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Research article

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Abstract

The relevance of everything exchanged in the virtual world has grown in tandem with the advancement of technology and its growing presence in human existence. The usage of social media and the speed has risen as the prevalence and availability of information or news among people for educational implementation, transmitting elements or knowledge, or accessing rapid information. In reality, the endeavor to get chosen news articles in front of everyone by complementing the content with visual elements in a virtual environment puts the phrase "manipulation" back to the forefront in the news and in information transfer methods. The application of information pollution methods on information, news, or visual assets in anything from sports to art creates new threats. The most essential element of mainstream media, as is well recognized, is its one-sidedness. However, today's rapidly evolving new media has placed the individual in the role of both transmitter and receiver. This research is based on conversations among today's social media users who believe that we are subjected to misinformation, information pollution, and news manipulation in the virtual world. During the research period, the correctness of the following assumptions was examined, depending on the scope and hypothesis of the study. The results have revealed that online profiles are not real; news that reaches an individual via social media is uncontrolled and unsupervised; in the virtual world, there is a lot of information pollution and misinformation and on social networking sites, data and photographs are modified as well.

Key Words: Education, social media, , information pollution, manipulation and ethics

1.Introduction

The world is diminishing due to rapid technological advancements. With a single click, the world under our fingertips can now provide you with a wealth of information about where you are heading. With picture support, you can get information about whatever you desire. On behalf of the people, this communication technology, which allows many computers throughout the world to exchange and receive data in many ways, is a significant step towards the information society. The Internet (World Wide Web) was introduced to the world in 1991 and Turkey met the Internet in 1993. According to Karasar (2004), the fast proliferation of new communication technologies around the world ushered in a new era of communication. The viability of communication has changed dramatically in this new era of communication. The Internet is the primary cause of these shifts in communication."

Social media technology has emerged as a result of the fast development and dissemination of Internet technology. People may now get the information they desire quickly, conveniently, and safely thanks to modern technology. People are particularly influenced by the information

supplied for news purposes in this system, which fully eliminates the earth's borders. Today, the Internet, which is also widely utilized in the visual and written press, makes news available to people all over the world in a timely and convenient manner. This technology, which has no time constraints and allows for instant access to new information, also serves to taint and distort data from time to time. In the virtual realm, this raises issues of "ethics in journalism." The issue "Who does not perform their obligations" has been questioned a lot in this instance. Commercial pressures, dependability, image manipulation, information illusion, inadvertent usage, and resource problems are all ethically questioned. This appears to be the most critical concern, according to Alankuş (2005). Media or journalism which is politically and morally correct and responsible should be established." If this is not done, it will be more about discussing or disputing the negative aspects of social media than the positive aspects.

In addition, social media can be used for educational purpose, to conduct our business or maintain connections in our daily life. Because of the convenience it brings, we can get attached to social media if we use it seldom and indefinitely. According to Solmaz and Majestic (2012), "Our actions, attitudes change, and we are condemned to an asocial life." Politicians, celebrities, institutions, and organizations all utilize social media, which is mostly used by young people. The issue of accessing news or information, as well as misleading, deceiving, or manipulating the transmission of acquired material, has been highlighted today thanks to social media, whose speed and audience size have reached amazing heights thanks to satellite technology. The virtual world, which is highly entangled in ethical dilemmas, makes us doubt the area's dependability and the correctness of information flow. The challenges of information pollution and manipulation in the virtual world will be investigated utilizing sample news in this study. A survey research developed for senior students of Girne American University's Faculty of Communication also supports the subject's substance.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Education, Social Media, Virtual Environment and News

Blended learning, distance education, technology-oriented education or individuals' online conversations and posts are referred to as social media. For instance, Facebook, Twitter, blog pages, forums, and other social media platforms. Karasar (2004) claims that "The number of people using social media is increasing. It is critical that it has a large user base and that its proliferation influences societal behavior." Because social media is continually updated and available to numerous uses of sharing networks, the Internet, which is known as a cross-border publishing activity, is an excellent communication tool for people. Weinberg (2009) defines social media as "an application area that allows diverse perspectives on information, opinions, and experiences to share publicly available websites and rapidly integrates the Internet world into our lives."

A virtual environment is a communication environment with users from the free culture and sector that is not genuine. Geographic constraints are completely eliminated when used correctly, and the information and image that is designed to be accessed may reach your



information vocabulary as rapidly as feasible. In fact, we purchase online, read the news on a regular basis, and even select our friends through virtual chat rooms. (<http://www.teknizmo.com.makale-sosyal-medya-yararlarivezaratlari> 25/3/2013).

The term "news" refers to the process of gathering information and disseminating it to individuals in the North, South, East, and West. It is a social product that reflects the society in which it is created. Journalism values "depend on the way that the reporting people think that some topics are newsworthy and the way these topics are presented" (Burton, 1995, p. 137).

2.2. Social Media, Pollution, and Manipulation of Information

When we think of information pollution, we think of communication experts, journalists who argue that "everything is fair in journalism," and the owners or management of institutions and organizations that represent their perception of news and viewpoint. We can observe that the conflicts of opinion that Girgin (2000) maintained as "there are other values that precede the news" approach that supports and opposes this point of view are still present today.

"Rapid advancements, particularly in today's mass media, generate economic, political, social, and cultural upheaval in societies, necessitating a re-examination of values and standards in this sector." Because the broadcasting techniques that are connected to a system, system, and principles through communication tools are incompatible with the tasks and applications that are put on them now. The manner in which events are transmitted, the unpredictability of information accuracy, and, in particular, visual distortion, are in direct antagonism to and incompatible with the tasks committed to the mass media.

Others who provide a communication environment in the mass media and virtual environment conduct professional ethics violations in order to improve the rate of mass reading and tracking. On the other hand, professions are only considered genuine to the extent that they affect society. When society is harmed and all boundaries are breached, information pollution begins and is used against society. By having access to information that has to be reported, as well as images, comments, and information on Internet usage, all communicators save time and effort. However, due to the rapid transmission of information and the shortness of time, it is hard to verify the incident's veracity. This situation causes fake news to circulate freely both via visual, written, and social media sharing networks. This leads to the emergence of manipulation in the news.

Manipulation is a term used to describe the techniques used to manipulate both written and visual products today. Girgin (2000), a communication specialist, has conducted substantial study on this topic. We can more simply explain manipulation and disinformation if we outline the basic information presented in this research. Misinformation and manipulation may occur for a variety of reasons;

- "1. It comes from either purposely created fake news or inadvertently edited misleading news.
2. In a competitive atmosphere, the necessity to resort to exaggeration and deception in order to project the impression of "news dodging."

3. As a result of special interest relationships, the news writer loses his objectivity and becomes an active policymaker who adds commentary to the news.
4. A vast number of news pieces were deemed "insignificant" due to space and time constraints.
5. News consumers, conscious or unconscious, are not receiving enough news from home or around the world.
6. Creating sensations by spreading false and exaggerated news.
7. By enforcing the rules of the country's governments and some institutions, important occurrences are prevented.
8. Some politicians deceitfully utilize the press and social networking sites to keep track on one another."

In addition, image manipulation is an incomplete method of achieving the intended goal. As is known, the transfer of the image obtained by digital cameras to a computer and the re-arrangement of the transmitted images are called "image manipulation". The method is also called image orientation. According to Vedat Şafak Yami (2009), 'these changes' are not just contrast adjustments. On the contrary, it is "intended" to change the meaning of the photographs.

2.3. Examples of News in Social Sharing Environments

Sample News 1:

According to Marilyn J. Matelski (2000) "Contemporary audiences/readers have the benefit of viewing social events with a media capable of transmitting them both promptly and aesthetically" (p.64). Matelski has been confirmed in a slew of recent news pieces. This event has received a lot of attention on social networking sites as well as in written and visual media.

Image manipulation employing modern communication technologies during the March 29, 2009 local elections, which was employed brilliantly in all newspapers, is one of his good examples. During the election campaign, images taken at rallies were utilized in a computer environment utilizing a method known as "cloning" to imply that a rally held by a political party in a province had a large turnout. "Those who control photography also rule people's brains," argues Microsoft CEO Bill Gates. The announcement of "cloning" just adds to the story's structure.

Sample News 2:

"Interactive communication rather as conventional one-way communication, began to emerge with the potential of regulating and selecting user material using the Internet," according to Tokgöz (2000). Politicians and celebrities have served as crucial role models in this respect. It's fascinating to see how politicians and celebrities utilize Twitter and Facebook pages to deliver breaking news to the public, communicate with them about various issues, and even start debates on other themes. Some instances are as follows:

1-Melih Gökçek, Metropolitan Mayor of Ankara, gave a public speech through Twitter. Listening to the public's difficulties is the same as conversing with the public about the municipality's services. However, a young lady stated, "What are you doing here at this time of the night? What kind of mayor are you? She had a disagreement with Gokcek over the questions. The disrespectful statements of Gökçek, who is enraged by this issue, are significant both for the free flow of information and for those who use technical capabilities to pollute information and insult others.

2- An MP uses a false Twitter account to converse with another MP on similar dates. The position of a T.R MP has been reduced to very amusing scenarios in this example, whose reliability and



verification are increasing the question marks every day. He sent along certain happenings in the parliament to the fake deputy, unaware that the person he was following was not a genuine person.

3- The statements made on social networking sites that the artist Muslim Gürses, who allegedly 'died' at a false date, have put even the Minister of Health in a difficult position. The announcement that he 'passed' without first verifying his correctness in order to break the news and make the official public has put the minister in a tough situation, with doctors clarifying that he is 'alive.'

4- The Governor of Istanbul sent a statement to pupils via social media sharing networks in the winter of 2021, stating that "schools suited for weather conditions would not be closed." The kids departed the next day after hearing this remark. However, there was a lot of snowfall at night. Students were left stranded when the school was closed, not because of national education authorities, but because of the Governor's early announcement on his Twitter account. Students who slept in the morning and did not notice the remarks made in the middle of the night following the Governor's proclamation were trapped in their schools.

5- The usage of social networking sites and proper information flow are questioned in the comments made by the football, basketball, and volleyball teams we host during the transfer periods. A transfer announcement made by a so-called footballer, as well as remarks that he is believed to have lived with management and coach, might be disputed in the same way half an hour later, the following day, or instantly. The news that he has transferred from team A to team B for billions of dollars, for example, makes the parties pleased, makes them dream, and causes them to make remarks. However, the other team's instant denial might be perplexing. With the speed of information, this increases the contamination of information produced by manipulation and fake news.

6- On social networking sites, the inscription 'TR' (Turkish Republic) was eliminated in public institutions in early April 2013. The T.R. Government was compelled to issue an official statement in response to this news, which elicited a wide range of reactions.

2.4. Ethics and Social Media

Today, social media, sometimes referred to as new media, appears to be a product of technological advancement. Every day, social media, which encompasses all forms of conventional media and more, sets new user records. With all transfers to the convenience and control of conventional media, this domain, which is highly quick and unregulated, introduces ethical issues. The word "ethics" has its origins in the Ancient Greek era. The word "Ethos" comes from the Greek and meaning "character" or "behavior." It is characterized as "moral" or "moralistic," according to certain scientists. When multiple sources are examined, it is discovered that notions such as "traditions" and "customs" are used to explain it in Turkish culture (Zafer, 2021).

With the introduction of social media into everyday life, it has become clear that the most serious ethical issue is the privacy of private life. Because circumstances emerge that compromise the privacy of one's personal life. Sharing audio and visual information of people with others, either by "tagged" or by strangers, can be a serious ethical issue.

The fact that users are subjected to excessive advertising and that their incorrect information is not validated before being disseminated indiscriminately poses ethical issues. The greatest risk is that, in addition to revealing personal information, being exposed to immoral content might put us in perilous circumstances. As it is seen, the purposes of Internet users' usage of social media, as well as their perceptions of the need for news and information, should be researched. Senior communication faculty students who utilize social networking sites are a sample of this research. The survey was confined to senior students from The American University of Kyrenia, The Faculty of Communication, Public Relations, Journalism-Broadcasting, and Radio-TV-Cinema Departments.

4. Findings and Evaluation: Survey Analysis

“The fastest way to get news is through social media networks.” According to the majority of the responses, 45 percent strongly agree.

Table 1: Social media networks are the fastest channel to reach news.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly agree	45	45,0	45,0	45,0
Agree	41	41,0	41,0	86,0
Undecided	5	5,0	5,0	91,0
Disagree	6	6,0	6,0	97,0
Strongly disagree	3	3,0	3,0	100,0
Total	100	100,0	100,0	

Responses obtained; 6% disagree, 41% agree, 5% undecided and 3% strongly agree. Those who strongly disagree are 3%.

Table 2: I use Twitter for news and information streaming.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly agree	12	12,0	12,0	12,0
Agree	25	25,0	25,0	37,0
Undecided	19	19,0	19,0	56,0
Disagree	32	32,0	32,0	88,0
Strongly disagree	12	12,0	12,0	100,0
Total	100	100,0	100,0	

Responses obtained; 32% disagree, 25% agree, 19% undecided, and 12% strongly agree. Those who strongly disagree are 12%.

Table 3: I use Twitter and Facebook to talk to my friends.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly agree	19	19,0	19,0	19,0
Agree	60	60,0	60,0	79,0
Undecided	8	8,0	8,0	87,0
Disagree	12	12,0	12,0	99,0
Strongly disagree	1	1,0	1,0	100,0
Total	100	100,0	100,0	

Responses obtained; 12% disagree, 60% agree, 8% undecided and 1% strongly agree. Those who strongly disagree are 1%.

Table 4: I believe in the credibility of Twitter and Facebook.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly agree	1	1,0	1,0	1,0
Agree	9	9,0	9,0	10,0
Undecided	34	34,0	34,0	44,0
Disagree	40	40,0	40,0	84,0
Strongly disagree	16	16,0	16,0	100,0
Total	100	100,0	100,0	

Responses obtained; 40% disagree, 9% agree, 34% undecided and 1% strongly agree. Those who strongly disagree are 16%.

Table 5: I believe that the people I follow on social networks are real individuals

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly agree	14	14,0	14,0	14,0
Agree	28	28,0	28,0	42,0
Undecided	35	35,0	35,0	77,0
Disagree	19	19,0	19,0	96,0
Strongly disagree	4	4,0	4,0	100,0
Total	100	100,0	100,0	

Responses obtained; 19% disagree, 28% agree, 35% undecided and 14% strongly agree. Those who strongly disagree are 4%.

Table 6: I follow my favorite football or basketball teams on Facebook and Twitter, and

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly agree	7	7,0	7,0	7,0
Agree	41	41,0	41,0	48,0
Undecided	29	29,0	29,0	77,0
Disagree	17	17,0	17,0	94,0
Strongly disagree	6	6,0	6,0	100,0
Total	100	100,0	100,0	

I believe this kind of information is accurate.

Responses obtained; 17% disagree, 41% agree, 29% undecided and 7% strongly agree. Those who strongly disagree are 6%.

Table 7: think it is right for political leaders and celebrities to reach out to the public

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly agree	4	4,0	4,0	4,0
Agree	14	14,0	14,0	18,0
Undecided	44	44,0	44,0	62,0
Disagree	23	23,0	23,0	85,0
Strongly disagree	15	15,0	15,0	100,0
Total	100	100,0	100,0	

using Twitter or Facebook accounts.

Responses obtained; 23% disagree, 14% agree, 44% undecided and 4% strongly agree. Those who strongly disagree are 15%.

Table 8: I think Facebook has its benefits as well as its harms.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly agree	39	39,0	39,0	39,0
Agree	49	49,0	49,0	88,0
Undecided	7	7,0	7,0	95,0
Disagree	3	3,0	3,0	98,0
Strongly disagree	2	2,0	2,0	100,0
Total	100	100,0	100,0	

Responses obtained; 3% disagree, 49% agree, 7% undecided and 39% strongly agree. Those who strongly disagree are 2%.

Table 9: I think social media networks cause information pollution and manipulation.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	19	19,0	19,0	19,0
	Agree	38	38,0	38,0	57,0
	Undecided	25	25,0	25,0	82,0
	Disagree	16	16,0	16,0	98,0
	Strongly disagree	2	2,0	2,0	100,0
	Total	100	100,0	100,0	

Responses obtained; 3% disagree, 49% agree, 7% undecided and 39% strongly agree. Those who strongly disagree are 2%.

3. Conclusion

Today, the rate of social media users continues to increase rapidly. As of September 30, 2021, Facebook had 2.91 billion monthly active users, while in September 2021, it was recorded that there was an average of 1.93 billion daily active users. The most popular social media site worldwide is now Facebook. As of April 29, 2022, Twitter, another component of social media, has more than 229 million daily active users. The general public cannot give up on social media, despite occasional issues with reliability, information pollution, and ethics. Young people enjoy and utilize social media, as evidenced by a survey done among the senior students at Girne American University's Faculty of Communication, which had a capacity of 100 participants. But young people are confused about reliability, the accuracy of individuals' profiles, their benefit and harm, and especially in the sense that they cause information pollution and manipulation. This shows that there may be problems in terms of both trust and ethics in social media. Despite the fact that social media has become a need in our everyday lives, it contradicts human nature in terms of reliability and authenticity. Every piece of information from this source has to be verified. Although information spreads quickly, there are many unanswered questions about accuracy. The only way to solve this is to question the information from other sources and prove its accuracy. Through information laws, this area can become more reliable with the right regulations.

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Appendix

Survey Questions

- 1- The fastest way to get news is through social media networks
a) Strongly agree b) Agree c) Undecided d) Disagree e) Strongly disagree

- 2- I use Twitter for news and information streaming
a) Strongly agree b) Agree c) Undecided d) Disagree e) Strongly disagree

- 3- I use Twitter and Facebook to talk to my friends
a) Strongly agree b) Agree c) Undecided d) Disagree e) Strongly disagree

- 4- I believe in the credibility of Twitter and Facebook
a) Strongly agree b) Agree c) Undecided d) Disagree e) Strongly disagree

- 5- I believe in the accuracy of profiles opened through Facebook
a) Strongly agree b) Agree c) Undecided d) Disagree e) Strongly disagree

- 6- I believe that the people I follow on social networks are real individuals
a) Strongly agree b) Agree c) Undecided d) Disagree e) Strongly disagree

- 7- I follow my favorite football or basketball teams on Facebook and Twitter, and I believe this kind of information is accurate
a) Strongly agree b) Agree c) Undecided d) Disagree e) Strongly disagree

- 8- I find it right for political leaders and celebrities to reach out to the public using Twitter/Facebook accounts
a) Strongly agree b) Agree c) Undecided d) Disagree e) Strongly disagree

- 9- I think Facebook has its benefits as well as its harms
a) Strongly agree b) Agree c) Undecided d) Disagree e) Strongly disagree

- 10- I think social media networks cause information pollution and manipulation
a) Strongly agree b) Agree c) Undecided d) Disagree e) Strongly disagree