



**MYSTIFYING AND DEMYSTIFYING SHARED  
INFORMATION ON COVID-19 ACROSS CYBER  
MEDIATED NEWS NETWORKS:**

**A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH TO  
SOLUTIONS FOR VULNERABLE  
POPULATIONS**

# ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKS



## Business

- Share large volumes of data to known and unknown groups
- Sell ideas; serve as 'influenceurs'

## Community

- Build and sustain networks of individuals and entities
- Mobilize Constituencies
- Share entertainment (fake news, photos, gossip, etc.)

## Institutional

- Provide feedback, identify priorities and opportunities,
- Establish positions on issues & approaches
- Plan strategies for intervention.



# WHY MYSTIFY INFORMATION?

**Fake news is frequently well-orchestrated and timely, making it appeal to preconceived thoughts and ideas in the minds of the target consumers.**

**-People who believe they are more popular or have accomplished within their community tend to spread rumors (false news)**

**Pressure to share and receive news is good rife when everybody else in the group is gossiping.**

-People start rumors to feel superior to the receiver, get attention, or take control of the receiving group.

-They understand rumor consumers feel a desire to belong

-People are naturally more interested in spreading rumors and dangerous information than receiving good news

. People who want to be in control are adept at spreading rumors

# HOW COVID-19 BECAME NEWS

## NEWS MAKING PHILOSOPHY

-**SECRECY BY LEADERS AND SCIENTISTS**

-**RUMORS IMPACT ON JOURNALISTS**

**1. Chinese authorities reported first case of coronavirus disease 2019 on Nov. 17, 2019. (The Guardian newspaper (No, 17, 2019),**

2. WOLRD news agencies around the world simultaneously reported the rapid spread of coronavirus, and various social media networks redistributed the reports in mid-January 2020.

3. cruise ships arriving the Italian, Spanish, and U.S. shores with infected patients. Next was the rising death tolls in Italy, Spain, and the U.S.

4. *New York Times* reports “new virus” that had infected dozens in Asia.

-Jan. 11, 2020, an the first known death from the Coronavirus in China.

-U.S., Japan, South Korea, Thailand, and other countries confirm cases.

-Jan, 30, 2020, WHO Directors Covid a global health emergency

-U.S. State Department warns U.S. travelers to avoid going to Chinam closes borders

-Feb. 11, virus is officially named Covid-19; 24 countries with infected people. 443 quarantined passengers released from Diamond Princess Cruise ship.

-Feb. 23, significant surge in infected cases in Italy & infection hikes in Europe & U.S.

-AP, Reuters, AFP, UPI. Independent news agencies (Swahili, Portuguese, German, Mandarin, Hindustani, Arabic, Russian, Malay, and Bengali- The story ABOUT SPREAD SPREADS IN 190 LGS,. in millions of network groups, giving it high relevance on mainstream media around the world.

-country leaders block borders

# COUNTRIES MOST AFFECTED BY COVID-19 IN EARLY 2020

SOURCE: WIKIPEDIA. RETRIEVED JUNE 2, 2020

Location	Confirmed	Recovered	Deaths
United States	1.85M +16,070	412K	107K +478
Brazil	531K +11,598	241K	30,079 +623
Russia	424K +9,035	187K	5,037 +162
United Kingdom	276K +1,570	-	39,045 +0
Spain	240K	150K	27,127

## PUBLIC OPINIONS IN SUPPORT AND DENIAL OF THE MYSTERY BEHIND THE PANDEMIC

- Opinion leaders: religious and non-religious bodies struggling to authenticate the virus as a threat to human life
  - *senior conservative Catholic Clergy described Covid-19 as a pretext for governments to deprive people of their freedom and track their movements.*
  - *Right-wing populist rhetoric- there global efforts a pretext to erase Christian civilization and create a hate-filled technocratic tyranny.*
  - Political tilt- a minority disease (affects blacks, poor, older people)
  - The Trump syndrome/ignorance
  - Media over reporting
  - \* Frontline teams (Health workers, bus drivers, lab technicians, and hospital personnel)- *Covid is real. Autopsy reports, lab tests, and other serological experiments show a direct link between Covid-19 infection rates and race-based socially induced health conditions*

# CYBER NETWORKS AS ENABLERS OF FAKE NEWS AND CONSPIRACY THEORIES

- Social media groups make it increasingly difficult for established cable networks to provide up-to-date news and information to their respective audiences partly because cyber communities are more aggressive in producing and disseminating news than established news organs.
- Senders enjoy the passion of “news maker”- “I was the first person to inform you?”

# CONCLUSIONS& LESSONS LEARNED

- Covid-19 has caused dramatic deaths and illnesses, disrupted the global economy, and, most importantly, raised new challenges for globalization
- (sociological), a more limited form of globalization might emerge
- **There's a greater risk in our overdependence on world superpowers for our protection**
- Frontline powers were unprepared (Are there still world superpowers?)
- **The operational meaning “superpower” ‘advanced country’ has to be redefined (scholars, political leaders, etc.)**



# PROMOTING INCLUSIVE/GLOBAL WELLNESS

*THEORETICAL AND PRAGMATIC ANGLES FOR LOCAL, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL BODIES*

- Clinical psychologists, pharmacologists, and serological workers in each ethnic group should record video messages on different prevention measures, show people how to use traditional concoctions, and disseminate them via social media networks.
- Governments, international organizations, foreign services departments that conduct business with local and external partners, and established news organizations should collectively take steps to protect journalistic ethics.
- Countries should set up/implement Patient privacy laws for patient privacy might be compromised

## ...*IMPLICATIONS FOR ETHICAL JOURNALISM*

- Media organs should raise fake news education & literacy levels within their ranks to enhance their reputation as the news reference point
- Established news organizations should collectively take steps to protect journalistic ethics
- Journalists should be trained to report health information with accuracy & professionalism (“the gumbo factor”) *“Training must include acquiring knowledge of every new technology, enhancing writing skills, and recognizing fake news typology”*
- Use reverse search engines, and fact-checking sites to screen fake news and redistribute news promptly, the media organs would become authoritative contacts for confirming the authenticity of the story, hence re-establishing public trust.

## *NEWS CONSUMER RESPONSIBILITY*

- News consumers should take the following steps to debunk fake news:
- If you, the news consumer, are not sure informing is accurate, do not share it.
- Check the date the story was published, for social media tends to recycle old stories.
- Question news headlines written in capital letters or sentences filled with caesuras.
- Question stories that quote other news outlets, especially websites, as their source.
- If there are no links or ways to verify quotes and references, the news is likely fake.
- Pay attention to news media language such as "We are seeking confirmation," or "We are getting reports that..," etc.
- Live reporting and viewers see actual photos and assess what informants are sharing, otherwise news is likely fake.
- Pick news from outlets close to the incident, not media from afar, and compare multiple sources.
- Beware of tweeted and retweeted messages that use more adjectives and action verbs are likely fake.
- The Center for News Literacy warns that 'big news brings out fakers and photo shoppers.'
- A news article with too many ads such as pop-ups and banner ads might be fake.
- Newsmongers should access <https://guides.stlcc.edu/fakenews/factchecking>
- Follow WHO rules for virus prevention, e.g. avoid crowds, wash hands, wear masks, & stay 6 ft. away in public.
- Newsmongers should access <https://guides.stlcc.edu/fakenews/factchecking>.

## *SUGGESTIONS FOR COUNTRY POLICYMAKERS*

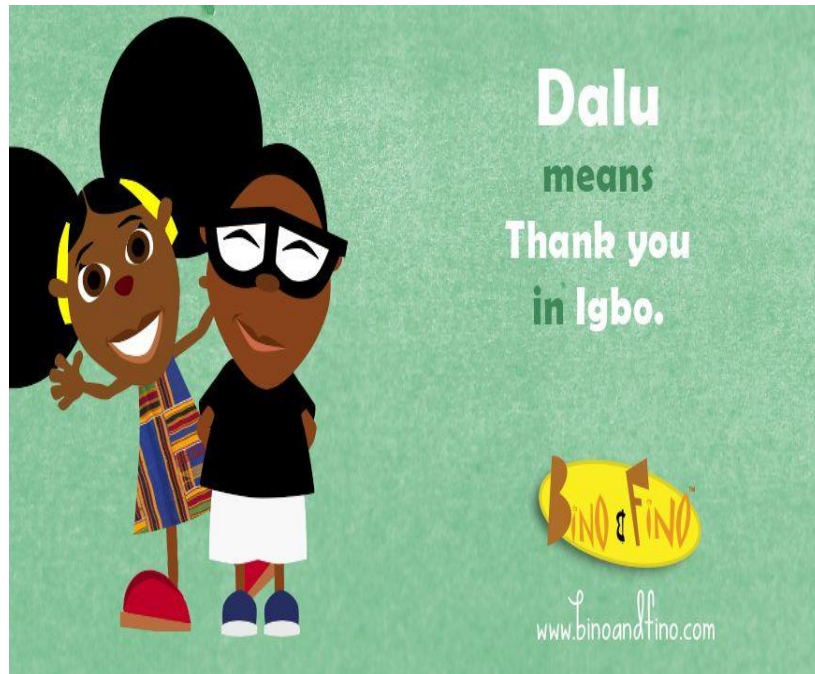
- Administrators should have a program for reopening the economy based on informed advice from top-notch scientists in their country and the WHO.
- Governments should set up a crisis intervention team of scientists, healthcare workers, media organs, and demographers to trace the spread of the virus and use trial medications such as dexamethasone or chloroquine only when it has been cleared globally as a safe form of treatment.
- Governments should liaise with international experts through diplomatic channels to compare experiences, share facts about it and treatment measures, and pick out best practices in finding a cure.
- Governments should find volunteers to share literature about the virus in their communities.
- Each government should invest in local herbalists, medical doctors, and serologists to seek remedial treatment and eventually find a cure because relying heavily on foreign intelligence could compromise a country's political, diplomatic, and economic interests.

THANK YOU

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