

Media Literacy and Democratic Resilience: Countering Misinformation in the Information Age

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Abstract

The wide spread of false information is now becoming an international problem. One proposed remedy is the improvement of peoples' ability to differentiate between correct and incorrect information via appropriate media literacy education measures. Misinformation refers to information that is distributed but is false or untrue, regardless of the intent to deceive. This spectrum contains everything from overt factual errors and mis-communications to mistakes in reporting or transmitting through unintended means. Given how easy it is for content to be shared and propagated in the digital era, misinformation can spread and often originates from various channels-people, media organizations, or social media entities.

Media literacy refers to the knowledge about accessing, interpreting, analyzing, and communicating media in its multiple forms. It includes having a deep understanding of how media works, how messages are transmitted through media, and how media affects society. Through media literacy, therefore, people can distinguish what is fact from fiction or false and critically analyze the motivation and credibility of various media communications. People must be aware of the truthfulness about the information and its related news, this is of utmost importance in today's digital world where information is huge and sometimes distorted. Media literacy builds critical thinking by making a person aware of misinformation and the agenda behind the creation of the media. Further, this empowers the people to interact

with the media in an active and responsible manner, which in turn will allow them to make wise judgments and create a more informed and discerning society.

To sustain long-term, sustainable improvements in well being requires democratic resilience. The tightest definition of democratic resilience would be to prevent democracies from turning into non-democracies. However, it also refers to sustaining excellent institutions that guarantee respect for fundamental rights, representative governance and participation, checks on the government, and the backing of an unbiased administration. Corruption in public institutions is particularly critical to sustain the resilience of democracy. Trust levels are inherently different in democracies. The continuous quest for trust ensures that democratic governments get better and better, permits stable business environments, guards against corruption, and upholds the legitimacy of international legal frameworks, all of which promote innovation and long-term corporate investment.

Key words: Media Literacy, Misinformation, Dis information, democracy with Media, Media role

Media Literacy

Obviously, media literacy is a weapons asset in battling misinformation. By all standards, much more critical, highly technologically literate consumers citizens-citizens and so many other related roles-consumers/ citizens-evaluate information critically, learn to recognize better sources for reliable information that flows from knowing what they've learned-the ability to determine if information came from a certain web site-source. Possessed media literacy make them able to interact with a potentially more entire and imaginative on-, off- line media. It is essential to teach adults and children media literacy. This is not something you learn for a day and forget all about. It is absolutely important to understand and develop practical skills but also knowing and being aware of how the digital world works. Of course, it is not the only solution to the spread of misinformation, and neither is it a panacea to eliminate the need for other laws and programs. Often, policymakers see media literacy as an easy victory but,

in reality, is rather complex, as Professor Sonia Livingstone has often pointed out. Because so much of the online world is unintelligible and ever-evolving, it is imperative that citizens not be burdened with the obligation of comprehending the inexplicable. By saying this, media literacy is an essential step to the regulation of improvement of the public's ability to navigate the online environment. Without proper education and awareness, only regulations will not be so effective to combat with these disinformation and misinformation.

The importance of media literacy in combating misinformation cannot be seen in a vacuum. Media literacy efforts have been going on for decades and have a much greater role to play in citizenship, even if many of the worries about online misinformation have only recently come to light. It is usual to view media literacy as a response to an issue such as disinformation (or online safety, digital inclusion, hate speech, radicalization, etc.). This approach is dangerous since it narrows the focus and allows for short-term thinking to prevail when long-term planning and funding are called for. Such planning should be on at least a ten-year cycle and longer if possible.

Instead of being a catchphrase for media and ISP firms, the practice of media literacy must become a real issue relevant to EVERYONE. That's why "civic competence," which should be somehow aligned with more general concerns such as diversity, ethics, sustainability, and social inclusion, is crucial and should come above technological considerations in and of themselves. Thus, we have to go fast and efficient with really needed initiatives and get out from the kind of morale-boosting rhetoric so widely dominating the profession.

Given these premises, we should perform fact-based research and focus our efforts on lobbying social media companies to produce better-quality content, technical tools, such as report buttons, and to follow global regulations and enable mobility. The inter sectoral development regulatory framework should be more commonly utilized, and cooperation between governmental and quasi-governmental agencies must be increased.

Media literacy is essential for people to acquire cognitive, technological, and social skills and capacities that would enable them to access information in media efficiently and make a critical evaluation of it. Media literacy makes our jobs, lives, and citizenship all dependent because it helps us make wise decisions, understand the moral implication of modern technology and media, and most importantly, how to communicate effectively with others in the digital world. Media literacy is therefore fundamental to the Commission's goals and digital strategy as a requirement for citizens of all ages to successfully navigate the contemporary news landscape and make informed decisions. Lifelong learning in critical and digital abilities is crucial to strengthen our societies' resistance to misinformation.

This story highlights the significance of media literacy in the digital age. Media literacy refers to the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create a range of media. It equips individuals with the ability to understand the complex media environment, distinguish between reality and fantasy, and make informed choices. In a world where false information and fake news can spread like wildfire on social media and other digital channels, media literacy has become an important factor for both individual and societal empowerment. Media literacy helps shield people and communities from the negative impacts of false information by encouraging critical thinking and media consumption that is informed. Media and educational policy often shifted between development projects and protectionist positions. The concept of media education in India is a bit vague at present. It has multiple disciplinary and political implications-including the idea of being critical media education for radical social transformation, learning through media-based technologies such as ICT, and vocational training for media professionals. The type of questions and contents that have different impacts on the three areas. However, all of them support the normative objectives of participation, empowerment, and progress.

There are many varied forums where media education takes place: such as practice-based learning; governmental efforts; academia; and civil society interaction. It could be argued that

a failure to define it precisely is in itself a virtue in coming up with a multi-faceted, inclusive approach to information and communication literacy. In terms of the hindrances to empowerment as presented by media literacy, which focuses on the relationship between the public sphere, media, and its sociopolitical systems, India has a tradition of citizen involvement, public protests, and seeking information that have developed the public sphere beyond institutional limitations. However, it is divided by different governmental structures, history, languages, educational opportunities, and access to technology.

Misinformation and Disinformation

Quick access to a wide range of online sources, the abundance of information, and the lack of geographical or temporal constraints are some of the biggest advancements in online media in the digital age. However, despite all of its benefits, new media exposes users to a serious risk: exposure to dubious sources like false news and misinformation. Credibility is one of the major features of a journalistic text. Every journalistic work that is supposed to be consumed by the public needs to include certain facts and events from its social reality. We are vulnerable to being exposed to fake news because it is hard to determine the origin and intention of some of the content online in the digital world.

Misinformation is defined as information which is spread as false or inaccurate, regardless of the intent to deceive. It encompasses a wide range of false information, from simple mistakes and misrepresentations to unintentional mistakes in reporting or content sharing. Since people can share information easily and receive it from various sources that range from human channels, mass media stations, or social media sites in this day and age, misinformation quickly disseminated can come from any place and person. Misinformation spreads based on the belief of people sharing this piece of information as real while compared to disinformation, where someone deliberately creates false information just to mislead. At times, even without intention, misinformation can cause dangerous negative effects. These effects include creating confusion, spreading

misconceptions, and influencing public opinion or conduct based on incorrect premises.

Examples of the prototypical kinds of disinformation are government propaganda, doctored versions of Wikipedia entries, faked documents, photos, maps, Internet frauds, phony websites, and misleading ads (in politics as well as in business). Disinformation is such a pervasive and pernicious danger to the quality of information that we need to begin by giving it a sharply focused meaning. This essay reviews the various meanings given to this concept by philosophers and information scientists. It argues that such analyses are either too narrow (excluding things that are disinformation) or too wide (including things that are not disinformation), or both. Several of these assessments do, in fact, overlook significant types of deception, including adaptive, side-effect, visual, and real disinformation.

Disinformation is not a recent phenomenon; it has always been present in the traditional and linear media landscape. However, because of the disruptive effects of the internet and new communications technologies on the digital era, worries about misinformation have grown. Distribution of Information Worldwide. The algorithms of the social media platforms allow for tailoring the information and messages sent to specific segments of the population, rather than broadcasting a single, unified message to the entire population. It is much more likely to have a negative effect on democratic processes and public discussion when messages and information are framed to the recipient in consideration of their gender, social class, location, age, political beliefs, or economic standing.

India is one of the most Misinformation prone country in South-East Asia, Whereas political misinformation is ubiquitous in India, it has oftentimes been relegated to or amplified by health and religious misinformation. Political misinformation arises only ahead of or amid crucial political events. The prevailing political context is accountable for the spread of political and other varieties of misinformation. Generally speaking, there are two political situations that are often favorable for spreading misinformation: the polarization of the society and

populist communication. Both trends are witnessed in present India. Furthermore, little trust in journalism, poor public service media, a more divided audience, and very high social media use can also be responsible cause for misinformation in India. Even though, some digital interventions, like chatbots and AarogyaSetu, have been seen during the pandemic to combat the proliferating misinformation problem, they are creating a crisis of trust among people in different ways. India, as a democracy, has had a mixed and chaotic track record in combating fake news. Some of its politicians have continued to undermine the effectiveness of the government by spreading unproven and inaccurate health information, even though the government has been working with big technology companies to limit the spread of fake news.

Democracy and Media

Media communicates political information, and a society bases its assumptions and decisions on it. Political and economic freedom are basic characteristics of a free media in a real democracy. Mainly, the media serves an information medium and communication in a civil, democratic, and tolerant society. The modern term often used in connection with the media is its referring as the fourth pillar of democracy, and the media power is essential in constructing a democratic culture beyond the political system. Freedom of expression forms the core of democracy, for there are several bases for this argument, though the most basic idea here is that democracy cannot stand unless the citizenry in which the votes in democratic elections and participates with governmental institutions in public processes are cognizant and are accorded the right to share their opinions freely in matters of public discourse. There would be one of the rationalities of the notion of democracy in that people may have a right to vote for their political leaders or make free and informed choices that can hardly exist with a right to freedom of expression. Democracy cannot succeed without the media and free press. In simple words, Democracy is the government of, for, and by the people. In this context, a democratic society requires the free press to be actively and vigilantly involved. It is the people's voice. It is crucial to the development of a robust democracy.

The media is regarded as the beating heart of a democracy. It is an important source of information, creating awareness among people in every nation in the world. The majority of people agree that the media is the fourth pillar of democracy. It makes people aware of different happenings from grounds such as sports, politics, economic, and social, etc. Media sometimes act like a mirror which illustrates the basic reality and sometimes it may be harsh.

In the context of Indian democracy, Citizens were denied access to basic information in the name of state security, and transparency in the government process was a pipe dream in the 20th century. In the independence struggle for India, print media played a crucial role and gained confidence. Many of the freedom fighters were allegedly journalists, and it is commonly known that the majority of them had a solid understanding of journalism. The media had greatly impacted the freedom movement in India. Subsequently after India's independence, the duty and role of the media was improved but during the period of emergency (1975) the activities of media were heavily curtailed. Media independence was totally destroyed, and even harsh commands were given to the media outlets. However, during the post-emergency period, the role of the media grew again and became much more relevant to the masses. Indian newspapers represented the political, social, economic, and cultural life of the country, which finally strengthened democracy and the Indian people's rule. Along with print media, electronic media particularly television programs and the internet has transformed the news reporting and analysis process in the recent past.

For a democratic nation, access to knowledge is crucial, and the ability to read and write freely is a vital part of exposing and revealing the truth, ensuring citizens' self-actualization and self-development, and assisting in ensuring citizens' involvement in a democracy. In other words, democracy is often considered a system of governance that is subject to popular sovereignty. It ensures that instead of acting out of ignorance or misinformation, citizens make responsible, informed decisions. Further, by ensuring that elected officials honor their oaths of office and carry out the demands of their

constituents, information performs a “checking function.” A democratic system can function at its best when there is widespread public engagement, which is impossible without people being informed on a range of topics. The media enters the picture here. People’s sovereignty, rule of law, social and political equality, elected government through universal adult suffrage, free and open competition for political office and institutions, periodic elections to legitimize government, civil liberties and fundamental rights, multi-party system, independent judiciary, and free media are some of the fundamental features of democracy.

Conclusion

Media Education should transcend from top-down approaches that treat the media consumer as completely powerless and instead consider them vacillating between passivity and action. The traditional model of media education, which seeks to empower people through information literacy and active action, must be complemented with public and media organizations along with sociopolitical effort. Strong pressures to increase information access “through a combination of (improved literacy, more assertive citizens, the spread of elected government) and supply (technologies that make knowledge more widely and cheaply available)” can help the poor “gain greater access to knowledge and information, regardless of the concentration of media,” as has optimistically been noted. Enlightenment occurs when information is available. There are answers when there is discussion. Exploitation, corruption, repression, and annoyance will occur in the absence of power distribution, the rule of law, and accountability. The media does more than just cover the news.

In addition, it watches for management and protects against corruption as well as bad management. Mass media has played an enormous role in popularizing the crusade against corruption. It has evolved as an increasingly responsible and mature organisation over time. Mass media corporations are a high threat. In a country like India, the media must go towards citizen-friendly democracy.

In this digital era of Mass Media, information flooding from different platform of media become a headache as many a times it has been observed that wrong or mis information being served to the mass. Social media is the main source of this wrong interpretation or conception about any news and eventually it creates confusion. Given the lack of a legal framework pertaining to platform governance in India, an outcomes-based self-regulatory framework may be a must for stakeholders to collaborate in the fight against online disinformation. Its execution depends on platforms' cooperation in the absence of enforcement instruments. There may also be difficulties for a prospective oversight body carrying out audits or efficiently keeping an eye on implementation. Nonetheless, this strategy would help close the divide between the government and social media companies and possibly steer clear of prescriptive laws like the Intermediary Liability Rules changes, which represent a greater risk to user rights. Media plays an pivotal role to inform and aware about the socio-economical changes happening around us by disseminating correct information about the news. Transnational media companies have ventured into the Indian market with their own global reach in the fight for sustainability and profit. Interests over truth and accuracy, which were initially thought to be a tool for social change through educational programs aimed at empowering the weaker sections of society and only focus on the truth. However, there have sometimes been communal riots due to excessive coverage or propaganda of sensitive subjects. Apathy and insensitivity are encouraged through the continuous repetition of news, especially sensational news. While the media has been able to monitor government action and encourage participatory communication at times, much work has to be done still. With respect to broadcasting and publishing news like this, the media must exercise very great care. It both stands to protect law enforcement officials' legal power and it mirrors the society in the face. Though there might not exist any direct and particular press freedom in Indian law which defines press freedom, but article 19(1) (a) undoubtedly included it under clause freedom of speech and expression.

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