Mis-Information Blends on Facebook during Infodemic COVID-19 in Bangladesh

Misinformation isn't a relatively new phenomenon. With the rapid growth of mobile users' and ease of use entry to the Internet, false information is circulating from people to people at a very high pace. In this case, some of the questions like, 'do people glaringly accept misinformation? Why don't people check the sources Prior to sharing details Along with others?' etc., Most issue remains unanswered. Panic triggered by False information in the time frame of the occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic is also not lesser. This research describes how unconsciousness and anxiety spread through Facebook during the coronavirus crisis in Bangladesh. The study analyzes the content of a total of 73 selected fake contents related to COVID-19 on Facebook between February to June 2020. Researchers examine the features of the known fake news by placing the contents in certain categories and explore how Facebook users post false information without cross-checking and make the public more unconscious and panicked. This work shows that, in some cases, mainstream media cover the wrong story by posting it on their website page, or to social media, and result in users believing in such non-authentic content. But myths, misinformation, and fraud fuel up making it more difficult for the government to reduce risks, and the health crisis is turning into a national economic crisis as well. The article also provides several suggestions by asking mass media to provide accurate information and increase public awareness to avoid the spread of misinformation.

Keywords: *Mis-Information Blends, COVID-19, Infodemic, Facebook, Bangladesh*

Introduction

The world is going through a challenging period because it has been battling the global pandemic coronavirus disease (COVID-19) since December 2019, when the very first case was detected in Wuhan, China. By then, more than 188 countries and territories (Wikipedia, 2020) have transmitted the novel virus, resulting in millions of infected cases and deaths. Tackling the situation was getting more complicated as the WHO (World Health Organization) quickly declared the outbreak as a 'Public Health Emergency of International Concern' and later proclaimed the virus to be a 'global pandemic' in March 2020 (WHO, 2020). In Bangladesh, the country's epidemiological institute IEDCR registered the first three identified cases on 8 March 2020 (IEDCR, 2020). Before the discovery of verified cases of COVID in Bangladesh, hundreds of false rumors and Facebook news circulated, making people unconscious and, in some cases, causing panic. Fake news about coronavirus spreads faster than credible sources and hinders the credibility of government information and the message of mass media. With some 34 million Facebook users in Bangladesh (Internet World Stats, 2020), numerous rumors, hoaxes,

1 and misinformation have appeared almost all of the time on social media, and
2 the public has begun to shift towards fear and panic unconsciously through
3 misinformation, which has challenged the government to take the right
4 measures to mitigate the danger. This research discusses how unconsciousness
5 and fear spread through people by disinformation on Facebook.
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8 **Background of the Study**
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10   While WHO partners with social networking sites to provide reliable
11 information to the public and to seek to eradicate misinformation, social media
12 sites are disseminating information internationally crucially during the outbreak of
13 COVID-19. Throughout this case, people use social media as a platform for
14 disseminating intentional misinformation and false contents, like 'Coronavirus
15 spreads out from the bat soups and among other Chinese foods,' 'the virus has
16 caused either the US to kill China or China to kill the USA,' etc., and it causes
17 doubt and hysteria among the public.
18   Fake news has sparked violence in Bangladesh over the last 7-8 years,
19 with quite several incidents taking place where Facebook was the medium to
20 spread the abuse. In the current situation, people have taken the Facebook
21 forum to communicate, discuss, and share their thoughts and views, where a
22 majority of them appear to spread misinformation about the ongoing
23 coronavirus outbreak. We may do much more damage to our society, because
24 people here are not so critical and trustworthy in some form of misuse of social
25 media. In an effort to prevent the dissemination of misinformation, rumors and
26 speculation about the latest outbreak of coronavirus, law enforcement officials
27 have asked a number of social media users and news outlets to "delete" and
28 "correct" their posts and stories (Dhaka Tribune, 2020).
29   There are several cases where the government claims to be an "anti-fake
30 news" player and the fact, however, says otherwise (The Daily Star, 2019). In
31 December 2018, days ahead of the national elections, Facebook and Twitter
32 suspended fake news pages and accounts linked to the Bangladeshi government
33 for publishing anti-opposition material (Reuters, 2018).
34   After the presence of the first cases of coronavirus in Bangladesh,
35 misinformation and misleading advice on coronavirus go viral on social media
36 as well as speculation on infected coronavirus and death estimates, causing
37 confusion among people. In April, the police reported at least 14 cases under
38 the Digital Protection Act related to the spread of coronavirus-related rumors in
39 social media, and 15 people were arrested (New Age, 2020). The number of
40 spreads of misinformation continues to increase, as do coronavirus cases.
41   Misinformation like, 'The virus won't survive long in hot climates like
42 Bangladesh,' 'eating thankuni leaves or drinking tea or hot water with ginger or
43 garlic is the only treatment,' 'the poor don't get infected with these diseases,' has
44 spread through the Facebook platform to make people more unconscious.
45 Religious coronavirus rumors are also well-publicized; in particular, the virus does
46 not infect Muslims and makes it more difficult for all concerned to contain both

1   pandemics and infodemics. As the head of the WHO Health Emergency Program,
2   Dr. Mike Ryan, said, 'We need a misinformation vaccine.' Research is necessary
3   for understanding the roots and the way how the disinformation spread, alongside
4   facilitated endeavors to disrupt its sources and to distinguish, evacuate, and
5   diminish its spread (NPR, 2020). Recent studies show how social media aims to
6   create panic among people as a whole. This research highlights some
7   misinformation related to COVID-19, where researchers will analyze how people
8   have become unconscious by misinformation on Facebook.
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11   **The Study Objective**
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13   The objective of the study is to identify how users disseminate fake
14   contents through Facebook and to find out the pattern of fake contents during
15   the COVID-19 outbreak among the people in Bangladesh.
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18   **Related Literature Review**
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20   Individuals generally depend on distortion of news when requested to attract
21   derivations and create conclusions about the content (Rich & Zaragoza, 2016).
22   Misinformation on social media is more prevalent throughout the outbreak.
23   Emerging pandemics need a comprehensive strategy on education and health
24   communication for public health institutions to address public awareness needs
25   about potential threats while reducing risk escalation and dramatization
26   (Strekalova, 2016).
27   The world's largest social media site, Facebook, has announced its community
28   norm on the subject, concentrating on eradicating misinformation from its site as it
29   works on new things to identify and constrain the dissemination of false news.
30   After the flare-up of the latest coronavirus started, Facebook has been fighting a
31   comparative flood of false reports and misinformation (Carnahan & Brooks,
32   2020). The same type of incident occurred during the Ebola outbreak in Africa.
33   Oyeyemi et al. (2014) discussed the misinformation spread on twitter during the
34   Ebola outbreak, which caused panic and anxiety, and found that a large number of
35   tweets were incorrectly informative and had a wide range of information than
36   authentic information. In these situations, people are in desperate need of accurate
37   and credible information from sources. The article finds that internet-based
38   sources are the most widely available in this digital age, so people want to find
39   reliable information from a web-based application. Researchers suggested that
40   policymakers, the government, and health experts need to develop policies and
41   find the right approaches to stop the spread of misinformation and scatter the
42   correct information.
43   Jeanine et al (2017) studied Twitter and Instagram related Ebola outbreak
44   posts, and the researchers found Instagram to be more effective in meaningful
45   communication with users. The study concluded that health authorities could

1   properly use social media platforms to disseminate information related to Ebola
2   and to control misinformation about it.
3   Megha Sharma et al. (2017) analyzes that 'unauthentic posts have been much
4   more common than those that disseminate reliable and important public health
5   knowledge about the disease. 'A recent study estimated that while the amount of
6   false news was on the increase, its ability to set the agenda for the rest of the news
7   media was on the decline (Vargo, Guo, & Amazeen, 2018). Other studies suggest
8   that, particularly when social media is used as an individual news consuming
9   medium, individuals rely primarily on their own opinion and initial experiences,
10   and only look at the outside authenticator if they feel dissatisfied with the first
11   experience of the story (Tandoc, Ling, Westlund, Duffy, Goh, & Wei, 2018).
12   Misleading posts will spread quickly because anyone can say anything to
13   anyone, with more than millions of users online consistently, numerous media
14   outlets have become ubiquitous without the control of editorial and could
15   undoubtedly be trusted or paid attention (Armstrong & Naylor, 2019).
16   In another study, NiamYaraghi (2019) describes misinformation on social
17   media as a negative aspect of our culture, making the world less informed and
18   disintegrating confidence. The study concludes that web-based companies ignore
19   their responsibility for published content on their websites, but over the years have
20   devised a series of computerized and human-driven procedures for the promotion,
21   editing and filtering of published content, as these measures have become primary
22   sources of knowledge for an overwhelming number of users.
23   Ahmad et al., (2020) researched on social media panic during coronavirus
24   pandemic in Iraqi Kurdistan and found that Facebook is often used to spread fear
25   and paranoia on COVID-19 and has a negative effect on the mental health of
26   users, causing psychological distress among young people.
27   Another research, why are people spreading disinformation during the
28   Pandemic COVID-19? 'tests how misinformation spreads quickly through social
29   media. The study found that consumers trust social media news and post
30   unverified information about COVID-19.
31   Research evidence shows that, according to COVID-19, people's perception
32   of cyberchondria has not affected the sharing of unverified information on social
33   media, and the effect of cyberchondria on unverified information sharing can be
34   improved by overloading information (Samuli Laato et al., 2020). In another
35   article, Emma Charlton (2020) states, 'With false news and the dissemination of
36   misinformation as characterizing issues, incorrect, misleading or false clinical
37   exhortation will flow around the world before anyone has the opportunity to
38   address it.'
39   In yet another article titled, "Fighting COVID-19 Misinformation on Social
40   Media: Experimental Evidence for Scalable Accuracy-Nudge Intervention,"
41   researchers found that participants post misleading news about COVID-19 in
42   the light of the fact that they actually fail to consider if the content is reliable when
43   deciding what to post, advising users to enhance their choices on what to share on
44   social networking platforms. (Pennycook et al., 2020).
45   Misinformation may be deliberately circulated or unintentionally transmitted
46   through web-based networking media. Like other social media platforms,

Facebook acts as a multiplier and facilitator of Coronavirus related information and misinformation. There is a range of concerns that pose immediate, direct, and implied reactions during outbreaks and crises.

With an overflow of information in the digital age, from unauthentic or deceptive sources, it is not so easy for individuals to distinguish authentic and reliable sources (Wemer, 2020) because the specialists concerned have shown a propensity to ignore their credibility among the people.

Frenkel et al. (2020) stated that some social media platforms were seeking to eradicate misinformation from their sites after WHOs believed that social media platforms were spreading disinformation on COVID-19 worldwide. Facebook says the social media giant is committed to raising the dissemination of fake news as close to zero as possible. This also addresses the need to ensure that action is taken to fix the issue when people experience hoaxes. In that case, Facebook is trying to identify false news through its community and third-party fact-checking organizations to limit its spread (Facebook for Media, 2017).

Rothschild (2020) argued that social media is spreading fear and panic among its users. Brewer (2020) writes that the public has been affected by panic and anxiety by hearing a lot of information and news about COVID-19. In his study, Vigdor (2020) attempted to find the result of misinformation during the coronavirus pandemic. The study concludes that misinformation is extremely dangerous, as any missteps will pose a significant public health risk during the COVID-19 pandemic by contributing to an exponential spread of the disease and accidental death due to self-medication.

In the debate on social media, Cellan-Jones (2020) argued that social media users want to get information and facts about COVID-19, but due to the misuse of the site, some countries use filters that allow social media to provide information, but not all the facts.

In Bangladesh, following the confirmation of Covid-19 cases, many people used social media platforms to express, comment, and share their concerns about the currently underway coronavirus issue. At this time, certain people are attempting to generate confusion and speculation about the coronavirus outbreak in society by spreading rumors and misinformation.

People generally accept things that affirm their preferences, regardless of how peculiar they are (Shishir, 2019) and the problem starts from there. In this case, traditional media has a role to play in presenting accurate facts so that people can better judge the content of social media. If users are not able to ensure that authentic data from credible and trustworthy sources distributed on Facebook will affect others to the negative outcome of such an outbreak. Committed to this, a systematic research question was built based on a thorough literature review that concludes how Facebook users continue to disburse and disseminate misinformation that resides in them more unconscious and create more panic during this COVID pandemic.

Theoretical Framework

Misinformation is not unprecedented (Banerjee & Haque, 2018). Today there are a large number of theories on psychology just as perspectives on individuals spreading lies and misinformation. The Social Identity theory was anticipated by Tajfel Turner and is considered to be one of Turner's impressive achievements (McLeod, 2019). Tajfel Turner, et al. (1979) argues that social identity is a self-concept of an individual originating from membership in a particular social community. In other words, the communities to which individuals belong is a significant aspect of personal-esteem and dignity for them (McLeod, 2019).

As per Social Identity Theory and Normative Influence Theory, individuals devour and disseminate knowledge that is socially acceptable to share in order to gain social acceptance, which would be an absolute necessity for a person's trust and character. On the other hand, according to the theory of Prospect, individuals decide on decisions that depend on relative misfortunes and advantages as opposed to their current position. Social recognition can also support, and by integrating the Social Identity Theory and the Prospect Theory, it can be inferred that, in order to retain or gain social approval, individuals can share information without sufficient control of the truth.

This can only be demonstrated by the rise of social media political parties. Rather than providing accurate interpretations of facts, certain political media organizations are deciphering data as evidenced by convictions and behaviors of in-group bias. This is a way of assuming what consumers are looking for rather than relying on what is real (Leonard, 2018). Such reports from political media outlets will be further shared, even if the reports are wrong.

On the contrary, The Media Literacy Theory (James Potter, 2014) is a conceptual framework that narrowly explains how a person accumulates knowledge in the throes of a conflicting information in a media setting and how individuals construct an incorrect understanding of that piece of evidence. In line with the Uses and Pleasure Principle, individuals use the media to fulfill their personal needs. Thus, during a time of urgency, people may offer false information in order to satisfy their mental satisfaction by inducing fear in the group or by finding the ideal results to be obtained through the dispensation of misinformation.

Misinformation was used as a tool during the 2016 U.S. presidential election to gain mass support during votes (Shirsat, 2018). Political campaigns used the internet as one means of spreading false information. The information shared with group leaders and further shared with less-involved users or followers of opinion may have an effect on the thought process of the whole community, in line with the two-step flow theory (Elkin, 1957). This may be intended to be used by politicians in the voting cycle to create propaganda.

The 2016 US Presidential campaign and the proliferation of false information offer a good example of this. Trump's victory in that election is an example of how to make good use of Magic Bullet Theory, although it is considered out of line with reality (Fayoyin, 2016). According to Common Theory, people made their decisions by voting for Trump because of conspiracy theories about Hillary Clinton which were spread via social media platforms like Facebook, believing in

1 false information (Marwick, 2018). Moreover, passive social media users will
2 believe everything they get from the web platforms and that users will continue to
3 do so consciously or unconsciously.
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6 **Methodology**
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8   A qualitative methodology has been chosen for this research because of the
9 especially useful qualitative approaches in examining the in-depth context people
10 give to the things they perceive (Merriam, 1998). Specifically, the phenomeno-
11 logical approach was used to clarify how participants make sense of the
12 phenomenon being studied, i.e. whether social media is an effective tool for
13 exchanging crucial information during the Covid-19 pandemic, or not.
14 Advancement of social media has paved the way for user-generated content that
15 leads to early notifications, awareness and protections that are equally
16 disseminated in these circumstances by misinformation and disinformation.
17   The researchers here have selected Facebook based on popularity as per the
18 Bangladesh Government advising to help spread credible content from reputable
19 sources for awareness-raising, and to delete fake news or disinformation that
20 would cause public hysteria. In this the researchers have attempted to find out
21 whether the social media is informing or misinforming the public about the
22 COVID-19 pandemic outbreak.
23   The first cases were reported by the government on 8 March (IEDCR, 2020)
24 and the government was decided to lock down on 26 March. Before that, rumors
25 and disinformation were widely disseminated on social media. But hoaxes spread
26 rapidly right after the first coronavirus death on March 18 (Pandey & Kaioum,
27 2020). The research looked at some selective Facebook posts on COVID-19 from
28 February, a month before coronavirus detection in Bangladesh, to June 2020 to
29 analyze the content of fake articles or posts. Researchers have selected fake
30 content on Facebook as a sample to conduct the study. These contents were
31 selected based on a fact-check that identified false news; therefore, researchers
32 acknowledge that these findings would not be able to capture all trends of
33 misinformation in Bangladesh through Facebook during the COVID-19 pandemic.
34 The researchers analyzed the content of a total of 73 false contents related to
35 COVID-19 on Facebook. Using the sources, researchers have tried to recognize
36 the characteristics of false news, which include misinformation on 'vaccination,'
37 'misleading' misinformation, misinformation on 'food consumption and
38 environment,' 'political theories,' 'creating panic' and making people 'unconscious'
39 via misinformation that has spread to Facebook throughout the peri study.
40   Misinformation is not novel (Banerjee, A. N., & Haque, M. N., 2018). Today
41 there are a large number of theories on psychology just as perspectives on
42 individuals spreading lies and misinformation. The Social Identity theory was
43 proposed by Tajfel Turner and is considered to be one of Turner's greatest
44 achievements (McLeod, 2019). Tajfel Turner, et al. (1979) argues that social
45 identity is a self-concept of an individual originating from membership in a
46 particular social community. In other words, the communities to which individuals

belong is a significant aspect of personal-esteem and dignity for them (McLeod, 2019).

According to Social Identity Theory and Normative Influence Theory, individuals are devouring and spreading news that is socially adequate to trade so as to accomplish social acknowledgment, which is an absolute necessity for a person's confidence and character. On the other hand, according to the theory of Prospect, individuals settle on decisions dependent on relative misfortunes and advantages contrasted with their present statuses. Social recognition can also help, and by incorporating the Social Identity Theory and the Prospect Theory, it can be concluded that, in order to preserve or obtain social acceptance, people can exchange knowledge without adequate control of the truth.

This can also be explained by the emergence of political social media groups. Rather than presenting factual interpretations of news, these political media outlets decipher data as indicated by the convictions and practices of in-group partialities. This leads to believing what customers search for rather than believing what's true (Leonard, 2018). Such information from political media sources would be further circulated even though it is inaccurate information.

The media literacy theory, on the other hand, according to James Potter (2014), is a cognitive framework that narrowly describes how a person consumes knowledge in the midst of an information overload in a media immersed society and how individuals create flawed meanings from that piece of information. According to the Uses and Gratification Theory, people use the media to meet their personal needs. Thus, often in times of emergency, people can share false news to fulfill their psychological gratification by causing fear in society or by considering the ideal results to be accomplished through the sharing of misinformation.

During the 2016 US presidential election, misinformation was used as a mechanism to achieve public votes (Shirsat, 2018). Political campaigns used social media as one of the methods to distribute fake news for their satisfaction. According to the two-step flow principle, knowledge exchanged with group opinion leaders, which is further exchanged with less involved users or opinion followers, may have an effect on the thinking process of the entire society (Elkin, 1957). It can be assumed that politicians use this model to create propaganda during the election cycle.

The US Presidential campaign in 2016 and the rise of false information indicate a clear example of this. Trump's win in that election is an example of how to use Magic Bullet Theory successfully, even though it is considered out of line with fact (Fayoyin, 2016). According to common theory, believing in false news people voted for Trump because and conspiracy theories about Hillary Clinton that were spread through social media sites like Facebook (Marwick, 2018). It can also be said that the passive users of social media will believe everything they get from social networking sites and that it will continue to do so.

Analysis and Discussion

Out of the selected 73 news, the researchers found that only three (3) false contents had been pinpointed in February, the first month of the sample period; where the fake contents had eventually spread since March when 25 fictitious contents had been identified that month. After the first coronavirus death in the world, a doctor was arrested for spreading rumors through the use of Facebook messenger, accusing the government of hiding 18/19 deaths in Chittagong (Pandey & Kaioum, 2020). From that time on, numerous rumors went viral and made people believe misinformation. In April, the same thing continued to happen as the researchers found 22 contents of false news. Following that, the number of detected contents was downgraded and in May, the number of incorrect contents was reduced to just eight (8). It can happen because the government took the initiative to counter social media disinformation, and more than a dozen were arrested for fake coronavirus posts and their Facebook pages were tracked down (New Age, 2020). During June, there was also a small rise in the number of false messages on Facebook, which jumped to 15 in number. (Chart-01)

Chart 1. Detected Fake items (February-June 2020)

Among the 73 fake objects, misleading posts were created by ill-motivated individuals mostly through their ID, in some cases using a fake account. In that case, researchers found that 14 of the selective items had been circulated via personal IDs and that almost half of the contents (36) had been disseminated via different Facebook pages and groups. Several mainstream media have also supported several misleading posts (17), While some of the so-called online media has also tried to disburse disinformation on Facebook by producing misleading posts on their internet sites. (Chart-2)

Chart 2. Fake Items Promoting Source
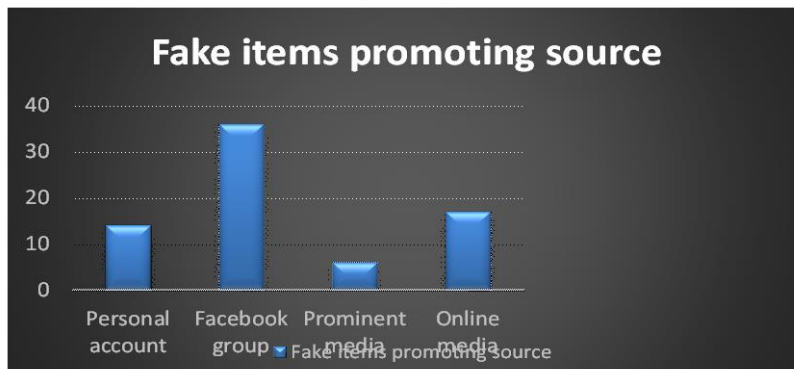
The reasons for spreading lies on Facebook are to make people believe and go viral. Using fake photos and making misleading statements, much of the material spread from inaccurate sources. From this study, researchers identified 55 of the fake contents that had been disseminated through non-authentic sources, such as personal accounts, Facebook groups, or so-called online platforms. However, in some cases, some well-known individuals have also been seen to share false content through their account, as the researchers see a police officer, on 31 March, sharing incorrect information on the coronavirus case on that personal account.

The problem became more serious when some mainstream media (print, online newspapers, and Television channel online sites) promoted misleading items. Researchers have described this matter as a credible source that may disseminate false information. (Chart-3)

Chart 3. Fake News Sources
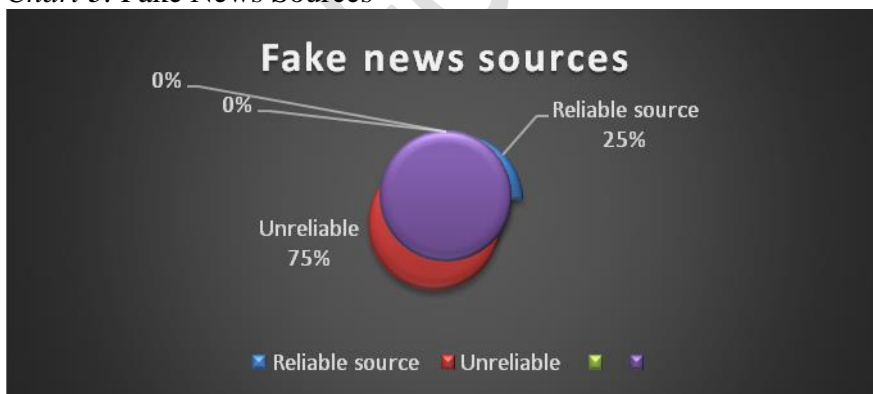
Category Analysis

a)   Religious rumors

After the identification of the first cases of COVID in China, rumors started to spread among the citizens of Bangladesh. Many of the country's Islamic thinkers started to spread rumors from a religious point of view (Chowdhury, 2020). Misinformation spreads among people that pious Muslims will not be affected by

the COVID virus, and as a Muslim majority country, people in Bangladesh had less chance of being infected by the novel coronavirus. According to the findings of the report, in February all the false items identified (3) contained religious contents, stating that 'China realized that Islam was the right direction, 'Chinese president prayed at mosques,' and the 'non-Muslims also prayed Jumma prayer with the Muslims.'

These contents went viral across Facebook pages, where researchers found an authenticated Facebook page called 'Ekusher Bangladesh' to spread false news. Fake news was more than 35 times viral than other content posted on other sites.

The scenario continues with the spread of the virus in Bangladesh. Some delinquents have tried their utmost through unscientific information and religious misinterpretations, which have made religious people motivated by these rumors.

False contents like, 'nearly 0.3 million people in China appear to be Muslims to get rid of China,' 'US President Donald Trump was obligated to listen to the Holy Quran,' 'The virus is spreading to non-Muslim countries,' were some of the items to say. People believed that form of material and spread without cross-checking, as some of the Islamic preachers preached that China had suffered from haram (Islamic forbidden food) food and that the virus was given by God to the Chinese (Haque, 2020). Interestingly, the misinformation has become more viral as some of the well-known media have published misleading news that has led users to believe in this kind of false information. On 5 April, Jagonews24.com, one of the leading online news outlets in Bangladesh, reported that 'For the very first time, German mosques used a Muslim prayer call (Azan) loudspeaker,' which was shared by more than 60k (jagonews24.com, 2020). Here the headline, 'for the very first time,' was not real, and it also made the wrong confidence stronger among the people. Among the sample contents, researchers found 12 fake contents related to religious misinformation, three of which were misleading content produced by renowned media.

b)   Misinformation regarding food consumption and weather

Some contents were seen at the beginning of coronavirus infection to advise people on what kind of food should be taken to protect coronavirus. According to the findings, some food consumption posts have spread to the public. A Facebook account spreads that 'drinking hot water with salt can cure coronavirus,' while 'Garlic paste water is more essential to prevent the virus' has also been circulated among users. The Fact-Checking Organization PolitiFact describes, 'There is no evidence that drinking water helps prevent coronavirus infection. Health officials debunked the argument' (PolitiFact, 2020). But the scenario became worse since the public thought that the rumors were the real one when some of the leading news portals tried to make people believe that particular foods could cure the novel virus. On May 16, Banglanews24.com published news on 'In three ways Chinese get rid of Coronavirus in just four days.' Media reports that drinking tea or hot water with ginger or garlic can also cure coronavirus, where 203k shared media (banglanews24.com, 2020). During the same week, Kalerkantha, the second-largest circulating daily in Bangladesh, published a fake news title, '22 advice from Dr. Devi Shetty to live a year.' Realizing the material as false, the daily took the news off its website.

1   On the other hand, conflicting reports about the weather also began to spread
2 as people began to believe that corona could not stay in hot weather. As
3 Bangladesh is a humid subtropical region, people here strongly believe that
4 COVID-19 may be less harmful here as such evidence is continually disseminated
5 on Facebook pages. According to the results, the researchers here noted a total of
6 six (6) fake food and weather-related contents.

7 c)   Misinformation regarding vaccination and death news

8   As the previous outbreak threatens to spread, the planet races to find a vaccine
9 to prevent COVID-19. By then, disinformation on social media has been a 'rising
10 threat' to vaccination efforts. According to the report, researchers found several
11 mainstream media to publish news on China's progress in discovering coronavirus
12 antidote at the beginning of March. dbcnews.tv, somoynews.tv, and jugantor.com
13 were on the list to make the wrong information available to the public. The study
14 found that six (6) vaccinations related incorrect information among the sample
15 items, while half of the contents were disseminated through local mainstream
16 media, which was more unconscious among the public.

17   Due to the announcement of different medicines as an antidote, prices have
18 risen and some medicines have gone out of stock, such as "doxycycline" increased
19 from BDT 220 to 300/350 shortly after it was identified as an effective anti-
20 COVID-19 drug without any proper information (Pandey & Kaioum 2020).On the
21 other hand, among the 73 content researchers found seven of these (almost 10%)
22 misinformation related to the public coronavirus infection, causing 'fear' among
23 the masses. The personal account was the main source of fake news, such as the
24 death of former health minister Mohammad Nasim and former home minister
25 Sahara Khatun.

26   Infected news from the Mayor of the City Corporation and two renowned
27 physicians (Jahangir Kabir and Jafor-Ullah Chowdhury) was also disseminated via
28 Facebook posts. But, again, mass media joined the party to spread the wrong facts
29 as 'UK Queen Elizabeth was diagnosed with coronavirus' (Jagonews online, 2020).
30 One of the leading national daily Janakantha, along with the news portal
31 jagonews24.com, published fake news (108k share) that would make people lose
32 "confidence" in mainstream media.

33 d)   Misleading information in mainstream media

34   Within this report, researchers pointed out the specific position of mass media
35 showing real 'unconsciousness' within disseminating proper knowledge to their
36 mass audiences. According to this report, a total of 16 contents (22%) were found
37 among the sampling contents that were overlooked by mass media with false
38 material. Social media users have taken the content as true and shared a lot with
39 other users, which means sharing fake information unconsciously. On 20 June, the
40 country's renowned daily Bangladesh Protidin published online news based on a
41 report from the Center for Genocide Studies (CGS). The daily records '1070
42 deaths every week' (Bangladesh Protidin online, 2020), while Jagonews24.com,
43 banglanews24.com, Dhakatimes, and the daily Janakantha joined the same party.
44 The fact, however, was that CGS submitted data on the occurrence of death until
45 13 June. This kind of misleading information creates 'panic' and 'fear' among
46 people. More inaccurate information like 20 million people were missing in China

and 59 people died in South Africa after drinking Dettol antiseptic fluid to prevent coronavirus infection has also been disseminated through some well-known media producing the same results as discussed.

e)   Misinformation regarding political and biased contents

In some cases, rumors on Facebook have been directed at the government or the political parties. Among the 73 contents, some content is disseminated targeting political leaders. Using misleading photos and making false statements, these posts spread stories such as a fake quote by the name of the Minister of Education, manipulating Prime Ministers Photo to see Nasim as a political figure, and disseminating an old photo of Nasim as a funeral meeting of the mother of the Minister of Law during the lockdown. In reality, these misleading contents spread to intimidate political leaders; on the contrary, they often build up their reputation in some cases.

Moreover, this study also finds some more false contents related to the world outlook, such as 'Tigers and lions have been released in Moscow's streets to hold people in quarantine,' 'some countries dump COVID-19 tainted bodies into the seas: warning people to avoid seafood,' 'fake images to show Italy's death toll' and 'the misleading quote from the Italian Prime Minister' as well. People in Bangladesh have begun to assume that COVID-19 is a disease of the upper class and there is less risk of poor people becoming infected, and this is why many of them have become 'careless' about taking protective measures; but in some instances, death toll rumors generate 'fear' among them.

Key Findings

The study explains that the number of misinformation continues to increase after the discovery of the novel virus in the world. People prefer to believe that disinformation is attributable to lack of knowledge, lack of accurate facts, and faith in news media. Analyzing the fact-checking content, researchers find 'Fear,' 'Panic,' 'Unconsciousness,' 'myths' as some of the factors behind the spread of misinformation on Facebook. The study found that some news media take misinformation as fact, and report it without cross-checking.

As a result, people tend to believe in non-authentic and incorrect facts, to become more unconscious, and, in some situations, it makes it more difficult for the government to set up proper initiatives as people disobey the rumor-confidence instructions. According to the report, social media is forming 'fear' among the public by disseminating the terrifying false content; on the opposite, by making people 'unconscious' by disbursing myths and misconceptions about the less dangerous behavior of this novel virus. The study finds that not only a group of people are reliable enough to spread misinformation on Facebook, but also mainstream media do the same through a variety of means.

Conclusion

According to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, the deadly COVID-19 pandemic is the most severe crisis we have had since the Second World War, and we are now seeing another harmful disinformation outbreak (tbsnews.com, 2020).

In times of crisis misinformation is plentiful. Misinformed culture has the power to generate chaos around the world. With advancements in smartphone use and inexpensive internet access, at the time of COVID-19, snowballing is at a very high speed, as is the amount of misinformation being made and spread further. Fake news reports flood each second of social networking sites. People with misinformation pretend to be doctors, epidemiologists and specialists while others who post them are dragging society into another terrible situation.

Now that we're living in an 'infodemic' environment, fake news is becoming more popular at this time. Fake tweets, texts, and posts also tend to propagate in many ways. As people want to defend themselves and the lack of information about the novel virus raises the degree of fear among them, hoaxers are taking advantage of the insecure psychology of Facebook users. The press needs to play a watchdog role during this pandemic. As the media is called the fourth state, it should fight against misinformation by curbing fake content and presenting the real one.

This article, however, indicates that mass media should provide high-quality journalism that creates confidence in its audience and disseminates reliable information without throwing down fake news and misinformation. The study may also amplify the theory of social identity, which notes that people may share news that they receive from different social media outlets, and that might be misleading, in order to maintain their level of social acceptance. The effort to spread disinformation during emergency periods can be linked to the uses and the theory of gratification. Anchored interests, in other words, will spread lies and disinformation for their own pleasure. This research indicates that it is the users' responsibility to verify the information before further sharing; most of the mass people were unable to conduct the proper fact-checking procedure.

Both rumors and hoaxes need to be eliminated from the social media, and credible facts should be disseminated among the public to raise awareness, which will help to make people aware. While the government is trying to repulse misinformation by taking some steps, encouraging news literacy will add value to the steps. Besides, individuals will need to observe the variety of news outlets and be wary of what they read and watch.

For the present analysis, however, answers from a sample size of 73 identified fabricated contents were obtained by random sampling. Therefore, if future study is carried out with a reasonable sample size it will draw more concrete conclusions. Based on current research, future studies may test more segments of the sample and examine more views and behaviors of social media users. New social media innovations are also expected to grow, with the rapid pace of technological advances in all fields. Therefore, there is still a lack of theoretical support for the use of social media. It is therefore very necessary to develop effective theories that deal with the use of social media as a matter of urgency.

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