FACTORS AFFECTING THE DISTRIBUTION OF FAKE NEWS ABOUT EMERGING DISEASES IN THAILAND

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ABSTRACT

At the end of 2019, many countries in the world experience the situation of emerging diseases called COVID19, which was caused by the latest Corona virus. The outbreak occurs widely. The situation of emerging disease in Thailand makes people in the society panic. Fake news has been created a lot and spread quickly. The fake news content is often linked to people's interests. The spread of fake news on the internet. In addition to affecting the confusion in the information, it also makes the lives of people fall at the risk of believing, resulting in a wide impact on the economy, politics, society, and domestic management. In a difficult situation as well, This research has collected fake news about emerging diseases in social media and studying factors that affect fake news distribution in Thailand.

Keywords: Fake News, Emerging Diseases, Spreading Fake News, Covid19

INTRODUCTION

In 2019, several countries around the world faced an outbreak situation of a new disease, the Emerging Infectious Diseases (EID), which refers to new types of infectious diseases that have increased in patients over the past 20 years or infectious diseases that are predicted to increase in the near future, including diseases that occur newly in any location or diseases that have just spread to another location. [1] During the past few decades, there have been continuous outbreaks of new infectious diseases worldwide, including newly discovered infectious diseases that have caused epidemics in humans, infectious diseases found in new areas, and infectious diseases that have been found in animals and are likely to spread to humans. For example, sudden and severe respiratory tract infections or SARS, were discovered in the year 2003.

For Thailand, there have been reports of new contagious diseases caused by various strains of coronavirus, leading to respiratory illnesses ranging from the common cold to severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus, which was not previously known. The outbreak started in Wuhan, China around December 2019 and is believed to have originated from animals and then spread to humans. The World Health Organization (WHO) reported the first cases of the disease with symptoms starting from December 1st. COVID-19 can be spread from person to person through respiratory droplets that

are produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes and can be contracted by inhaling the droplets or by touching surfaces contaminated with the droplets. The incubation period from infection to symptom onset ranges from 1 to 14 days, with an average of 5-6 days. More than 97% of patients develop symptoms within 14 days. The virus multiplies in the upper respiratory tract and reaches its peak during the early stages of symptoms and then decreases. The most common symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough, loss of taste and smell, and fatigue. Less common symptoms that may affect some patients include muscle aches, headaches, stuffy nose, runny nose, sore throat, diarrhea, red eyes, or a rash on the skin or discoloration of fingers or toes.

The situation of the emergence of new diseases has made people in society alarmed. Fake news has been created in large numbers and spread rapidly. Fake news refers to news that is partially true or false. Fake news is created for various purposes, such as to create alarm, attack, disturb, cause harm, divert attention, mislead readers, or steer them in a desired direction. This also includes writing news that is covertly supported, which is often presented on social media and online platforms that are considered professional. Online fake news has a continuous trend and variety in terms of topic, format, and platform (Shu et al., 2017). Fake news often links to the events and interests of people, which are based on Google or Facebook search statistics, and often uses headlines that seem too good to be true to make people click and read. It may be a story that appears like real news, but is fake news, an advertisement that invites belief, or creates an image. Martina Chapman has classified fake news into 6 categories: Fabricated Content, Manipulated Content, Imposter Content, Misleading Content, False Context of Connection, Satire and Parody. Meanwhile, Xichen Zhang and Ali A. Ghorbani have presented perspectives to understand the scope and diversity of online fake news data. Fake news consists of 4 components: creators/distributors of information, targets, news content, and social context. Research studies related to all 4 components have found that studies focusing on detecting fake news are more important than other topics.

The spread of fake news on the internet not only leads to confusion in information but also puts people's lives at risk of falling into the trap of believing fake news. It has wide-ranging impacts on the economy, society, and internal management within countries. The content of fake news is often linked to the trend and interest of people following the situation of the epidemic spread, and often uses sensational headlines to lure people into clicking and reading, leading to misinformation and forwarding of inaccurate information.

Shalini Talwar and her team conducted a study on the behavior of sharing fake news, using quality data from 58 open-ended articles to analyze and identify behaviors related to sharing and forwarding fake news. They hypothesized the relationship between behavior using the honeycomb framework and the third-person effect hypothesis. The results showed that immediate sharing of news to create awareness had a positive effect on sharing fake news due to time factors and religious beliefs. Understanding the behavior of fake news senders can have an impact on the strategy for managing fake news in different situations. Relevant government agencies can also develop and disseminate messages that encourage social media users to take corrective action against fake news. This approach can greatly alleviate the spread of fake news, especially fake news related to religion or ethnicity, which has become a major concern at the international level.

Currently, information and news on the Internet are continuously growing and rapidly, and can be called a data society. The Internet is another channel that is used to disseminate news and information because it is convenient to forward, causing the news and information to spread rapidly. Statistics from the Anti-Fake News Center, Ministry of Digital Economy and Society, show the number of fake news during the period when Thailand faced the new epidemic from January 1, 2020, to July 30, 2021, totaled more than 260 fake news, mostly information that was forwarded from online social media channels. A survey conducted between 4014, 2020, by the People's Behavior Assessment Project on Fake News during the COVID-19 pandemic situation, using a random sample of 4,100 people found that people have a media literacy index of 78.21%, can correctly distinguish between real and fake news, and do not share false news messages,

accounting for 57.6%. The public has seen, heard or read fake news in the past month, with Facebook being the main channel, accounting for 51.1%. It was found that 83.9% of those who shared false news did so via Facebook. The above survey results show that timely readiness to present factual information from the country's health agencies is crucial in abnormal situations, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to the news reports from the COVID-19 Situation Administration Center (CCSA), which reports statistics on infected cases, recoveries, and deaths, which inform the country's coronavirus outbreak situation, mainstream social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube have influenced the thoughts, feelings, and beliefs of the majority of the population. These platforms may attract individuals seeking to manipulate information to benefit themselves, resulting in the spread of fake news and the potential for negative impacts on individuals, society, and the country. Based on related factors and research data, the researchers recognize the importance of studying factors that influence the spread of fake news about the new pandemic disease in Thailand. The dissemination of media related to the new pandemic disease is crucial to the country in crisis situations, leading to problems in management by the government, private sector, economy, society, and individuals.
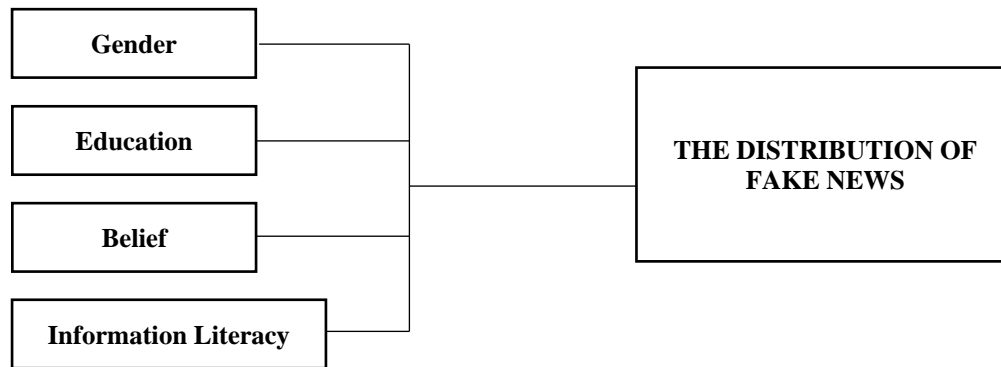
Fake News

Currently, there is no definite definition for fake news. Over the past few years, many scholars have given various and different definitions of fake news. Sayeed Al-Zaman (2020) defined fake news as inaccurate, distorted, false news, and rumors. Fake news is a historic crisis of human communication that causes tension, misunderstandings, and disagreements in human society in the era of digital communication and online social networks. Hunt Allcott and Matthew Gentzkow defined fake news as intentionally false news articles that may cause readers to misunderstand the truth. Lazer et al. defined fake news as falsified information or imitation of news content, false news, low-quality information, or information that causes misunderstandings. Nikhil L. Kolluri and Dhiraj (2021) suggested that fake news can be divided into two types: news with false content such as satire and parody, and disinformation, which is news that readers do not know is false. In summary, fake news is information that is actually news, but it is a fabricated story, advertising, image, or false information.

Spreading Fake News and Motivations

The dissemination of fake news on the internet has caused a great deal of concern in society and has had an impact on the economy and broader society. Fake news has a negative impact on individuals and society as it is a form of manipulation that persuades the recipient to accept, believe, share, or disseminate false news and information related to the new epidemic, making it a major problem in the era of social media. The anonymity, user-generated content, and convenience of technology all contribute to the spread of fake news.

The spread of fake news related to the new epidemic is a global problem, and various countries have implemented measures to deal with this issue. For example, the dissemination of anti-fake news guidelines has been widely publicized to advise people to check the accuracy of suspicious news, verify the author and source of the news, and in Thailand, the Digital Economy and Society Ministry has established a center to combat fake news in order to solve the problem of fake news spreading online. The center serves as a mediator to verify news information.

1.2 Conceptual framework

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│      Gender         │────┐
└─────────────────────┘    │
┌─────────────────────┐    │        ┌──────────────────────────┐
│     Education       │────┤        │   THE DISTRIBUTION OF    │
└─────────────────────┘    ├────────│        FAKE NEWS         │
┌─────────────────────┐    │        └──────────────────────────┘
│      Belief         │────┤
└─────────────────────┘    │
┌─────────────────────┐    │
│ Information Literacy │────┘
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Figure 1: Conceptual framework

Figure 1 The study on factors affecting the dissemination of fake news related to the novel coronavirus in Thailand includes the following conceptual framework: Age, gender, education, belief, and information literacy level.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology
    1 Research design
    This study is Quantitative Research
    2 Population and samples
    The research aims to study the general public residing in Thailand who engage in online social media usage. The sample group is determined using Yamane's (1973) table at a confidence level of 95% with a margin of error of 5%. The sample size obtained from the table is 400 and the data is collected through online surveys. The sampling method used is non-probability sampling, specifically convenience sampling.
    3 Instrumentation
    The research tool used for data collection is an online questionnaire, divided into three parts as follows:
    Part 1 contains screening questions about the perception of fake news related to the new disease outbreak.
    Part 2 contains general information about the respondents, such as gender, age, education level, and occupation.
    Part 3 contains information about online social media usage behavior, including type and frequency.
    Part 4 contains information about factors affecting the dissemination of fake news related to the new disease outbreak in Thailand.
    4 Data Collection:
    The general public residing in Thailand with online social media usage behavior were collected by distributing the online questionnaire URL through social media platforms, including Facebook. The data was collected in June 2022, for a total of one month. The number of respondents was 580 people. Afterward, the researchers selected complete questionnaires and obtained 400 respondents for statistical analysis.

5 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics used in the research include frequency and percentage, while inferential statistics used include structural equation modeling, causal relationship analysis, and pathways of variables influence.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Results and Findings

1 General information

General information of survey respondents, totaling 400 people, showed that mostly female, with 288 people, accounting for 72%. The number of respondents aged between 25-35 years old was 156, accounting for 39%. The single status was found in 312 people, accounting for 78%. The number of respondents who completed a bachelor's degree or equivalent was 217, accounting for 54.2%. Private sector employees were 205 people, accounting for 51.25%. All respondents had knowledge of false news about the new epidemic disease in Thailand.

2 Results

Factors affecting the spread of false news about the new epidemic disease in Thailand in terms of gender, as each age group of the population has different levels of technological awareness, affecting decision-making on forwarding false news without verification.

Factors affecting the spread of false news about the new epidemic disease in Thailand in terms of education level, as research found that education level affects the evaluation of received data, analysis and data interpretation before forwarding.

Factors affecting the spread of false news about the new epidemic disease in Thailand in terms of belief, as Thailand has culture, customs, and indigenous wisdom, causing false news related to herbal medicine or traditional wisdom to be believed significantly.

Factors affecting the spread of false news about the new epidemic disease in Thailand in terms of information literacy, as information literacy is a crucial factor in verifying and evaluating the credibility of news and information.

DISCUSSION

From the research on "Factors affecting the distribution of fake news about emerging diseases in Thailand", it can be summarized that the factors influencing the spread of fake news related to new diseases in Thailand are gender, education, beliefs, and knowledge in information technology. This has an impact on the decision-making process for forwarding fake news, including evaluating and forwarding information, as well as the level of analysis and data disaggregation before disseminating information. Particularly, beliefs play a crucial role in Thailand, which is a country with culture, customs, and wisdom, as seen in the spread of fake news related to the use of herbs or traditional wisdom. They are often trusted and forwarded.

SUGGESTIONS

This research reveals the factors that affect the dissemination of fake news about emerging diseases, providing information that can be used as a guideline for organizations involved in managing and responding to these diseases. This information can help address and solve the issue of fake news that may arise during outbreaks of emerging diseases in Thailand.

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