Beyond Fact-Checking: Understanding Belief in Anti-Immigrant Disinformation

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Research Gaps

Factors influencing belief in disinformation

Factors influencing disinformation sharing

Regional and demographic variances

Limitations

Lack of conceptual and definitional clarity

Few citizen studies (beyond US college students and M. Turk)

Few studies using representative populations

Few studies comparing regional differences

Fabricated Claims

"Comment is free, but facts are sacred." (C. P. Scott 1921)

Contested Truths

Political truths are "never neutral, objective, or absolute" (Coleman 2019)

Research Questions

What factors influence (i) susceptibility to anti-immigrant disinformation and (ii) the intention to share anti-immigrant disinformation?

Research Design

Online survey (20 minutes)

Sample Size: 300 (incidental random sample from Irish networks)

Procedure:

(i)   pre-questionnaire (demographics, topic knowledge, interest)

(ii)   presentation of six news stories (credibility, intention to share)

(iii) post-questionnaire (personality)

Disinformation News Stories

1. French Senate Says Notre Dame Cathedral Must Be Restored Exactly As it Was Before Fire – No Islamic Minarets or Swimming Pools *[Gateway Pundit]*
   A decontextualized story giving a false impression

2. Canada's Prime Minister begs Nigeria President for one million immigrants *[CBTV]*
   A fabricated story with invented quotes from politicians

3. UN Agrees to Outlaw Criticism of Immigration *[Knights Templar International]*
   A true story about a politician's protest with a false claim

Legitimate New Stories

1. Migrants occupy Athens rail station in border passage bid *[France 24]*

2. EU countries take migrants after Mediterranean stand-off *[BBC]*

3. U.K. Police Investigating Attacks on 5 Mosques in Birmingham *[The Telegraph]*

Canada's Prime Minister begs Nigeria President for one million immigrants

By newsonline

The Prime Minister of Canada, Justin Trudeau, has pleaded with Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari, to allow one million Nigerians enter Canada under a new Employment and Migration Programme designed for immigrants.

According to Trudeau, immigrants from Nigeria have been a strong force in Canada's growth in all sectors of its economy.

Migrants occupy Athens rail station in border passage bid

Issued on: 05/04/2019 - 13:25

Clashes broke out in a migrant camp in Diavata in northern Greece AFP

Athens (AFP)

Dozens of asylum seekers occupied the main railway station in Athens on Friday in a burgeoning protest demanding access to the border and passage to other EU states.

Credibility Judgements

A subjective perception that the given information corresponds to reality (Choi et al. 2006; Hilligoss & Rieh 2008)

Measure: Perceptions of story accuracy, believability, authenticity (Appleman and Sundar 2016)

Influenced by

- demographic differences
- patterns of internet use
- personality traits
- familiarity with the topic
- levels of cognitive development
- information literacy skills (Choi et al. 2006; Hilligoss & Rieh 2008; Metzger & Flanagin, 2015)

Demographic Factors

Age: susceptibility generally decreases with age (Loftus 2019; Wilbers 2016) but elderly are more susceptible (Guess, Nagler, & Tucker 2019)

> **Age (ranging from adolescents to elderly)**

Low cognitive ability increases susceptibility (De keersmaecker & Roets 2017; Zhu et al. 2010)

> **Education level**

Poor analytical thinking increases susceptibility (Pennycook and Rand 2017)

> **'Need for cognition' 4 item inventory (Beißert, Köhler, Rempel & Beierlein, 2014)**

Internet and social media use influence credibility judgements (Metzger et al. 2011) and political misperceptions (Garrett 2019)

    2 items on frequency of use (Rosen et al. 2013)

Digital literacy influences understanding of information credibility (Hilligoss & Rieh 2008; Metzger & Flanagin 2015)

    1 item on media knowledge (Digital News Report)

Repeated exposure increases believability (Hasher and Goldstein 1977; Fazio, Brashier, Payne and Marsh 2015; Pennycook and Cannon 2018; Polage, 2012; Wang et al. 2016)

    1 item on familiarity with the story

Poor topic knowledge may increase susceptibility (Fernbach et al. 2019)

> **1 item on knowledge: estimate of immigration levels**

Levels of concern may influence susceptibility and openness to corrections (Nyhan and Reifler 2015)

> **1 item on interest in news about immigration**

Attitudes influence news consumption (Guess, Nyhan, & Reifler 2018) and belief (Lewandowsky et al. 2012; Flynn et al. 2017)

> **3 items from the Immigration Attitude Index**

Personality Factors

Personality characteristics influence susceptibility to false memory and misinformation (Doughty, et al. 2018; Zhu et al. 2010)

> **10 item inventory on Big Five (Rammstedt, Kemper, Klein, Beierlein, & Kovaleva, 2013)**

Need for Cognition influences concerns about credibility (Metzger et al. 2011) and correct memory recall (Antonio 2015)

> **4 item inventory (Beißert, Köhler, Rempel & Beierlein, 2014)**

Propensity to Trust influences information sharing (Deng et al. 2017; Mooradian, Renzl & Matzler 2006)

> **4 item inventory (Frazier, Johnson, & Fainshmidt, 2013)**

Desire for self-expression and concern for others influences information sharing (Chadwick and Vaccari 2019; Chakrabarti et al 2018; Deng et al. 2017; Marwick 2018; Pratima Dodda et al 2019)

> **1 item on intention to share and 2 items on motivations for sharing/not sharing**

Also influenced by **propensity to trust** (Deng et al. 2017) and **topic interest and attitudes** (An, Quercia, & Crowcroft 2013; Pogorelskiy & Shum 2018)

Study Limitations

Small, non-representative population (300 people)

No regional comparison (Irish immigration attitudes)

Some factors not addressed (confirmation bias, source credibility, emotional arousal)

Key Issues
- Suitable publications for the present study

- Robust survey design for a larger study

Thank you