

## COMBAT THE FAKE NEWS PANDEMIC DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS IN JAIPUR CITY

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### **Abstract**

Since the advent of social media, there has been a shift in both the production and consumption of news. In 2020, around 2.95 billion people were using social media worldwide. A tidal wave of activity on social media was triggered in tandem with the wide spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus. The vast majority of platforms were used to inform people about relevant news, suggestions, and preventative actions. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), uncontrolled propaganda and conspiracy theories are spreading at a rate greater than that of the COVID-19 outbreak. This has resulted in an infodemic, leading to psychological tension, inaccurate medical recommendations, and economic disruption.

The main aim of the present research is to find the depiction of fake news and the impact that this phenomenon has had on the residents of Jaipur city. The platform of this study is to find the many types of fake news as well as the motivations behind those who spread misinformation by doing a content analysis of four key social media platforms. This study examined 130 of Jaipur's most popular fake news stories on social media. Data is collected from the city of Jaipur using the four most popular social media platforms: Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and WhatsApp. There are four different categories of fake news topics that these topics may distinguish: COVID-19 treatment, hospitals, remedies, and available treatments. There is a widespread misunderstanding about how hospitals handle COVID-19, accounting for 34.62 percent of all false news stories. Text, photos, audio, and videos are the four categories used to define the many kinds of content. The percentage of content recorded as being in the type of text accounts for the high ratio. The goals behind fake news may be broken down into three primary categories: the creation of hype, the promotion of certain medicines; propaganda against the government; and propaganda directed against hospitals and medical doctors. Even though instances of fake news are not fairly distributed and regularly alter over time, a gradual decrease in the number of daily incidents can be seen moving closer and closer to the conclusion.

**Keynotes:** COVID-19, Fake News, Propaganda, Disinformation, Misinformation, Social Media, Jaipur City.

### **Introduction**

Disinformation is prevalent, especially concerning communicable diseases, immunizations, and social health care services. Fake news represents a historical breakdown of people's ability to engage with one another, leading to tense circumstances, discontent, and incorrect societal interpretations.

The anti-vaccination movement can be traced back to the 18th century, when vaccinations against smallpox were illegal because they were blamed for a severe disease outbreak in Paris. This is where the campaign's roots can be found (Rubella, 2018).

The rapid spread of the contagious illness COVID-19 throughout the world has resulted in a pandemic, putting the lives of millions of people in jeopardy. Through a variety of activities, including the ongoing broadcast of regional and international news about the pandemic, as well as the publication of cautions and guidance for the fight against the pandemic and its consequences, social networks play an important role in the fight against the viral infection and the consequences it has brought about. It is estimated that there will be over 3 billion people using social networks worldwide in 2022, according to Statista (Zhan, 2014). It is anticipated that the amount will increase to 3.43 billion in 2023.

It is seeing a resurgence in popularity worldwide in this age of new communication and online social networks. Although we refer to it in various ways, such as disinformation, misleading information, fake news, false news, and rumors, the core problem has not significantly changed (Campinho, 2019). The world is grieving for the loss of over a million lives attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic. The unpredictability that is linked with health results in the emergence of a new manifestation that is referred to as an infodemic (a combination of the words "information" and "epidemic"). In this instance, there is a wealth of true and fake information. In contrast to truthful information's effect, which is to assist mitigate the crisis, fake information only exacerbates it.

Despite this, academics' attention has recently been drawn to spreading false news through social networks owing to the problem's pervasiveness across all geographic regions. Even though it is the most democratic nation on the planet and the poorest state in South Asia, India is still experiencing a rise in the amount of fake news that can be found on the internet, even though more developed nations with more advanced technology and higher levels of technological expertise are gaining control over the spread of false news. The crisis caused by the spread of false news has been exacerbated by several factors, including confessions, politics, and public health issues (Azim, Roy, Aich, & Dey, 2020).

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, who is the "Director-General of the World Health Organization", remarked:

"We're not just fighting an epidemic; we are fighting an infodemic." (WHO, 2020)

The World Health Organization promptly launched a mechanism called the WHO Information Network for Epidemics to communicate specialised information with certain target groups after the declaration that COVID-19 was a public health emergency of global significance. This was done with the knowledge that stressful situations, such as pandemics are associated with information overload and incorrect information (Zarocostas, 2020).

It is anticipated that the infodemic, a worldwide pandemic of false information, would significantly affect public health and the social environment. The content generated on the internet can provide users with accurate information and favorably influence the behaviors of

those who use it. Nevertheless, it has the potential to influence public opinion and behavior in ways that are harmful to one's health ("Lara-Navarra, Falciani, Sánchez-Pérez, & Ferrer-Sapena, 2020").

It is impossible to stop the propagation of fake news on social networks in light of this precarious situation. This study helps us comprehend the dynamic nature of fake news in social networks related to the COVID-19 epidemic, which has the potential to make it easier to identify false news on the internet.

This research, which focuses on false news linked with COVID-19 spread over social networks, investigates digital and analogue sources of information to answer research questions. The following discussion will be broken up into four key sections. The findings of previous research connected to this topic are considered and outlined in the literature review. In the section under "Methodology," a comprehensive description of the data gathering and analysis techniques is presented. The section under "Results" presents and discusses this research's primary and secondary conclusions. In the last step, the discussion section outlines an overview of the preliminary results, predicated on the associated arguments and earlier conclusions. This section also includes a discussion of the benefits and limitations of the present research.

## **Literature Review**

This section of the present research discusses the historical context of fake news, the prevalence of social media, the repercussions, and some of the previous solutions suggested for reducing the spread of fake information via social media. Theoretical models that may be used for the dissemination of misinformation via social networks are also provided in this volume.

### **A. Health-Related Attitudes on Social Media**

According to Kalsnes (2018), because of the widespread usage that occurs daily, social networks can record the actions of a significant number of users. Social networks provide sufficient assets for making choices linked with health and recording behavioral responses and attitudes that impact people's health. This is especially true in the realm of health. Twitter and health-related social networks are in second and third place, respectively, behind the most popular social network, which is Facebook.

### **B. Health Misinformation in Social Media**

In its white paper on risk communication, the World Health Organization (WHO) encourages the scientific community to increase its capability to promptly convert new data into valuable, culturally acceptable, and easily comprehensible risk communication assets that can be distributed across a variety of platforms, including social networks (Lau & Coiera, 2009). In this section, we will concentrate on the work done to evaluate the validity of the materials associated with health that can be found on social networks. Then we are going to look in greater detail at some examples of tools that can uncover and monitor false health information.

The COVID-19 outbreak is dealing with a second pandemic simultaneously, this one being led by false news. This primarily breaches the connection between public health agencies, which in

turn causes widespread worry. Meanwhile, as a rapid response, several studies have already surfaced on the scientific platform investigating “the spread of false news on social media platforms in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic”. Other studies investigate the spread of false news from various perspectives, including behavioral, cultural, and sociolinguistic factors.

Some studies are based on comparing the ways in which false news is spread across distinct social networks. For example, (Belizário, 2020) evaluates samples of information distribution about COVID-19 by looking at the information from the following social media sites: “Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and Reddit”. Gab is also included in this investigation. The results show that different sites include varying amounts of fake news, with Gab being more susceptible to the phenomenon. According to the research findings, the manner in which news related to COVID-19 is disseminated is the same irrespective of the sites. According to Belizário (2020), Gab is a well-known social network popular among political activists and adherents of the extreme right. As a result, the hypothesis accepts the premise that normal users are more likely to encounter false news than online influencers. Tapia (2020) says in another piece of research that users of social networks are more likely to share false news than news with an evidential foundation about COVID-19, which is one of the most significant dangers to the general public. They believe that contentious and inadequate decision-making is the direct outcome of spreading false news on social networks.

In contrast to the previous studies, which focused on the emotional problems caused by false news in the COVID-10 period, the more recent studies have suggested several possible solutions to this meltdown. According to Kim and Walker’s (2020) point of view, the pharmacist is the most important person in health communication. In light of this, reliable information gleaned by pharmacologists must be spread across society and between other health professionals to reduce the amount of fake information circulating concerning drugs. Another article explains how the COVID-19 pandemic might lead to an infodemic since it spreads such a large amount of fake material. They offer to teach people who examine the facts, those who debunk myths, and dependable resources on COVID-19 so that they may fight this meltdown (Waran, Jayaseelan, & Brindha, 2020). In addition, they offer to compile and disseminate the needed factual information to the general public, students, and instructors so that everyone can recognize false news.

A few studies also investigate the political and legal ties associated with false information. Because of infodemia caused by COVID-19, a significant amount of false news is spread on social networks, which slows down the response of public health authorities in Latin American countries (Zhang et al., 2020). As part of their research, they keep an eye on the prevalence of false news in Peru. According to their monitoring, the country’s stringent legislation (in the form of incarceration) against the release and distribution of false news makes it more successful in the fight. The Dominican Republic is struggling with an ineffective management system, while Peru is becoming more successful due to its stringent government actions to deal with the problem of false news (Tapia, 2020).

In a different piece of research, Ricard, and Medeiros (2020) examine the issue of false news from the point of view of the discipline of criminology. It provides several preventive measures to decrease the distribution and growth of fake information, including the deployment of artificial

intelligence as a counteraction and the use of counter-narrative as one of the policies. Despite the fact that these studies do not investigate fake news on social networks, their conclusions may apply to the regulation of fake information on social networks.

### **C. Effects of fake news on public**

According to findings from earlier studies, the news of false research was more prevalent in the campaign for the presidency of the United States in 2016 than the dissemination of news from 19 previous reputable sources combined (Ouedraogo, 2020). This vulnerability to enormous volumes of information may result in media tiredness and weaken the healthy activities required to safeguard people, which concerns public health. Additionally, false information and gossip concerning COVID-19 disguise healthy behavioral reactions (such as washing hands, social distancing, and so on) while encouraging fraudulent practices that boost the spread of the viral infection and eventually lead to unsatisfactory results for society's physiological and mental health. For instance, in India, it was reported that a father of three committed himself after finding out that he had a positive diagnosis of COVID-19 (Raj & Goswami, 2020).

In Nigeria, health officials found several cases of people taking excessive amounts of chloroquine, a medicine used to cure the malaria parasite. This happened after the media reported that the medicine effectively treated COVID-19. This is another example of the dangers that are associated with communicating medical news that is not appropriate (Allam, 2020).

Another rumor regarding the nationwide isolation in the United States led to increased hurried purchases of groceries and office supplies, which disrupted the delivery chain. This not only widened the gap between supply and demand but also contributed to an increase in food shortages among people in precarious economic situations and other vulnerable groups (Field, 2020). In various places all around the world, a phenomenon that is quite similar to this one has been seen. This phenomenon may have long-term repercussions for population health, nutrition, and the physical and emotional health of the impacted people.

Coronavirus is a relatively understudied illness, but there is a great deal of misleading information circulating about how to diagnose and treat it, confusing both the general public and medical experts. In addition, the treatment of the most recent scientific studies about treatments or vaccines for this sickness is diminished as a result of this.

These falsehoods and rumors also contribute to the social stigmatization of the infectious condition, reducing home isolation and social distance use. Several nations reported incidents in which hundreds of people were infected due to a single person who visited the same church or mosque despite their doctor's suggestion that they remain in quarantine at home (Hudson, 2020). These sorts of problems are contributing to less-than-ideal control of the COVID-19 pandemic across a variety of population groups.

### **Research Objectives**

The primary objective of this section of the current research is to find the impact of the fake news that is accessible on social media in Jaipur City (Rajasthan), as well as the impact that this has on the public in Jaipur City. The purpose of this research is to find the thought processes of persons

who spread false misinformation as well as the responses of the general public to rumors. In addition, the general public's reactions will be analyzed to determine the extent to which they believe and spread fake news. The pandemic caused by COVID-19 is a worldwide issue that will continue to affect the rest of the world for some time. People are terrified of this potentially fatal illness. Social media is the most prominent venue for disseminating false misinformation to spread people who lack the expertise of professionals. Consequently, all of this leads us to the objective of this section, which is:

- To find the spread of fake news on the COVID-19 pandemic on social media platforms in the city of Jaipur.
- To find which social media platform is most often used to spread fake news in Jaipur City.

Worldwide, there have been 559 million confirmed coronaviruses (COVID-19) cases as of July 13, 2022. The United States has confirmed around 16 percent of all cases reported worldwide, making it one of the countries most severely affected by the illness. In the midst of this pandemic, the reports of false misinformation being spread on social media have developed into a significant cause for alarm. Every nation is dealing with the major problems about COVID-19 fake cures, propaganda against the government, and misunderstandings on the severity of this deadly virus assault.

### **Research Questions**

The question that has to be asked for us to get the results from the research is:

R1. What kind of fake news is posted on social media in Jaipur City?

R2. What is the prominent agenda behind that fake news on social media in Jaipur City?

### **Theoretical Approach**

The concept of Framing Theory is going to serve as the focal point of this research section. Gregory Bateson is credited with the concept of framing as a hypothesis due to the fact that it was first proposed in 1972. The term "framing theory" refers to a method that the mainstream media uses to place contrasting perspectives on a mass covered by the news.

Second-level Agenda Setting is a term that is sometimes used to refer to the concept. In large part, this is because the concept of framing theory has a strong connection to Agenda Setting theory. The term "framing" refers to how the mass media organise and present information to the general public on various problems, as well as the occasion and the provision of specific context to them to sway meaning and necessitate selective impact over how people see reality.

The term "framing theory" refers to a philosophical postulation that describes how the content of reports is often created and contextualized by a media owner (McQuail, 2005). According to Oommen (2005), an intellectual framework that governs the presentation of events is in accordance with. In framing, the media devote significant attention to a particular issue. Through framing, the mass media elevates an issue to a significant level and directs the audience's attention to specific problems, ideas, and people while downplaying precisely what is put outside the framework (Boykoff & Laschever, 2011). When it comes to the tone of the framing, Stephens

(2015) noted that the majority of coverage in the mainstream media leans more toward the pessimistic side as opposed to the more optimistic side.

Regarding the COVID-19 outbreak, it is unmistakable that the media have broached the subject of the repercussions that would result from placing a much greater emphasis on the potential for the illness to spread throughout the continent and across the countries of the world. In this particular situation, generally speaking, there is a connection between the research and the concept of framing due to the fact that the media frame reports and these kinds of reports or terms rely on the content manufacturers, which typically portend problems such as a Covid-19 outbreak. In other words, there is a nexus between the two.

## **Methodology**

In order to investigate the misinformation and opinion of the residents of Jaipur City about fake news, the research design was synced with content analysis from social media users. Due to the novelty of the subject matter and the lack of new research on this topic, exploratory research was the method of choice for this investigation. This will help you build a more comprehensive grasp of the topic.

The research is based on primary data collected from posts made on social media. The researcher started by observing and looking into social media for examples of fake news that already existed. Looking for and listing fake news stories was the primary emphasis in the Jaipur area. A total of 231 social media platforms were mostly based on false news. The posts were collected over the period of three months using data from hundreds of different accounts. The posts were collected in a week's time and were altered while the searches were being done. While some posts provided a smaller number of search results, others generated a larger number of results. Every comment was taken as a screenshot and copied and pasted word for word so that none of the nuances was lost.

The gathered information was organized into numerous categories: hospital treatments, recommendations for drugs on social media, therapies that did not use COVID, and treatments that involved COVID-19. After an in-depth evaluation, 130 fake news stories were identified and removed from consideration. The primary screening was done based on two criteria established by the research question. These criteria were as follows:

- (a) fake news connected to COVID-19 and
- (b) fake news that includes concealed propaganda.

Following the collection of data, it was discovered that in the city of Jaipur, the dissemination of fake news is much more common on four of the most popular social media platforms: Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, and YouTube.

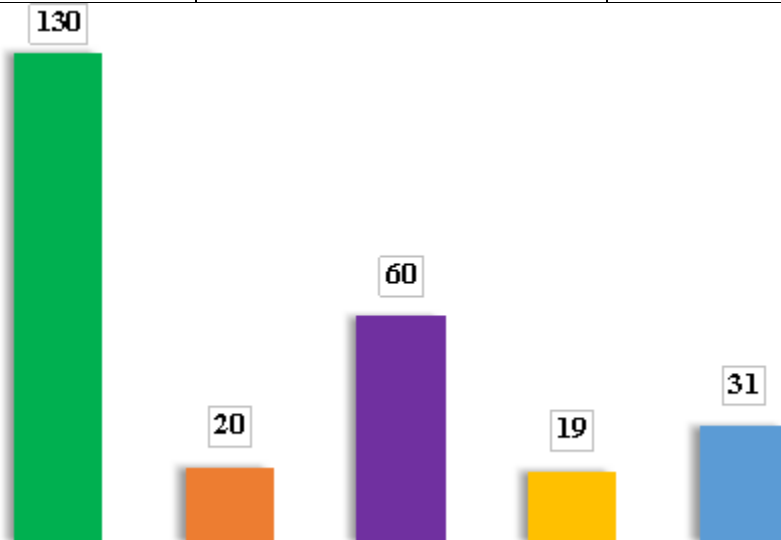
There are two processes involved in the data evaluation. First, gathered content was examined in response to the topics, content kinds, and goals of fake news. Two, the sources were identified presumably by keeping up with the news and the specifics of the incidents described in the content pieces.

**Results and discussion**

In the following section, the outcomes that were recorded by the contents analysis will be presented:

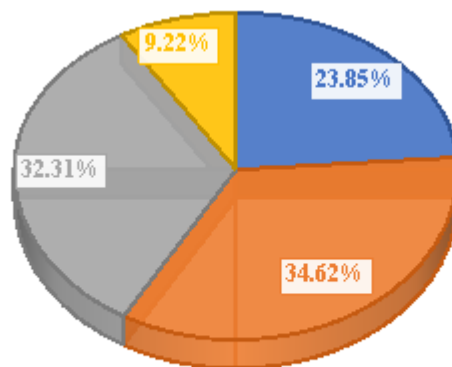
**Table 1: Total Numbers of Fake News**

YouTube	20	15.38%
Facebook	60	46.15%
Twitter	19	14.62%
WhatsApp	31	23.85%
Total	130	100%



**Chart 1.Total Numbers of Fake News**

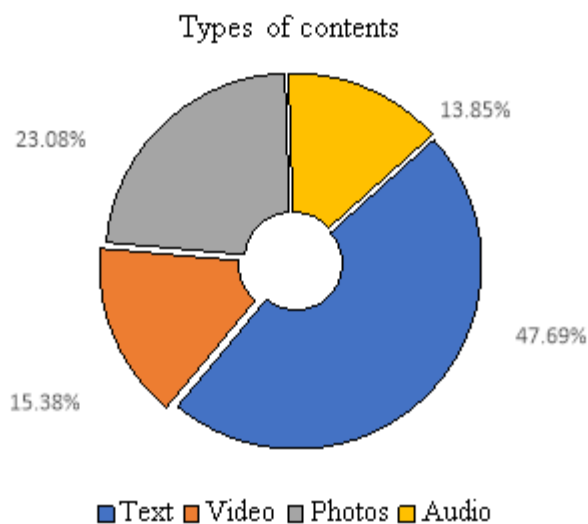
The above chart presents an overview of the total number of false news stories compiled from four distinct social media platforms. For this research, one hundred thirty examples of fake news were collected. It has been recorded that a total of 60 pieces of fake news were collected from Facebook, 31 from WhatsApp, 20 from YouTube, and 19 from Twitter.



■ Covid treatment ■ Hospitals ■ Remedies ■ General treatment

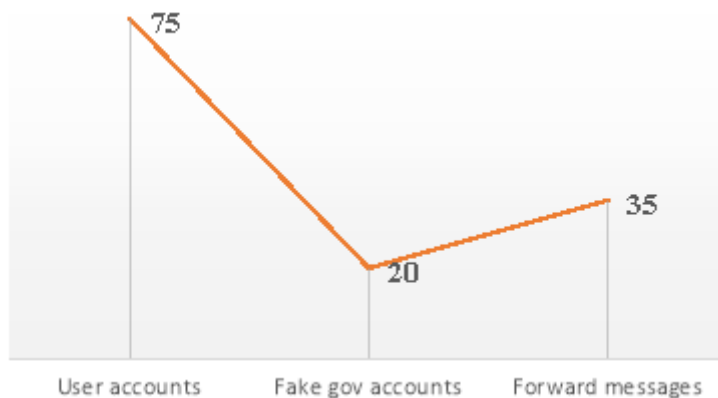
**Chart 2.Categories of Fake News**

Chart 2 outlines the many types of fake news recorded on the social media platform in Jaipur City. The percentage of people that believe the false information related to the COVID-19 treatment is 23.85. The percentage of people who believe fake news regarding hospitals is now 34.62. In addition, remedies are collected at a rate of 32.31 percent, and general alignment treatments get 9.22 percent of the total.



**Chart 3.Types of Contents**

Chart 3 illustrates the categories of false news stories. It has been recorded that 47.69 percent of the posts were recorded in text, 15.38 percent of the posts were posted, 23.08 percent of the posts were photos, and 13.85 percent of the posts were audio recordings.

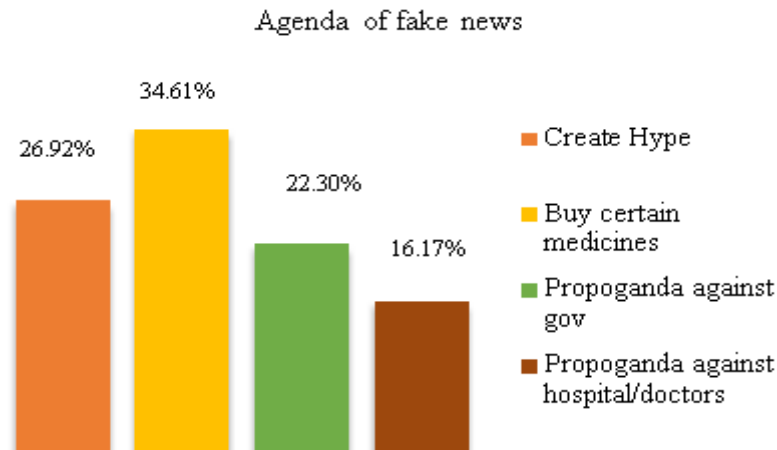


**Chart 4.Sources of Fake News**

**Table 2.Source of Fake News**

User's accounts on social media	75	57.69%
Fake government account	20	15.38%
Forward messages from unknown	35	26.93%
Total	130	100%

Chart 4 explains the various accounts that make up fake news sources. It has been discovered that general user accounts are responsible for spreading 57.69 percent of the fake news. With 15.38 percent, much fake news is recorded via fake accounts that use official agencies' names. In the end, the majority of fake news is received through forwarded communications provided by unknown people, accounting for 26.93 percent of the total.



**Chart 5. Agenda of fake news**

Chart 5. provides evidence of the plan established behind spreading fake news on social media in Jaipur City

People in Jaipur City, with a percentage of 92 percent, are more likely to be in a situation of fear and hysteria after reading fake news on social media. Second, purchase specific drugs from fake news frames that have been verified 34.61 percent of the time. Thirdly, propoganda against the government based on fake news with 22.30 percent, and finally, propoganda against physicians and hospitals were recorded with 16.17 percent.

### **Conclusion and Discussion**

This study's main goal was to identify the resources, agendas, and news stories that included false information. The fake news around COVID-19 on social media first concentrates on the following four key themes: Treatment for COVID-19, hospitals, treatments, and remedies, as well as general treatment of Fake news.

#### **A. Covid-19 Treatment**

About the COVID-19 treatment, there have been multiple instances of fake news recorded. A significant number of people are posting their prescriptions on social media and making recommendations on certain medications. In addition, a lot of injections are also suggested on Facebook. All of these medications are being used without the participation of any qualified medical professionals. The Jaipur City authority has updated an update stating that many people are following fake prescriptions, putting their own lives at risk in the process. This is the most important problem facing the world now, and it is affecting many people. Fake news related to medications for the treatment of COVID-19 was recorded with a significant ratio.

## **B. Remedies**

The social media platforms in Jaipur City are home to an appreciable number of hoaxes that pass themselves off as cures. The following section contains a ranking of the top topics found in fake posts. A wide variety of natural treatment remedies are available to guard against coronavirus. In addition, the consumption of garlic and ginger, which may work as vaccination and eliminate the virus if it enters the body, is also recommended as a type of false misinformation.

## **C. Hospital and Medical Professionals**

This fake news platform has the highest rating across all social media platforms. Due to following this fake news, a great number of people are taking their own lives. This news has also presented a significant challenge for the government in Jaipur with regard to the pandemic. The fake news about hospitals' treatment is both vital and delicate. It gave a false impression that medical hospitals were not treating COVID-19 patients. In addition, they are accused of remarking that doctors inject patients with poison so that patients die. The country is in a state of hysteria and terror due to this news. Fake news is something that everyone believes in and continues to speak about. In addition, people allege that the government's goal is to acquire cash from foreign organizations by boosting the mortality rate to a high level. They think this plan is being carried out. Since of this, many people avoid going to the hospital, which might make their illness worse because it results in a longer delay in receiving treatment. Second, there is widespread dissemination of fake news across all social media platforms claiming that hospitals in Jaipur City produce fake COVID-19 death certificates. It has been reported in the so-called "fake news" that medical doctors are issuing corona death certificates to everyone, even when the deceased suffered from other people.

## **D. General Sickness Treatment**

In this last section, a significant amount of fabricated news is uploaded and distributed with an extensive list of medications for fake alternative treatments. People are getting communications even from people they are not unknown. In that article, people do not go to hospitals and do not take certain medications for various ailments, including sore throats, coughs, fevers, and many more. On such lists, there are a significant number of antibiotic options. The doctors noted that a significant number of people are suffering from severe ailments. People are taking such medications without first speaking with a qualified medical professional. As a direct consequence of this, these people are experiencing severe adverse consequences on their lungs, livers, hearts, and brains.

The second part of this study is to try to find the motivations of those behind fake news. The following section will focus on these four key points:

- In the first situation, it incites widespread fear and hysteria among the general public. Because of this illness, the purpose of fake news is to strike fear into the general public's hearts.
- Secondly, propaganda to purchase particular medicines that are recommended in fake prescriptions is the foundation around which fake news is built. Following the dissemination of such fake news, the cost of recommended and herbal medicines rapidly increased. People

were purchasing these medicines despite being expensive since they were unaware that doing so may put their lives in peril.

- Thirdly, it is apparent that such fake news is created in such a way as to bring down government policies and to cause people to cease believing the government. Most people held that governments were solely responsible for all fatalities to justify their continued receipt of support from industrialized nations.
- The fourth aspect of the issue of fake news is the emphasis placed on the propaganda directed against all hospitals and medical personnel.

Identifying the origin of false news on social media platforms leads to finding useful information. Various forms of online mass media produce the vast majority of fake news stories. Additionally, the creation of fake news and its subsequent dissemination are in great part made possible by the use of four potent social media sites: Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, and YouTube. This finding indicates how crucial online media may be in the creation of fake news and how crucial it is to protect online media in order to stop the dissemination of COVID-19 fake reports.

The nature of the inaccurate reports linked with COVID-19 is unfavorable, and they may have negative implications that can include damage to the medical care system and general public wellness communication. Unfavorable fake media reports spread false information and facts on medicines, healthcare services, and death-related particulars, which misleads individuals and the community amidst the following uncertainty.

Even though it has produced several unique and previously unpublished results, this specific research has a few limitations. The city of Jaipur is the source of the information that was acquired. Instances of fake news, and the area is home to various unique flora and fauna. In the subsequent studies, further research may be conducted to understand this phenomenon better.

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