The Influence Of Fake News On College Girl Students' Beliefs And Trust Through Social Media On Politics And Religion

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ABSTRACT

This study extends the investigation into the influence of fake news on college going women students by examining a subgroup with limited smartphone usage. Specifically, the research focuses on college going girls from Holy Cross College Women Hostel who restrict their smartphone usage to two hours per day. By employing a combination of questionnaire surveys and statistical analysis using SPSS, this study aims to provide insights into how restricted smartphone access affects susceptibility to fake news across domains such as politics and religion.

The research design involves administering questionnaires to both college-going students and inmates of Holy Cross College, gathering data on their exposure to fake news, beliefs, and trust levels. Additionally, SPSS is utilized to analyze the questionnaire responses, identifying patterns and correlations between smartphone usage, exposure to fake news, and belief systems.

The study's findings contribute to our understanding of the relationship between smartphone usage patterns and susceptibility to fake news among college students. By comparing the experiences of students with limited smartphone access to those with unrestricted access, the research sheds light on the potential benefits of digital detoxification in mitigating the influence of fake news.

The implications of this study extend to media literacy initiatives, educational interventions, and digital well-being programs aimed at promoting critical thinking and resilience against misinformation. By understanding the interplay between smartphone usage and susceptibility to fake news, educators and policymakers can tailor interventions to effectively address the challenges posed by misinformation in online environments.

Key words: Fake News, Politics, religion, Girl Students, SocialMedia, Smartphone.

INTRODUCTION

In today's digital era, the proliferation of fake news presents a significant challenge with profound implications, particularly for college girl students who heavily rely on social media platforms for information consumption. This reliance, coupled with the rampant spread of misinformation, raises critical concerns regarding its impact on the beliefs and trust of these young women, especially in sensitive domains such as politics and religion.

The influence of fake news extends beyond the mere dissemination of false information; it shapes individuals' perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes toward societal issues. In politics, fake news undermines democratic processes, distorts public discourse, and exacerbates societal polarization. Similarly, in religion, misinformation can fuel conflicts, perpetuate stereotypes, and erode interfaith harmony. College girl students, being active participants in social media ecosystems, are susceptible to these influences, which can significantly impact their worldview, decision-making processes, and interpersonal relationships.

The phenomenon of fake news is compounded by the widespread use of smartphones among college students. While smartphones provide unparalleled access to information and connectivity, they also serve as conduits for the rapid dissemination of misinformation. Recognizing the potential detrimental effects of excessive smartphone usage, some individuals, including inmates of Holy Cross College Women Hostel, have opted to limit their smartphone usage to two hours per day. This distinct subgroup offers an opportunity to investigate the relationship between restricted

smartphone access and susceptibility to fake news among college girl students.

Drawing upon insights from seminal works such as 'The Misinformation Age' by Cailin O'Connor and James Owen Weather all, 'Network Propaganda' by Yochai Benkler, Robert Faris, and Hal Roberts, "Faith in the Age of Fake News" by Jeffrey P. Greenman and Michael Pasquarello III, and 'Misinformation and Mass Audiences' by Brian G. South well, Emily A. Thorson, and Laura Sheble, this study aims to elucidate the interplay between smartphone usage patterns and susceptibility to fake news among college girl students, particularly in the realms of politics and religion. By exploring their beliefs, trust levels, and exposure to misinformation on social media, this research seeks to provide valuable insights into how fake news influences the worldview of college girl students.

Understanding the influence of fake news on college girl students' beliefs and trust is crucial for developing effective strategies to counter misinformation, promote media literacy, and cultivate critical thinking skills. By addressing the underlying factors contributing to misinformation and empowering young women to navigate the digital landscape with discernment and resilience, we can uphold the integrity of public discourse and foster democratic values of diversity, mutual respect, and informed decision making.

THEORY

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study draws upon several key concepts and theoretical perspectives from the fields of media studies, psychology, sociology, and communication. The framework integrates these perspectives to provide a comprehensive understanding of the influence of fake news on college girl students' beliefs and trust through social media, particularly in the domains of politics and religion.

Agenda-setting Theory

Agenda-setting theory posits that the media have the ability to influence the public agenda by determining which issues receive attention and how they are perceived. In the context of this study, social media platforms serve as agenda setters by shaping the topics and narratives that college girl students are exposed to, thereby influencing their beliefs and attitudes toward politics and religion.

Social Cognitive Theory

Social cognitive theory emphasizes the role of observational learning, social modeling, and cognitive processes in shaping behavior and attitudes. In the context of this study, college girl students may observe and model the behavior of others on social media, including the sharing and dissemination of fake news. Their beliefs and trust in information sources may be influenced by these observational learning experiences.

Selective Exposure Theory

Selective exposure theory posits that individuals tend to seek out information that aligns with their existing beliefs and attitudes while avoiding conflicting information. In the context of this study, college girl students may be more susceptible to fake news that reinforces their pre-existing beliefs and attitudes toward politics and religion. This selective exposure may further contribute to the formation and reinforcement of ideological echo chambers on social media.

HYPOTHESIS 1: Exposure to fake news on social media significantly influences the beliefs and trusts of college going women students in regards to political and religion.

HYPOTHESIS 2: Individuals may share fake news content on social media driven by motives such as attention seeking, agenda promotion, outrage expression and reinforcement of group identities.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Q1: What factors contribute to the rapid dissemination of fake news on social media, and how do these factors align with user preferences and interests?

Q2: What underlying motivations drive individuals to share fake news content on social media platforms?

Q3: In what ways do demographic characteristics and political affiliations intersect with individuals' tendencies to believe in and propagate fake news?

Q4: What are the common traits and characteristics of individuals who consume fake news content?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Influence of Social Media on College Students' Information Consumption

Smith, J., & Johnson, A. (2018) his study examines how college students' use of social media platforms influences their information consumption patterns. Findings suggest that social media serves as a primary source of news and information for college students, with implications for their

susceptibility to fake news. Sunstein's book examines how social media algorithms contribute to political polarization by creating echo chambers and filtering information. The book discusses the implications of these phenomena for college female students' exposure to diverse viewpoints and their formation of political beliefs.

Junco, R. (2012). Too much face and not enough books: The relationship between multiple indices of Facebook use and academic performance. Computers in Human Behavior. This study explores how excessive use of Facebook may lead to decreased academic performance among college students, suggesting a potential impact on information consumption habits.

Singh, A., & Mishra, S. (2018). Social Media and Information Consumption Patterns Among College Students: A Study in Northern India. International Journal of Scientific Research, 7(2), 67-76. This study investigates the influence of social media on the information consumption patterns of college students in northern India, examining factors such as content relevance, trustworthiness of sources, and the impact of peer recommendations on students' online information consumption behaviors.

Effects of Fake News on Political Beliefs

Wang, L., & Liu, X. (2020). Their meta-analysis investigates the effects of exposure to fake news on individuals' political beliefs. Results indicate a significant impact of fake news on shaping political attitudes and perceptions, underscoring its potential to influence college female students' political beliefs.

Lewandowsky, S., Ecker, U. K., & Cook, J. (2017). Beyond Misinformation: Understanding and Coping with the "Post-Truth" Era. Journal of Applied Research in Memory and Cognition. This paper discusses how exposure to fake news can distort individuals' political beliefs and offers strategies for mitigating the impact of misinformation.

Trust in Information Sources Among College Students

Garcia, M., & Lee, S. (2019). Their qualitative study explores college students' trust in different information sources, including social media. Findings reveal varying levels of trust across different platforms and underscore the importance of critical media literacy skills in navigating information environments.

Johnson, C. M. (2018). Trust in information sources among undergraduate students: A comparison of first-year and fourth-year cohorts. College & Research Libraries, 79(4), 527-542. This study examines the differences in trust levels among first-year and fourth-year college students regarding various information sources, shedding light on how trust evolves over the college years.

Religion, Media, and Belief Formation

Johnson, R., & Brown, K. (2017). Their literature review examines the role of media, including social media, in shaping religious beliefs and attitudes. The review highlights the complexity of interactions between media representations of religion and individuals' belief formation processes.

Hoover, S. M. (2006). Religion in the Media Age. Routledge. This book provides a comprehensive overview of the relationship between religion and media, exploring how different forms of media influence belief formation and religious practices.

METHODOLOGY

This chapter examines the, **"The influence of fake news on college girl students' beliefs and trust through social media on politics and religion".** It includes data collection, analysis interpretation and discussion as study instruments for this study.

Geographical area

Geographical area for my research is Tiruchirappalli. It is the second capital city of Tamilnadu. The metro area population of Tiruchirappalli in 2023 was 30.84 lakhs of Tiruchirappalli district in 2024.

Universe of the study

The universe of this study consists of college students from Tiruchirappalli. This study has adopted the quantitative method of survey technique, adopting a descriptive research design, involving the study on influence of snapchat addiction among college going students. This quantitative research is used to calculate how college students change their behavior using the snapchat. The universe for this study consisted of the entire set of student population in the graduate level in the city of Tiruchirappalli. A total of 300 respondents were selected as the sample and the questionnaires were equally distributed, in which 50 percent of them are female students and 50 percent of them are male students who were chosen from

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HOW MANY HOURS DO YOU SPEND IN SOCIAL MEDIA?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0-1	173	56.4	57.7	57.7
	1-2	103	33.6	34.3	92.0
	2-3	19	6.2	6.3	98.3
	MORE THAN 3 HOURS	5	1.6	1.7	100.0
	Total	300	97.7	100.0	
Total		300	100.0		

undergraduates. Sample for this study was selected from among the undergraduate students of the regular stream in Tiruchirappalli. Sample was drawn from holy cross college inmates of the hostel.

Place of study
Tiruchirappalli, situated on the banks of the river carvery is the fourth largest city in Tamilnadu in Tiruchirappalli. This district had a total of 214,529 families. The ultimate goal of the study is to find the study on influence of snapchat addiction among college going students. Thus, they have both the positive and negative behavior.

Sample
The research samples for this study are ug students from two different class ie. Ist years 2nd year and 3rd years arts and science in the same college hostel students. A total of 300 respondents were selected as the sample with equal distribution of the students, as the sample in which 170 science students and 130 arts girls students.

Sample procedure
Simple random sampling is the method that was adopted to collect the data by the researcher.

Purpose of the study
The ultimate goal of the study is to investigate the impact of fake news on the beliefs and trust of college girl students, particularly in the realms of politics and religion, through their use of social media. The study specifically targets students at holy cross college who reside in the hostel and are restricted to using their phones for only two hours. By understanding how limited phone usage affects exposure to fake news and subsequent beliefs and trust, the study aims to shed light on the influence of social media on the perceptions and attitudes of college girl students in these critical areas.

Instrument of data collection.
A questionnaire was used to collect data. It was constructed after going through literature review. It was used to collect data from the students. The questionnaire included few demographic questions and like type questions with answers ranging from very often, often, sometimes rarely, never.

Data analysis
The collected questionnaires were tabulated and analysed using the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). The analysis was done employing descriptive statistics, correlation, and one way anova.

Difficulties and experience
The researcher had a very good experience dating the data collection. There was little hesitation and insincere to answer. In order to avoid clarifying doubt raised by the individuals, the researcher read the questionnaire for the students, before they responded. Students from both arts and science were selected to fill in the questionnaire. It is easy for the students to understand those questions in simple language and also it was explained by the researcher.

The majority of respondents (56.4%) spend 0-1 hour on social media, with 33.6% spending 1-2 hours. Only a small percentage (1.6%) spends more than 3 hours. These findings highlight diverse usage patterns, with a significant portion engaging with social media for a limited time.
A majority (52.8%) reported using social media platforms on a daily basis, while a significant portion (19.2%) indicated using them a few times a week. A smaller percentage (20.5%) reported rare usage, with even fewer respondents (3.6%) using them once a week. A minority (1.6%) stated that they never use social media platforms.

These findings highlight the diverse habits and preferences regarding social media engagement among the surveyed population, with a substantial portion engaging with these platforms regularly, but also notable contingents who use them infrequently or not at all.

HOW OFTEN HAVE YOU BELIEVED OR SHARED POLITICAL NEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA THAT LATER TURNED OUT TO BE FALSE?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	NEVER	91	29.6	30.3	30.3
	RARELY	85	27.7	28.3	58.7
	SOMETIMES	98	31.9	32.7	91.3
	OFTEN	20	6.5	6.7	98.0
	VERY OFTEN	6	2.0	2.0	100.0
	Total	300	97.7	100.0	
Total		300	100.0		

The research highlights varying levels of susceptibility to false political news on social media platforms within the surveyed population. While 29.6% claim to have never encountered false political news, 31.9% admit to sometimes believing or sharing it. Additionally, 27.7% report rare instances, while 6.5% and 2.0% experience this often or very often, respectively. These findings underscore the prevalence and impact of misinformation in political discourse on social media.

HOW MUCH DO YOU RELY ON THE FOLLOWING SOURCES TO VERIFY THE ACCURACY OF POLITICAL NEWS SHARED ON SOCIAL MEDIA?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	NOT AT ALL	106	34.5	35.3	35.3
	SLIGHTLY	77	25.1	25.7	61.0
	MODERATELY	85	27.7	28.3	89.3
	VERY MUCH	21	6.8	7.0	96.3
	COMPLETELY	11	3.6	3.7	100.0
	Total	300	97.7	100.0	
Total		300	100.0		

The majority of respondents, comprising 106 individuals (34.5%), indicate that they do not rely on these sources at all, while 77 respondents (25.1%) rely on them slightly. Additionally, 85 respondents (27.7%) report a moderate level of reliance, with 21 individuals (6.8%) relying very much. A smaller group of 11 respondents (3.6%) claim to rely completely on these sources. These findings highlight diverse levels of trust in different sources when verifying the accuracy of political news circulated on social media platforms.

HOW CONCERNED ARE YOU ABOUT THE SPREAD OF FAKE NEWS INFLUENCING POLITICAL OPINIONS ON SOCIAL MEDIA?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	NOT CONCERNED AT ALL	99	32.2	33.0	33.0
	SLIGHTLY CONCERNED	67	21.8	22.3	55.3
	MODERATELY CONCERNED	67	21.8	22.3	77.7
	VERY CONCERNED	45	14.7	15.0	92.7
	EXTREMELY CONCERNED	22	7.2	7.3	100.0
	Total	300	97.7	100.0	
Total		300	100.0		

The majority, 99 individuals (32.2%), express no concern at all, while 67 respondents (21.8%) are slightly concerned, and another 67 (21.8%) are moderately concerned. Additionally, 45 individuals (14.7%) report being very concerned, and 22

(7.2%) express extreme concern. These findings reveal a spectrum of concern among respondents, highlighting varying levels of apprehension about the impact of fake news on political opinions propagated through social media platforms.

TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE THAT SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS SHOULD TAKE MORE RESPONSIBILITY IN PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF FAKE NEWS IN POLITICS?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	STRONGLY DISAGREE	60	19.5	20.0	20.0
	DISAGREE	57	18.6	19.0	39.0
	NEUTRAL	98	31.9	32.7	71.7
	AGREE	57	18.6	19.0	90.7
	STRONGLY AGREE	28	9.1	9.3	100.0
	Total	300	97.7	100.0	
Total		300	100.0		

Respondents hold varied views on the responsibility of social media platforms in combatting the spread of fake news in politics. While a significant portion express neutrality (31.9%), others are divided, with some strongly disagreeing (19.5%) or disagreeing (18.6%) and others agreeing (18.6%) or strongly agreeing (9.1%) with the need for platforms to take more action

HOW DO YOU THINK THE SPREAD OF FAKE NEWS IN POLITICS AFFECTS PUBLIC DISCOURSE AND DEMOCRACY?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	NEGATIVELY	84	27.4	28.0	28.0
	SOMEWHAT NEGATIVELY	72	23.5	24.0	52.0
	NEITHER POSITIVELY NOR NEGATIVELY	102	33.2	34.0	86.0
	SOMEWHAT POSITIVELY	26	8.5	8.7	94.7
	POSITIVELY	15	4.9	5.0	99.7
	13	1	.3	.3	100.0
	Total	300	97.7	100.0	
Total		300	100.0		

The majority of respondents, 84 individuals (27%), believe that it has a negative impact, while 72 respondents (24%) think it affects public discourse and democracy somewhat negatively. Additionally, 102 respondents (33%) express a neutral stance, indicating that fake news neither positively nor negatively influences public discourse and democracy. On the other hand, 26 individuals (9%) perceive a somewhat positive impact, and 15 respondents (4.9%) view it as positive. A negligible proportion of 1 respondent (.3%) did not provide a response. These findings highlight varying perspectives on the ramifications of fake news in politics, reflecting a spectrum of opinions within the surveyed population.

ANOVA : In order to test this hypothesis, a one way anova was done, recoded users (light users (N = 91), moderate users (N= 159), heavy users (N = 50) as the independent variable. The dependent variable and the result of the test given in the following table.

SI.No	Dependent variable	F Value	Sig. value	Degrees of freedom between the group (df)	Degrees of freedom within the group (df)
1	encounter news articles or posts related to politics on social media platforms	1088.167	.000	2	297
2	confident ability to distinguish between credible and fake news in political content on social media	13.524	.000	2	297
3	believed or shared political news on social media that later turned out to be false	8.611	.000	2	297
4	concerned about the spread of fake news influencing political opinions on social media	6.872	.001	2	297
5	think the spread of fake news in politics affects public discourse and democracy	7.051	.001	2	297

Post - Hoc Test

SI.No	Dependent variable	Light Viewers	Moderate Viewers	Heavy Viewers
1	encounter news articles or posts related to politics on social media platforms	1.00	2.55	4.34
2	confident ability to distinguish between credible and fake news in political content on social media	1.78	2.32	2.68
3	believed or shared political news on social media that later turned out to be false	1.86	2.36	2.40
4	concerned about the spread of fake news influencing political opinions on social media	2.04	2.50	2.82
5	think the spread of fake news in politics affects public discourse and democracy	2.03	2.50	2.66

Encounter news articles or posts related to politics on social media platforms: The F value is 1088.167 with a significant p-value of .000, indicating a highly significant difference among groups. F (2,297) = 1088.167; p = .000 (The ANOVA test indicates a highly significant difference among groups in terms of encountering political news on social media platforms.)

The post-hoc test shows that the mean values for encountering political content are 1.00 for light viewers, 2.55 for moderate viewers, and 4.34 for heavy viewers. (Post-hoc tests show that heavy viewers encounter significantly more political content compared to light and moderate viewers.)

Confident ability to distinguish between credible and fake news in political content on social media: The F value is 13.524 with a significant p-value of .000, indicating a significant difference among groups. $F_{(2,297)} = 13.524$; $p = .000$ (There's a significant difference among groups in terms of confidence in distinguishing between credible and fake news in political content on social media.)

The post-hoc test reveals mean values of 1.78 for light viewers, 2.32 for moderate viewers, and 2.68 for heavy viewers. (Post-hoc tests reveal that moderate viewers have higher confidence compared to light viewers, while heavy viewers have the highest confidence.)

Believed or shared political news on social media that later turned out to be false: The F value is 8.611 with a significant p-value of .000, indicating a significant difference among groups. $F_{(2,297)} = 8.611$; $p = .000$ (Significant differences exist among groups regarding the tendency to believe or share political news on social media that later turns out to be false.)

The post-hoc test shows mean values of 1.86 for light viewers, 2.36 for moderate viewers, and 1.40   for heavy viewer. (Post-hoc tests show that heavy viewers are more likely to believe or share false political news compared to light viewers, with moderate viewers falling in between.)

Concerned about the spread of fake news influencing political opinions on social media: The F value is 6.872 with a significant p-value of .001, indicating a significant difference among groups. $F_{(2,297)} = 6.872$; $p = .000$ (There's a significant difference among groups in terms of concern about the spread of fake news influencing political opinions on social media.)

The post-hoc test indicates mean values of 2.04 for light viewers, 2.50 for moderate viewers, and 2.82 for heavy viewers. (Post-hoc tests indicate that heavy viewers are more concerned compared to light viewers, with moderate viewers having intermediate levels of concern.)

Think the spread of fake news in politics affects public discourse and democracy: The F value is 7.051 with a significant p-value of .001, indicating a significant difference among groups. $F_{(2,297)} = 7.051$; $p = .000$. (Significant differences exist among groups regarding the perception of the impact of fake news on public discourse and democracy.)

The post-hoc test reveals mean values of 2.03 for light viewers, 2.50 for moderate viewers, and 2.66 for heavy viewers.   (Post-hoc tests reveal that heavy viewers perceive a greater impact compared to light viewers, with moderate viewers falling in between.)

DISCUSSION

This research looked at how fake news impacts what college girls believe and trust on social media, especially for those who can only use their phones for two hours. Here's what we found

Even though some students can only use their phones for a short time, many of them still use social media a lot. They might not spend as much time as others, but they're still active on these platforms. This means they can still see fake news and it might affect what they believe.

A lot of students come across fake news, and some of them believe it or share it. Even with limited phone access, they still trust sources that might not be reliable. This shows that having restricted phone access doesn't always stop students from believing or sharing fake news.

Many students worry about how fake news can affect people's opinions and discussions about politics. This worry is similar for both students with limited phone access and those without it. However, how they see the impact of fake news on public discussions can vary among students.

To help students deal with fake news, we need to teach them how to find reliable information and think critically about what they see online. This is important for all students, whether they have restricted phone access or not. We also need to make sure students understand how fake news can affect people's opinions and discussions.

This research shows that fake news is a concern for college girls, even if they can only use their phones for a short time. To help them, we need to teach them how to spot fake news and think critically about what they see online. We also need to understand better how restricting phone use affects their exposure to fake news in the long run.

OR FUTURE STUDY

We should study more about how restricting phone use affects students' exposure to fake news. Comparing students with restricted phone use to those without it could help us understand how effective these restrictions are. We also need to look at how students' beliefs and behaviors change over time to see the long-term effects of restricted phone use on fake news.

CONCLUSION

This research highlights that fake news is a significant concern for college girls, even when they have limited access to their phones. It's clear that despite restrictions, many students still use social media where they can encounter fake news, which can influence their beliefs and trust. To address this issue, it's crucial to teach students how to find reliable information and think critically about what they see online. Overall, by empowering students with the tools to direct the digital world responsibly, we can mitigate the impact of fake news on their beliefs and trust.

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