demonstrate relatively higher disgust prone than liberals, a response theorized to functionally correspond to pathogen avoidance (Inbar et al.,2012;Terrizzi et al.,2013).

A study conducted with 513 South Korean adults points out that emotions, specifically anger, plays an important role in the spreading of COVID-19 misinformation, as people who come across anger are more liable to perceive false claims as scientifically reliable. This is more prominent among conservatives contrast to liberals. Ji-Young Han, Meeyoung Cha, & Won-Jae Lee.2020). Studies established significant behavioral disparities connected to emotions: Fear is associated with reassessment of behavior, while anger is linked to high tendency towards action.(Groenendyk & Banks, 2014;Lerner et al.,2003;Lerner & Keltner, 2001;Miller et al.,2009; Valentino et al.,2015; for a review, see Carver & Harmon-Jones, 2009; Lerner & Keltner, 2000; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985).

**Media Literacy and Its Role in spread of False information**

During the COVID-19 spread, people have taken on the role of self-determined experts, using S.M sites to

circulate news of the real warming caused by the virus. Some medical experts have provided unreliable proofs from their clinical observation through blogs and YouTube videos, declaring that COVID-19 signs are no more severe than those of a mild flu, recommending it is not a significant threat to world health. However, for a person tended towards conspiracy ideas, these messaging may reinforce verification bias, where people lean towards evaluation of proofs that align with their existing beliefs.(Douglas & Sutton, 2008).

Common opinion encompasses the belief that the Covid was started and/or propagated by electromagnetic signals transferred through phone masts, (see Kouzy et al., 2020). Through social network analysis on X posts, researchers developed that the conspiracy theory was mainly publicized by an isolated group and a few users, some of whom signed up accounts particularly to spread this narrative (Ahmed et al., 2020). sharing of false information on S.M is carried by different factors, adding development in the technology sector for instance Artificial

Intelligence-manipulated media and AI-Programed accounts. Moreover, the charm and ease of spreading fake information contributed to its Larger distribution (Ferrara et al., 2020).

Fake news, described by Lazer et al. 2018), contrive news that exemplify the format of media content but lacks the systematic process or intent typically related with legitimate

news.studies indicate that the dissemination of false news is different from that of real news. Notably, false information on social platforms tends to circulate "farther, faster, deeper, and more broadly" compared to real news (Zhao et al., 2020).

**Theoretical Framework**

Framing Theory is concerned with the manner in which the media and communication present particular dimensions of an issue to the public in a manner that enhances acceptability by amplifying some aspects while minimizing other aspects of the same issue. This involves the argument that the manner in which information is 'operationally defined' determines how it is received by the audience, as different words, tone, and context appeal to different feelings or thought processes. The theory

points out that communication is not non-partisan and the frames can guide attention to specific readings, which in turn, shape perceptions and action among the public.

Framing Theory is most suitable here because it provides information on how moods such as anger, fear, and excitement were used to guide perception of events in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic including the spread of fake news. The pandemic was reported in media outlets and through social media posts that used these emotional appeals and moved audiences more to act and spread more misinformation. Through these emotional frames, the theory offered the theoretical groundwork of how the COVID-19 media events impacted the audience to foster the swift spread of fake news during the pandemic.

## Research Methodology

This research used a qualitative method to explore how three emotional tones which include anger, fear and excitement, help in the dissemination of fake news during the COVID 19 pandemic. A preliminary research was conducted using peer reviewed articles and reports which was published from early 2020 till the time of writing this paper and it was searched in Google scholar and other international journals dataset.

The present study used thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) to analyze common themes associated with emotional framing and misinformation dissemination. This entailed identifying with the material, creating initial codes, searching for themes, and reviewing and expanding on these themes before linking them to the theoretical framework of Framing Theory to explain the ways in which the media sways public opinion and accordingly leads to the further dissemination of fake news.

## Findings Emotional tones leads to misinformation in COVID-19 era

**RQ1:** Whether or not emotional tones play a significant role for spreading false or misinformation regarding COVID-19?

Based on research, it seems as though emotional tones may add tremendously to the dissemination of deceptive data in the covid-19 pandemic. Emotional messages sometimes evoke strong replies and have

the power to affect how individuals think and the way in which they come to meet decisions. People may tend to react more strongly to invalid information that is given to them emotionally, thereby raising the probability that these individuals are going to accept, and pass along it without investigating its validity. Exaggerated and emotionally charged content usually generates more attention and engagement on social media, making it easier for spreading false or fake news. Therefore it must be maintained that we understand how emotional tones leads to propagation of fake news.

## Major Elements associated with sharing of fake news

**RQ2:** what are the elements that are associated with the sharing of fake news related to COVID-19 Vaccination?

A number of factors contribute to the circulation of false news about covid19. To get started social networking platforms play a substantial part in the dissemination of information. These platforms enable the rapid and widespread distribution sometimes without sufficient source or content verification. It had been shown that people are more likely to get information that are emotionally charged and pay heed attention to these kinds of contents. During covid 19, a news was spreading out related to covid vaccination. People will die if they are injected with a vaccine after two years or they may get affected by other kinds of diseases. This creates a fear in minds of people and they start searching for anything related to this so they can get correct information and may get rid of this vaccination. In reality it was just a fear that was created by the social media emotionally charged content. Misinformation most often contains sensational and thrilled content, the audience can easily get inspired or attracted by that information and tend to rely on that information.

## Emotional tones linked with Sharing of Misinformation

**RQ3:** How emotional tone (anger, fear, excitement) is more linked with the sharing & spreading of false or misinformation?

Emotional tones like fear, anger, excitement is closely related to the sharing of misinformation or false news during the pandemic of COVID19. Emotional content trigger people and it may influence their

cognitive behavior to share that news specifically. Anger is a strong enough emotion to share any news. When an individual gets to know about any particular news that may increase their anger, and by sharing such news they can show sympathy with any person or with a group of people they used to share that news specifically.

Fear is another powerful emotion that may trigger an individual's behavior. When a person comes to know about any news that may create a fear and trigger them to share with others misinformation spreads rapidly. It may create harm in society.

Excitement is another strong emotion which may lead to spread misinformation on social media. People get news and in excitement they used to share news without confirmation which may cause disturbance and wide spreading of misinformation in society. During COVID 19 people use to spread news like how to recover from covid 19 earlier than specifically mentioned 14 days and which things they must have to use.

### Conclusion

It is concluded that misinformation, disinformation and fake news are based on emotional tones. It's human psychology that the news with a certain emotional tone and sensational content may grab their attention rapidly and they can process that news swiftly as compared to the news with no sensation. Fake news grasps readers' attention more swiftly than real news. It mostly contains emotional language, which may lead readers to trust on fake news rather than real news. Previous research shows that certain emotional language in content or news may prevent readers from cross-checking reality. One of the the captivating countenance of media is quickness with which they share news to be the first one of sharing "News Headline", this kind of news sharing is well suited for those users who want to be informed with new and fresh content. But may be ill suited for those who used to crosscheck the reality. It is clear that emotionally charged material grasp reader's attention.

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