

Analyzing The Fake News Narratives And The Influence Of Mediatization: A Content Analysis Of COVID-19 Facebook Posts In Germany

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Abstract

Since the first use of the term fake news during the US presidential election in 2016, this phenomenon has evolved and its nature has become more complex. The content of fake news has developed and created their own chain, which almost has functioned as a whole in all countries of the world. Manipulations and malicious agendas that operate under the guise of fake news take on huge proportions with the intensification of the COVID-19 pandemic. These contents were characterized by fake news conspiratorial narratives which stimulated news chaos, and not only that, they caused the violation of the information ecosystem all over the world. This research study is centered on the examination of fabricated news narratives, primarily within a European nation, specifically Germany, and the facilitating influence of mediatization. The study specifically scrutinizes the conspiratorial attributes inherent in false news narratives that were circulated throughout the three most critical months of the COVID-19 pandemic in Europe, as outlined by the World Health Organization, namely October, November, and December 2020. In order to investigate and examine fake news narratives and

their contents with conspiratorial characteristics, this research study engaged with Qualitative Content Analysis as its framework. This study is particularly guided by the framework established by Michael Barkun and Jesse Walker, which offers a comprehensive approach to examining content imbued with conspiratorial attributes. Additionally, the analysis involves the utilization of NVivo 12 Plus software to investigate the terminological instances employed in the construction of fake news narratives. The results showed that the conspiracy nature was evident during the analysis of the fake news narrative which described that powerful groups and elites were behind the COVID-19 pandemic in order to achieve their malicious plans. Moreover, conspiracy beliefs such as vaccines as bioweapon, population extermination, New World Order, 5G, microchips etc., were very evident during the analysis of fake news narratives which were disseminated during the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak. As a conclusion, the study highlights the evolution and the impact of complex fake news phenomenon, particularly within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasizing their conspiratorial attributes and disruptive effects on the information ecosystem in Germany.

Keywords: Fake News Narratives, Conspiracies, Qualitative Content Analysis, COVID-19 Pandemic, Facebook.

Introduction

During the US presidential election campaign in 2016, many young people as well as adults worldwide, apparently driven by financial gain more than any political ideology, were instrumental in disseminating misinformation. Over a hundred websites were created during the campaign, producing false narratives that mostly favored the Republican candidate for President. The contents in these websites were political—and often wrong in facts. In addition, the false narratives that polluted the media ecosystem during the US electoral campaign in 2016 took on large proportions that later influenced the decision of the voters in the American continent (Guess, Nyhan, & Reifler, 2018). Thus, the term "Fake News" appeared as a new description of misinformation, disinformation and manipulative narratives precisely during the 2016 US election campaign, and from there it

entered the field of researchers from different disciplines who try to give descriptions, meanings and definitions regarding this phenomenon (Zhang & Ghorbani, 2020).

Moreover, the actualization of the "fake news" phenomenon took on even greater proportions during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, where conspiracy theories were now involved as a constituent mechanism of fake news. Furthermore, conspiratorial narratives under the umbrella of fake news during COVID-19 became very evident where Facebook users all over the world shared them with great intensity, with or without awareness. On the other hand, this vacuum caused the breakdown of the media ecosystem where manipulative narratives with conspiratorial content, disinformation or misinformation proliferated and jeopardized the efforts of experts and the people of good will to manage and prevent the pandemic (Desta & Mulugeta, 2020). Specifically, most of the contents of the narratives disseminated were characterized with conspiracy nature because it was about the "powerful group", "elites" and "internal - external forces" as creators of the COVID-19 pandemic with the aim of exterminating the population all over the world.

With the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, fake news was employed almost all over the world with a more sophisticated and devastating character. Since the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak started, the lack of information on the deadly virus created a vacuum, which had worsened the information ecosystem where the emergence of conspiracies of fake news narratives popped up and proliferated rapidly everywhere. In addition, extraordinary narratives such as population extermination, deadly vaccines, 5G network, microchips, and malicious agendas of powerful groups captured the social, media and social networks' discourses (Bruns, Hurcombe, & Harrington, 2021; Douglas, 2021).

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020, fake news narratives in Germany were characterized by conspiratorial and manipulative content, but not only—they were proliferated almost throughout the whole globe. As an adding note, Jensen et al. (2021) point out that such narratives with conspiratorial content regarding vaccination in Germany claimed that vaccination against the COVID-19 virus is aimed for the application of mandatory

vaccination in the future as well. Furthermore, it has been claimed that believing in the conspiracy narrative regarding COVID-19 in Germany was associated with doubt, mistrust and denial towards the technical claims on the COVID-19 pandemic (van Mulukom et al., 2022). Thus, this research study focuses on investigating how conspiracies of fake news narratives are portrayed in Germany. To comprehend the influence of the conspiracies of fake news narrative in society and the role of mediatization facilitating it, the purpose of this research was to develop an in-depth understanding of conceptual and contextual meanings describing it. Therefore, we have explored and investigated which contents, communication and accessing differences have been disseminated, and without exception made, the mediatization effects as well as its role has been in depth analyzed.

This research study aims to achieve three primary objectives within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in Germany. The first objective involves an in-depth exploration of the intricate web of conspiracies present within the realm of fake news narratives during the pandemic. The study delves into the various dimensions of these conspiratorial narratives to gain a comprehensive understanding of their origins, content, and potential implications. The second objective focuses on investigating the role of mediatization as a catalyst in amplifying and disseminating fake news conspiracy narratives. This entails an examination of how media platforms and communication channels contribute to the proliferation of such narratives, thereby shaping public discourse. Lastly, the third objective entails an exploration of the deceptive façade underlying fake news conspiracy narratives, particularly within the German Facebook user community. By examining the prevalence and reception of these narratives among Facebook users in Germany, the study seeks to uncover insights into the dynamics of their adoption and circulation in the social media landscape.

Literature Review

The fake news is not something new (Newman & Fletcher, 2017), it has been part of the news itself since the beginning of its creation. However, the fake news phenomenon and the investigation on these claims have raised a huge discourse among the experts worldwide. Thus, the term fake news was first used by

Trump in the US electoral campaign of 2016. Based on our analysis, we came across with very astonishing definitions of the phenomenon. The definitions form two chapters of definitions, as we will call pre-Trump and post-Trump chapter. Thus, the pre-Trump chapter definitions have closely to do with the phenomenon itself, meaning, and the definitions describe the "fake news", whereas the post-Trump chapter of "fake news" focuses on the motives and causes rather than the concept itself. These concepts can be seen in the Figure 2.1. However, Simons (2018) argues that is fake news the core of the problem, or a symptom of a greater issue? Moreover, it has been claimed that the fake news expresses a wider crisis of trust in elites and media outlets (Franklin & McNair, 2017). Furthermore, researchers have various claims regarding the causes and motivations of fake news. In addition, Franklin and McNair (2017) points out that the cause of fake news rise is crisis of trust in elites and media. The other factors, which contribute, are professional purposes, revenues from commissioning broadcaster, or for boosting the careers. With this, he refers to as dishonest journalism.

In this line, Bryan (2010) argues that the technological changes will affect the quality of the information and the state of our democracy. We are being "bombarded" every day whether with genuine or fabricated content. Thus, this serious dilemma has frustrated not merely the ordinary people, but also the political experts worldwide. Considering this, Germany is the first country that has started formulating regulation to take down the dilemmas by fining the platform with 500.000 euro it fails to eradicate from the website (Newman & Fletcher, 2017).

According to Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) there are two main factors that motivate the creation of "fake news". The first one is considered as a material or monetary factor, in which the creators of fake articles make money from clicks-through advertising banners, whereas the second factor is considered ideological. That is to say, the dissemination of false information happens for the purpose of ideological influence, either simply to favor a party or a particular person who in most cases degrades the opposing party. Furthermore, the pressure from the competitors to distribute articles as soon as possible in order to catch up with this dynamism is the major problem of "fake news" phenomenon as well. From a slightly different perspective, Bakir and McStay (2018) argue that

the core problem of the "fake news" as much as it is economic it is emotional as well. This process occurs because false information, namely sentimental titles of this information, emotionally affect their reader that because of being influenced, they pay attention to them through a click. In this way, clicks with the assistance of the algorithms are automatically converted to profits called as advertising revenues, initiated from the ads banners placed on the same website with false information. Based on the scholarly explications regarding the motives and factors that influence the distribution of "fake news", we can conclude that two are the main stimuli. One is for economic gain and the other is to impose the ideological agenda.

When it comes to an epistemological meaning of mediatization, researchers have formulated a few definitions, among them as well skeptical towards the clarified meaning of what mediatization really has to do with. Researchers consider mediatization as a process of social change in which media have become deeply integrated into different levels of society (Hjarvard, 2013; Mazzoleni, 2008; Strömbäck & Esser, 2014a, 2014b; Strömbäck, Esser, & Lundby, 2009). On the other hand, Strömbäck (2008) argues that mediatization represents a concept which is inherently process-oriented. Moreover, it has been emphasized that the mediatization addresses the effect on the content of the media message rather than the communication format (Altheide, 1991). As an explanatory note, below

Fundamentally, under the mediatization as a process of social change and media transformation, certain aspects have become more prominent in media spectrum, such as a focus on negativity, conflicts, fake news exemplars throughout the world, etc. Thus, it has been argued that a biased reflection of reality, shown by the news media, can have severe cultivating consequences for public perception, especially when negative events are overrepresented or when severity is exaggerated (Renn, Burns, Kasperson, Kasperson, & Slovic, 1992). Hence, it has been claimed that communication and internal structure of it are dependent on media, and this dependency is called mediatization (Krotz, 2017). Thus, it can be argued also that fake news stands reciprocally in this process. It is part of a medium, and being so, it is mediatized.

The "fake news" or as it is referred to in the majority of European countries as "false information", means information which is not based on arguments, lack of facts, it has a purposeful objective, and that, in most cases or always it is disseminated for ideological, economic or political reasons. In this line, the disoriented economic, ideological or political systems of a country are the driving apparatus for actualizing the immunization of fake news. Consequently, the aforementioned elaboration will bring us to our point of view we referred in the beginning, to the component, which is exercised under the umbrella of fake news exposed in the narrative content embedded with disinformation, namely conspiracy narrative of fake news. Similarly, according to Bergmann (2018), since early times conspiracy theories have circulated among people, and as such seem to have satisfied the human desire to find a subtle, secret and orchestrated way to deal with chaos that reigns among societies worldwide. In addition, the nature of conspiracies is such that it is presented as a kind of narrative, spread with deliberate objectives by prefiguring someone or a certain situation in a fictitious way.

Additionally, if we recall the conceptual meaning of fake news from the literature review, we see that these two phenomena are imprinted in each other, where one helps in the "birth" of the other and vice versa. Similarly, it has been pointed out that conspiracies produce narrative content characterized by disinformation and imagination of various forms and shapes, however, in principle, their authors are not interested in "information" they disseminate, rather they are focused in objectives (Pyrhönen & Bauvois, 2019). Additionally, fake news is defined as false and non-factual information, namely disinformation, which aims to manipulate the masses with malicious purposes harmful to society. On the other hand, it has been pointed out that the point of unification of conspiracy theories and fake news narrative is misperception, encroachment or ignorance of reality (Szebeni, Lonnqvist, & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2021).

Methodology

In this study the qualitative approach is specifically incorporated because this methodology not only explores the issue of a phenomenon, but also exclusively explains why and how it is

appearing. In this line, the researcher has combined elements from the Michael Barkun and Jesse Walker approach in order to identify, adequately scrutinize and categorize the selected codes under the framework of the analytical process. Additionally, this qualitative research study incorporates Qualitative Content Analysis, a method and a research tool developed under the Content Analysis Paradigm by a network of sophisticated scholars. Consequently, according to the given research questions, on the one hand the four stages of mediatization created by Stromback have been employed to explain the role of mediatization in the dissemination of fake news narratives. On the other hand, the model of Michael Barkun and Jesse Walker approach have been utilized for identification, structuring and categorization of the codes selected in a deductive way, whereby on this premise making the relation and explaining the conspiracies of fake news narratives in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak.

Barkun's model highlights three categories of conspiracies that can be presented in a narrative interpretation. The first category represents alternative accounts of an isolated event, the second represents the framework of the larger system of conspiracies that have to do with malevolent powers for controlling people, etc., and the third group has to do with super-conspiracies which refer to complex conspiratorial contents that are thought to be interconnected in a hierarchical manner. According to Barkun (2003a; 2013b) there are three groups for the classification of conspiracies:

1. Conspiracies of certain events - this category refers to isolated and well-defined events. A more concrete example in this group could be included the pandemic of 2020.
2. Systematic conspiracies—this category alludes to a certain powerful group, which systematically has malicious plans to take control of the population, of any state, or to overtake existing institutions of a country. This category of conspiracies was very evident during the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak where certain communities were described as the inventors of the virus under the pretext of taking control of the world.
3. The third category refers to super-conspiracies, which have to do with a complex group of interrelated contents but function as separate entities. In this category of special emphasis is a powerful

evil force, which is part of the group as a whole but acts separately all over the world. Similar to the nature of this category, was the content of fake news narratives describing the powerful elite with malicious using COVID-19 as a pretext in order to exterminate people for their individual interests.

In the five types of conspiracies described in this approach, Walker focuses his distinction precisely on where the enemy is within the narrative. According to Walker (2013), there are 5 categories of conspiracies as follows:

- i. "Enemy outside" refers to the "powerful" external group which builds evil plans from outside against the population of any country;
- ii. "Enemy inside" describes the group within the community, an inseparable part of the citizens and has malicious goals for the population;
- iii. "Enemy above" refers to a powerful group that manipulates certain events for individual benefits;
- iv. "Enemy below" involves the lower class within the community, which aims to disrupt the social order; and
- v. "Benevolent conspiracies" find the concepts, which believe that supernatural forces work behind the scenes.

The corpus of content-based studies represents a group of elements that are well defined and are related to the presented research questions. Moreover, according to Kutter and Kantner (2012) corpus-based content analysis aims to achieve internal validity and increase the efficiency of the analytical process. The corpus here comprises all fake news narratives disseminated during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak in 2020. Hence, the corpus builds all the fake news narratives disseminated during the period: from the month which according to the WHO was considered the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak. More specifically, the month, which was considered the peak according to the WHO dashboard, was October 2020, followed by November and December as well. Moreover, according to the authentic fact checker's database for Germany, the total number of flagged fake news narratives in Facebook is 39. Almost all fake news narratives disseminated in Facebook during these months consisted of conspiratorial content. As an explanatory note, the fact checker is authentic and its account is registered in Poynter

institute. Moreover, Facebook is collaborating with this authentic fact checker as third party organization, which professionally analyzes and helps Facebook identify and flag disseminated fake news narratives within its platform. Furthermore, the researcher did not analyze all the fake news narratives disseminated during the entire pandemic that lasted more than two years, but from the entire research corpus by incorporating purposive sampling the researcher has selected the most peak months of the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, which is the beginning of October 2020 to the end of December 2020.

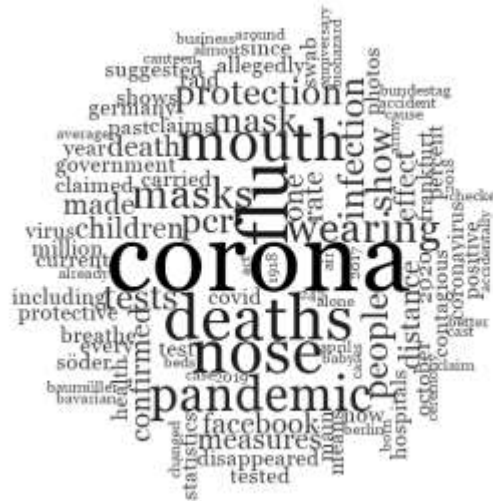
In this research study the researcher as a source of data collection has selected authentic fact checkers database from Germany. As we have pointed out earlier, the period of this research study is from the month which according to WHO was considered as the peak month of the COVID-19 Pandemic outbreak until the end of December 2020. Additionally, the peak month described in the WHO dashboard during COVID-19 pandemic in Europe was the beginning of October 2020, followed by November and December of the same year. Firstly, the researcher extracted all fake news narratives flagged by authentic and professional fact checker as untrue materials and with deviant content.

The fact-checking source chosen for this study in Germany is correctiv.org, an accredited platform registered under the Poynter Institute. Notably, the Poynter Institute works in conjunction with Facebook as an external entity to counteract the proliferation of fabricated news narratives. The selection criterion was clear because it is supported by the large number of data from fact checker's database, specifically the data that referred to the period that the researcher has selected in this research study. Furthermore, the researcher has incorporated NVivo 12 Plus – a software that is used in qualitative research, where the researcher using this software has highlighted the most prominent terms within disseminated fake news narratives.

Finding and Analysis

This study has analyzed the conspiracies of the fake news narratives in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic by incorporating two approaches. Respectively, the Michael Barkun's Model, and the Jesse Walker's approach in one hand, all under the umbrella of the Qualitative Content Analysis, and NVivo 12 Plus as a computer-

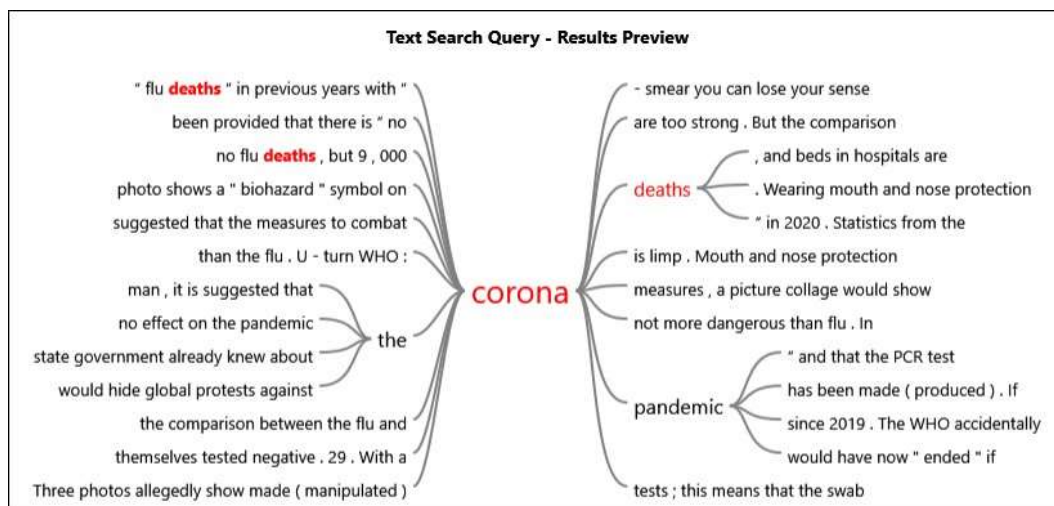
based analysis on the other hand. Initially, the researcher has applied NVivo Plus to identify Word Clouds, Word Tree and Tree-Map of every fake news narrative shared on Facebook during the COVID-19. In the Figure 1 below is visualized the word cloud for all



fake news narratives about Germany which have been used, repeated and frequented more during the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak.

Figure 1: Most frequently used words in the data set of fake news narratives for Germany

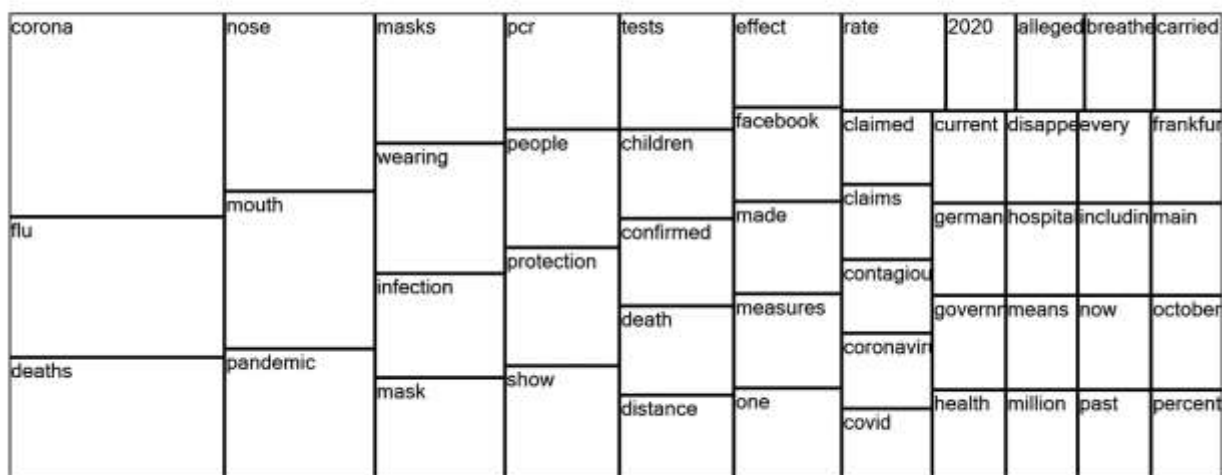
The most frequently used terms can be clearly identified, and those terms that have to do with corona, death, extermination, infections, state institutions, flu and so on. In addition, you can also see repeated terms in the narratives such as protective measures, masks, corona tests, etc. Furthermore, in Figure 2, a word tree is visualized which presents specific



terminology of fake news narratives during the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak.

Figure 2: Word tree of specific terminology of fake news narratives for Germany

In Figure 2 visualized above, a word tree was generated through NVivo12 Plus, which consists of the most frequent terminologies during the dissemination of fake news narratives in Germany. Therefore, according to Figure 2, the terminological instances of fake news narratives can be clearly seen; such as corona, death, infections—linking it to pandemics, WHO, manipulations etc. In addition, Figure 3 presents a tree map, which



has more to do with consequences and instances of repeated and frequent terms.

Figure 3: Tree map of frequently used terminologies

In the Figure 3 generated above, the most frequent terminologies can be clearly identified during the proliferation of fake news narratives that have to do with; people, children, masks, contagious, pandemic, deaths. It can be clearly seen that the frequency of these terms is more inclined to the consequences and instances of victimization due to the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak.

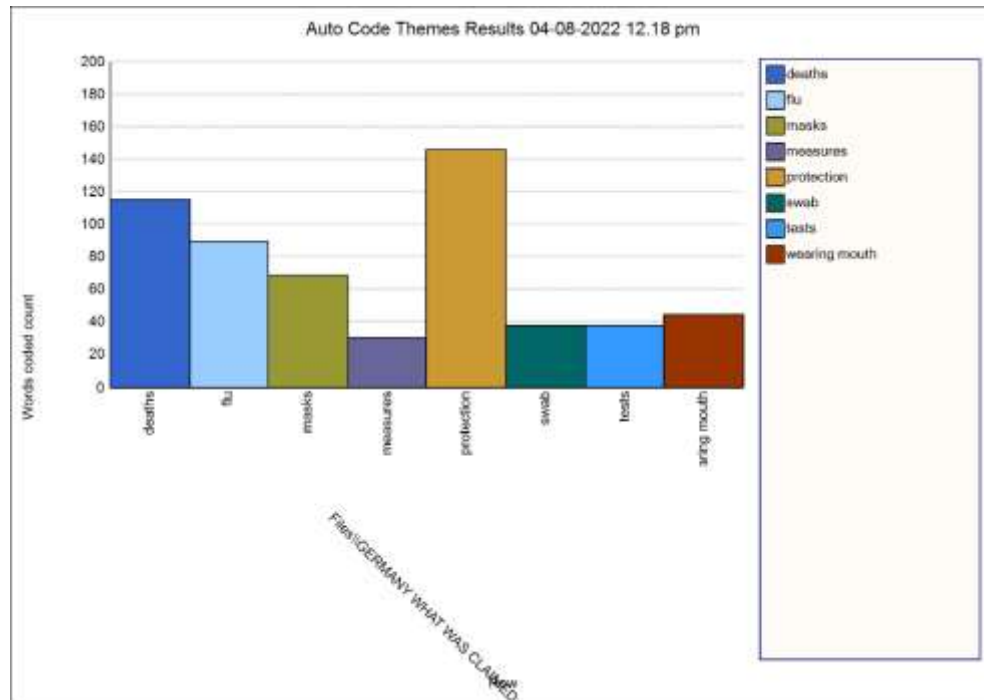


Figure 4: Chart of frequently used terminologies

In Figure 4, the frequency repetition of the theme code presented above is visualized by charts. It is clear that the instances most used in fake news narratives in Germany spread fear and confusion, and above all, according to the fifth graph, the need for protection is expressed. Furthermore, in Figure 5 the percentage coverage of coding terms used frequently in fake news narratives in Germany during COVID-19 pandemic outbreak.

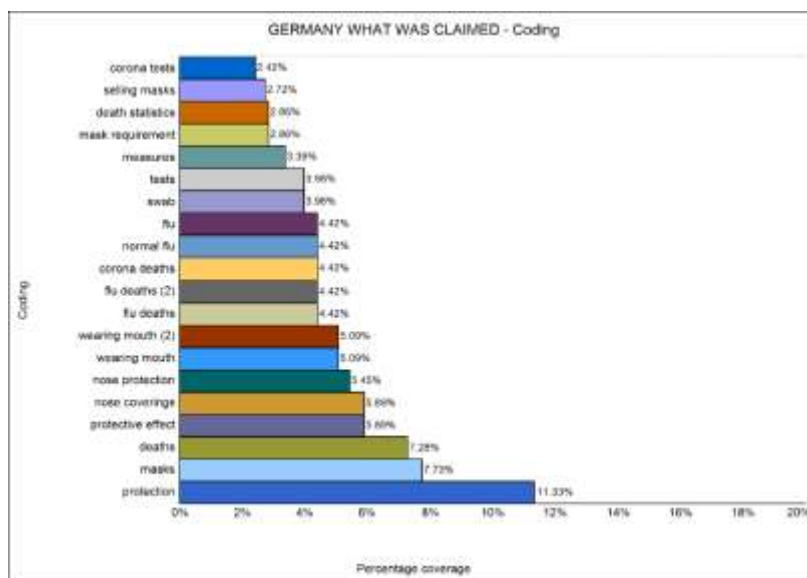


Figure 5: Coding percentages of terms used frequently in fake news narratives in Germany

In the Figure 5 visualized above, terminological instances are identified which refer to deaths and protection in a larger percentage. Other terminological instances have to do with tests, swabs, masks as mechanisms used during the pandemic. Higher frequency of the words in Figure 5 have to do with the protective mechanism, and here the researcher determines the need for protection expressed in the disseminated narratives.

This research study employs a Qualitative Content Analysis approach to examine fake news narratives within the context of Germany, utilizing the analytical frameworks proposed by Michael Barkun and Jesse Walker. An illustrative example extracted from the dataset highlights a claim asserting that global protests against COVID-19 measures were being concealed by the media, supported by a picture collage. The verdict from the fact checker, however, deems this claim mostly incorrect, indicating that not all images featured demonstrations against these measures and that media reports exist from various countries. The analysis of this excerpt reveals the underlying sentiments of the author, indicating frustration with perceived infringements on personal freedom and a lack of trust in media entities, which are portrayed as concealing truths about the pandemic. This fake news narrative identifies an

internal adversary, where the media assumes the role of the antagonist. In accordance with Jesse Walker's classifications, these assertions fall into the category of "**enemy above**," representing a subset that attributes manipulation of events for individual gains to a particular group.

Furthermore, the investigation employs a qualitative content analysis methodology to delve into fake news narratives, drawing from a specific case extracted from the dataset. In this instance, the assertion is made that the Bavarian state government had prior knowledge of the COVID-19 pandemic dating back to 2019. However, the verdict from the fact checker unequivocally refutes this claim as false, dispelling the notion that the government possessed such foreknowledge. The analysis of this excerpt unveils the author's perspective, indicating a belief in the pandemic being a genuine scandal. This narrative aims to disseminate confusion and disarray among readers, aligning with a classic instance of misinformation characterized by conspiratorial undertones. As outlined by Michael Barkun, this falls within the category of "**conspiracies of certain events**," portraying a specific situation or incident as definitively true. Yet, the fact-checkers' assessments have conclusively labeled this narrative as inaccurate.

Moreover, another excerpt drawn from the dataset, presents another case for analysis. The claim being scrutinized asserts that the World Health Organization (WHO) unintentionally confirmed that the coronavirus was less hazardous than the seasonal flu. However, the verdict from the fact checker unequivocally labels this statement as false, negating any confirmation by the WHO in this regard. A comprehensive examination of this excerpt reveals several key facets. The narrative alludes to perceived opacity within health institutions and governments concerning fatality rates. The author contends that transparency is lacking in the comparison of the dangers posed by COVID-19, SARS, and the seasonal flu.

Additionally, the narrative posits a lower COVID-19 mortality rate than officially reported, while expressing disapproval of restrictions and lockdown measures, linking them to increased poverty. The author's credibility is depicted as confined to their ideological group, contrasting with skepticism towards external sources. These claims establish distinct

"enemies," attributing blame for the pandemic's effects. Notably, the WHO is positioned as an **"enemy outside,"** while the author implicates figures like Merkel, China, and the Vatican as being interlinked through claims like "pretty much best friends" and "U-turn WHO: Corona not more dangerous than flu." These assertions, flagged as false by fact checkers, align with the categorization of **"systematic conspiracies,"** indicative of a potent group systematically pursuing malevolent agendas to exert control. In essence, this analysis highlights the dichotomy between in-group credibility and out-group incredibility in the author's perception.

Moreover, this dataset excerpt presents yet another case for analysis. The claim at hand alleges that a photo displaying a "biohazard" symbol on coronavirus test materials suggests that the swab sticks are deliberately "contaminated" to induce illness in individuals. However, the fact checker's verdict dispels this assertion by pointing out that the photo actually depicts prepared but non-infectious control samples, which are utilized for practicing the rapid test procedure. Through an analytical lens, this study delves into the prevailing misinformation circulating within the population, particularly concerning coronavirus tests. The narrative propagated by the post propagates a conspiratorial scenario wherein the components of the test kit, marked with "biohazard" symbols, are purportedly designed to intentionally infect individuals. This narrative constructs an adversarial entity perceived as the "enemy," utilizing COVID-19 tests as a means to inflict harm. This tendency aligns with the characterization of the **"enemy outside,"** signifying an external, influential group that orchestrates nefarious schemes against the population. In essence, this analysis underscores the dissemination of misinformation within the context of coronavirus testing, illustrating how conspiratorial narratives can vilify external actors as perceived adversaries.

Conclusion

It can be noticed that the coronavirus, vaccines, the "external/internal enemy", powerful external groups, have been frequented with great intensity through fake news narratives in Germany. In addition, the results show that the contents with elements of conspiracy are very evident in the fake news narratives

about the COVID-19 pandemic proliferated in German Facebook users, such as powerful groups that are behind the pandemic, poisons released on us, vaccines as bioweapon, 5G network and microchips etc. Fake news narratives that were disseminated among the German Facebook users, according to the analysis contained a conspiratorial character, where it was claimed that COVID-19 is fabricated and is used as a pretext by powerful groups to achieve certain plans. Moreover, conspiracies such as depopulation of the world, extermination of people, etc., were also evident in the proliferated fake news narratives in Germany.

This research study reveals that fake news narratives disseminated during coronavirus outbreak among German Facebook users contain manipulations characterized by elements of conspiracy such as: "external/internal enemy", powerful external groups, 5G Network as bio weapon, etc. Moreover, the study highlights that mediatization is an inevitable part of our social life, and being so, it really plays an important role in our interactive communication. As such, the media shapes the communication discourses as well as social dimensions. Thus, our communication and internal structure of it are now dependent on media, and this dependency is called mediatization. In this line, fake news stands reciprocally in this process and it is inevitable part of a medium.

The key characteristics that build the fake news narratives proliferated among German Facebook users during COVID-19 pandemic are: the COVID-19 pandemic fabricated by elite groups with malicious purposes to reduce the number of human beings, as well as the application of control over people for personal purposes of some external powerful groups. In all these claims, the disseminators of fake news narratives criticized the "powerful group" as the creators of the pandemic, as well as the "elite group" as responsible for the worldwide pandemic disaster. Furthermore, conspiracies such as the extermination of humanity, 5G network, vaccines as bioweapon, were transformed into very hot topics during the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak all over the world, forming the manipulated chain of information. In this context, it is worth pointing out that the damage to the informational ecosystem by numerous fake news narratives implied a very weak image on the WHO in terms of credibility. On the other hand, they initiated the disregard of genuine recommendations for the

prevention of the coronavirus. Thus, this entire period resulted in a severely damaged information ecosystem, the consequences of which are still present today.

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