

Paper: “Social Networking and Misinformation Challenges: Moroccan Students in Tertiary Education as a Case Study”

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Peer review:

Reviewer 1: Stefan Vladutescu
University of Craiova, Romania

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Moulay Ismail University, Morocco

Reviewer 3: Uğur Gündüz
Istanbul University, Turkey

Reviewer A:

Recommendation: Resubmit for Review

The TITLE is clear and it is adequate to the content of the article.

The title has the potential to address an important and timely issue, but it could benefit from some refinement to make it more concise, clear, and specific to your research focus, purposes, and design. Here are some suggestions in this regard:

1. Length and Complexity: The title is quite long and includes multiple concepts. While it's important to be specific, a lengthy title can be overwhelming and may not effectively communicate the essence of your research at a glance. Consider whether you can simplify or rephrase it to make it more concise and clear.
2. Specificity: While the title mentions Moroccan students in tertiary education as a case study, it might benefit from further specificity. For instance, you could specify the city or university you are focusing on, or you could mention the time frame of your study. This additional detail can help potential readers understand the context better.
3. Clarity: The term "post-truth era" is somewhat abstract and may not be immediately clear to all readers. You might consider adding a brief explanation or definition in the title or in the introduction of your research to ensure that readers understand the concept you're exploring.
4. Research Focus: It's essential to ensure that your title accurately reflects the primary focus and scope of your research. If your study also involves other elements beyond social networking sites and misinformation challenges, you might want to consider whether they should be included in the title.

The ABSTRACT clearly presents objects, methods, and results.

The abstract should be improved due to some weaknesses related to the main parts of an abstract in an IMRAD paper, mainly the background, methods, key results, and conclusions:

1. Background:

- The abstract provides a clear background by stating the primary purpose of the study, which is to explore how Moroccan university students engage with social networking sites and evaluate digital content. However, it lacks a more detailed context regarding the significance of the research problem. It would be beneficial to briefly mention why this topic is relevant or important (research gap).

2. Methods:

- The abstract briefly mentions that a survey was used as a research instrument, which is an appropriate method for collecting data in this context. However, it doesn't provide any details about the survey design, sample size, or data collection procedures. A bit more information on the methodology would enhance the abstract.

3. Results:

- The abstract mentions that the study reports that most respondents critically evaluate social media content and deploy verification measures. It also notes that the majority of respondents rate their digital media perceived self-efficacy highly. However, it lacks specific data or percentages to support these findings. Including some key statistics or findings would make this section more informative.

4. Conclusions:

- The abstract mentions that the study presents conclusions and recommendations for Moroccan policymakers and stakeholders, which is expected in a research study. However, it does not provide any details about these conclusions or recommendations. Providing a brief overview of the main findings or recommendations would enhance the abstract comprehensibility.

5. Keywords: The choice of keywords at the end of the abstract is somewhat generic. Consider using more specific and relevant keywords that accurately represent the content of the study.

There are a few grammatical errors and spelling mistakes in this article.

There are a few areas where it can be improved:

- In relation to the sentence, "This empirical endeavor, that used the survey as a research instrument to gather data," could be rewritten for better clarity. For example, "This empirical study used a survey as a research instrument to gather data."
- The sentence, "The sweeping majority of respondents highly rated their digital media perceived self-efficacy," could be made clearer. For example, "The vast majority of respondents reported a high level of perceived self-efficacy in digital media."
- There's an inconsistency in the use of capitalization in keywords. It's common practice to capitalize all keywords consistently.

The study METHODS are explained clearly.

I wanted to provide some clarification regarding the research design mentioned in your work. You've referred to the research design as a case study, which is indeed a qualitative research design. In a case study, researchers typically focus on a specific case or a small number of cases in great depth, often without sampling. However, in your study, it seems you are interested in examining Moroccan students in tertiary education, which could be considered a broader population.

Given the scope of your research, it might be more appropriate to reconsider the research design. Instead of a case study, you could conduct a research study that targets Moroccan students in tertiary education more broadly. This would involve selecting a representative sample from the population, as there are currently 12 public universities in Morocco with 145 higher education establishments. A well-designed quantitative or mixed-methods approach could provide valuable insights into the larger population of Moroccan students in higher education.

Other Weaknesses and areas for improvement in the Methods Section:

1. Sample Size: While random sampling is a good approach, the sample size of 102 students may be considered relatively small, especially if you intend to draw

generalizable conclusions about Moroccan university students as a whole. It's important to acknowledge the limitations of your sample size in the discussion section of your research.

2. **Non-Representative Sample:** You note that the sample is not largely representative of the vast population. This is a significant limitation, and it's crucial to clearly state the limitations of your study in terms of external validity. Be cautious about making broad generalizations beyond your sample.

3. ****Self-Selection Bias**:** The fact that students voluntarily agreed to participate may introduce self-selection bias. Those who chose to participate may have different attitudes or behaviors related to social media and misinformation compared to those who declined to participate. Acknowledge this potential bias in your study.

4. **Survey Design:** While you mention that the survey contained ten multiple-choice questions, you don't provide details about the content of these questions or how they were developed. It's essential to ensure that the questions are well-constructed and validated for reliability and validity to yield meaningful data.

5. **Instrument Validity and Reliability:** You should describe how you assessed the validity and reliability of your questionnaire to ensure that it measures what it intends to measure consistently. This information is critical for the trustworthiness of your findings.

6. **Data Collection:** Using Google Forms is convenient, but it's essential to consider issues related to data security, privacy, and potential biases introduced by the online platform. Explain how you addressed these concerns and ensured the anonymity of respondents.

7. **Response Bias:** You don't mention any strategies you used to mitigate response bias, such as ensuring clear and unbiased wording of questions, or how you handled incomplete or inconsistent responses.

The body of the paper is clear and does not contain errors.

The author is invited to address the following concerns (the results section and the appendix):

A) The Results Section:

1. **Repetition and Redundancy:** The results section tends to be repetitive, covering similar points and statistics multiple times. For instance, the repetition of the percentages of students' media consumption patterns can be condensed to avoid redundancy and maintain reader engagement.

2. **Overuse of Percentages:** While percentages are useful for conveying quantitative data, it's important to balance them with qualitative insights and analysis. The section is heavily focused on presenting percentages, which can make it seem too data-driven without offering in-depth interpretation and discussion of the results.

3. Clarity and Organization: The presentation of results can be made more reader-friendly by organizing the information into subsections or themes. This would help readers navigate the section more easily and understand the logical flow of your findings.

4. Interpretation of Findings: While you present a substantial amount of data, there's a lack of in-depth interpretation and analysis of what the results mean. For example, you mention that many students are aware of the lack of credibility in social media, but why is this significant, and what implications does it have for addressing misinformation?

5. Discussion of Limitations: It's crucial to discuss the limitations of your study explicitly. You mention some potential biases, such as social desirability bias when respondents may provide answers that make them appear more digitally literate. Addressing these limitations helps establish the credibility of your research.

6. Integration of Literature: Where relevant, integrate your findings with existing literature and theories related to media consumption, digital literacy, and misinformation. This would provide a more comprehensive context for your results and help readers understand their significance.

7. Qualitative Data: Consider incorporating qualitative data or quotes from respondents to add depth and context to your findings. Qualitative data can provide valuable insights into students' attitudes and behaviors that quantitative data alone may not capture.

8. Discussion of Contradictory Findings: Where your findings may contradict common assumptions or prior research, it's essential to discuss these discrepancies and propose possible explanations. For example, why do some students rate themselves as digitally well-equipped while displaying certain behaviors that suggest otherwise?

9. Recommendations: While you briefly touch on the role of higher education institutions, consider expanding your discussion on the practical implications of your findings. How can universities adapt their curricula to address digital literacy and critical thinking skills effectively?

10. Conclusion of the results section**: Summarize the key takeaways from this section before moving on to the recommendations and conclusion. This helps readers understand the main findings without having to re-read the entire section.

B) The Appendix (Survey):

While the survey you've provided is generally clear and straightforward, there are a few areas where it can be improved or refined:

1. Introduction and Purpose: The introduction could be a bit more informative. You might want to briefly explain why you're conducting this survey and how the data will be used for academic purposes. This can help participants understand the importance of their responses.

2. **Demographic Questions:** The demographic questions (gender, age, academic level) are essential, but you might consider adding a few more demographic questions like "Major/Area of Study" or "University Name" to gather more context about the participants.
3. **Media Usage and Viewing Patterns:** The questions in this section are generally clear, but you might want to add an option for "I don't know" or "I prefer not to say" to allow participants to skip questions they don't want to answer or genuinely don't know.
4. **Usage of Social Networking Sites:** Instead of asking participants to rate their daily usage of each social networking site, you could ask them to estimate the average time they spend on each site per day in minutes or hours. This would provide more precise data.
5. **Motives for Using Social Networking Sites:** Consider making this question multiple-choice rather than open-ended. This makes it easier to analyze responses quantitatively and categorize them into specific motives.
6. **Perceptions About Social Media Content and Misinformation Issues:** The question about the most logical reason for the spread of fake news on social media sites could benefit from providing definitions or explanations of each option. Some participants might not fully understand what is meant by "emotional appeals" or "political agenda reasons."
7. **Response Scales:** Ensure that response scales are consistent across questions. For example, some questions use a 5-point scale (e.g., "Never to very frequently"), while others use a different scale (e.g., "Absolutely to not at all"). Consistency can make it easier to compare responses.
8. **Question Flow:** Consider the flow of the questions. It may make sense to group related questions together. For example, all questions related to social media usage could be grouped, followed by questions about perceptions of social media content.
9. **Avoid Leading Questions:** Ensure that questions are neutral and do not lead participants to a particular answer. For example, the question about the most credible source should not imply that there's a lack of credibility in any of the listed sources.
10. **Other Specify Options:** For questions with an "Other" option, consider providing a text box where participants can explain their answer. This can help capture more detailed responses.
11. **Pretesting:** Before distributing the survey widely, consider pretesting it with a small group of participants to identify any issues with question clarity or wording.
12. **Informed Consent:** Depending on the platform you use to administer the survey, you may need to include an informed consent statement at the beginning, explaining the purpose of the survey, how the data will be used, and that participation is voluntary.

The CONCLUSION or summary is accurate and supported by the content.

The summary of results, recommendations, and conclusion in your study presents valuable insights, but it could benefit from addressing the limitations of your sample and providing more in-depth discussions on certain recommendations and methodological choices. A more concise and focused conclusion would strengthen the overall impact of your study.

The list of REFERENCES is comprehensive and appropriate.

I noticed numerous direct citations that lack page numbers, which is a fundamental requirement for APA documentation.

It is imperative to pay meticulous attention to referencing and adhere to the APA 7th edition guidelines throughout your work. Unfortunately, we have identified several instances where referencing, especially regarding tables and figures, does not align with the prescribed guidelines. In particular, there have been violations noted in both in-text and end-of-text citations. These discrepancies are crucial to address as they impact the document credibility and scholarly integrity.

I kindly request that you review and rectify these referencing issues promptly. This will ensure that your document aligns with APA 7th edition guidelines and maintains the highest standards of academic citation and documentation.

In relation to this, while the text cites a few sources to support claims, it could benefit from more specific and up-to-date citations. Providing specific references for key statistics and claims would increase the credibility of the rationale and significance.

Please rate the TITLE of this paper.

[Poor] **1-5** [Excellent]

2

Please rate the ABSTRACT of this paper.

[Poor] **1-5** [Excellent]

2

Please rate the LANGUAGE of this paper.

[Poor] **1-5** [Excellent]

2

Please rate the METHODS of this paper.

[Poor] **1-5** [Excellent]

2

Please rate the BODY of this paper.

[Poor] **1-5** [Excellent]

2

Please rate the CONCLUSION of this paper.

[Poor] **1-5** [Excellent]

2

Please rate the REFERENCES of this paper.

[Poor] **1-5** [Excellent]

2

Overall Recommendation!!!

Return for major revision and resubmission

Comments and Suggestions to the Author(s):

While the paper shows promise, it requires significant revisions before it can be considered for publication. Below are comments and suggestions to guide your major revision and resubmission as an author:

1. Clarity of Research Question and Objectives:

The research question and objectives need to be more clearly articulated. Ensure they are specific and concise to guide the study effectively.

2. Literature Review:

Expand and strengthen the literature review section to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the existing research in the field. Discuss relevant theories and models related to misinformation and its impact on social networking sites.

3. Methodology:

Elaborate on the research methodology, including the sampling method, data collection, and analysis techniques. Ensure that the chosen methods align with the research objectives and can provide meaningful insights into the topic.

4. Data Collection:

Clarify how data were collected from Moroccan students in tertiary education. Provide details about the survey or interview process, including sample size and data collection instruments.

5. Data Analysis:

Present a clear and detailed account of the data analysis process. Describe how you intend to analyze the data to address the research questions.

Results and Discussion:

Ensure that the results are presented logically and concisely. Discuss the findings in the context of the research objectives and the existing literature. Provide interpretations and insights based on the data.

6. APA Formatting:

Thoroughly review and correct all APA formatting issues, including in-text citations, reference list, and citations for tables and figures. Ensure that page numbers are included for direct citations.

8. Tables and Figures:

If tables and figures are used, make sure they are clearly labeled, cited appropriately in the text, and explained in detail. Each table and figure should enhance the reader's understanding of the study.

8. Conclusion:

Revise and strengthen the conclusion section to summarize the key findings and their implications for the broader field of study.

References:

Double-check the references for accuracy and consistency with APA 7th edition guidelines.

Language and Clarity:

Carefully proofread the manuscript for language issues, clarity, and coherence. Ensure that the text is well-organized and easy to follow.

9. Ethical Considerations:

Discuss any ethical considerations related to the research, especially when dealing with human subjects.

Reviewer B:

Recommendation: Revisions Required

The TITLE is clear and it is adequate to the content of the article.

The article investigates how Moroccan university students engage with social networking sites (SNS) and assesses their self-perceived abilities to critically evaluate digital content, particularly online news and information.

The ABSTRACT clearly presents objects, methods, and results.

The study provides valuable insights into the students' practices and perceptions in the context of the prevalent misinformation challenges.

There are a few grammatical errors and spelling mistakes in this article.

The article suffers from some grammatical mistakes and punctuation issues. It is therefore required to proofread the manuscript carefully before submitting the final version.

The study METHODS are explained clearly.

The methodology section needs to provide more detailed information about the survey instrument, including the structure of the questionnaire, specific questions, and response options. This will help in understanding how the data was collected and analyzed.

The body of the paper is clear and does not contain errors.

The article should explicitly state the data analysis methods used, whether they are descriptive statistics, inferential statistics, or a combination of both. This is crucial for ensuring methodological rigor.

The CONCLUSION or summary is accurate and supported by the content.

The article should address ethical considerations, such as informed consent, privacy protection, and data handling procedures. This information is vital to ensure that the research adheres to ethical standards.

The list of REFERENCES is comprehensive and appropriate.

The literature is not sufficient in the article and up-to-date, it should be enriched with current literature in the field.

Please rate the TITLE of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

4

Please rate the ABSTRACT of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

4

Please rate the LANGUAGE of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

3

Please rate the METHODS of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

3

Please rate the BODY of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

3

Please rate the CONCLUSION of this paper.

[Poor] **1-5** [Excellent]

3

Please rate the REFERENCES of this paper.

[Poor] **1-5** [Excellent]

3

Overall Recommendation!!!

Return for major revision and resubmission

Comments and Suggestions to the Author(s):

The article investigates how Moroccan university students engage with social networking sites (SNS) and assesses their self-perceived abilities to critically evaluate digital content, particularly online news and information. The study provides valuable insights into the students' practices and perceptions in the context of the prevalent misinformation challenges. However, I would like to see the following concerns addressed: So, I recommend major revision as indicated below:

1- The methodology section needs to provide more detailed information about the survey instrument, including the structure of the questionnaire, specific questions, and response options. This will help in understanding how the data was collected and analyzed.

2-The article should explicitly state the data analysis methods used, whether they are descriptive statistics, inferential statistics, or a combination of both. This is crucial for ensuring methodological rigor.

3- The article should address ethical considerations, such as informed consent, privacy protection, and data handling procedures. This information is vital to ensure that the research adheres to ethical standards.

4- While the gender distribution is mentioned, further analysis or discussion on how gender may influence the participants' media consumption and misinformation perception would add depth to the findings.

5-The article should provide a brief overview of the key findings and proposed recommendations, as alluded to in the abstract. This will enhance the article's completeness.

6- The citation style used in the article should be consistent and conform to the

guidelines of the journal.

7- The article suffers from some grammatical mistakes and punctuation issues. It is therefore required to proofread the manuscript carefully before submitting the final version.

8- If applicable, tables and figures should be well-labeled and referenced within the text. They should also be presented clearly for easy interpretation.

9- The article could benefit from further contextualization of the Moroccan socio-political environment and its impact on the spread of misinformation.

10- The literature is not sufficient in the article and up-to-date, it should be enriched with current literature in the field.

In summary, the article addresses an important research area, but several revisions are necessary to enhance its methodological clarity, transparency, and overall contribution to the field. With these revisions, the article has the potential to make a valuable contribution to the understanding of misinformation challenges in the context of Moroccan university students.

Good luck with your research!..

Reviewer N:

Recommendation: Revisions Required

The TITLE is clear and it is adequate to the content of the article.

The title of the manuscript reflects its content.

The ABSTRACT clearly presents objects, methods, and results.

The abstract correctly retains the objective, theme, method of investigation and research results.

There are a few grammatical errors and spelling mistakes in this article.

It would be good for the manuscript to be read by a native English speaker.

The study METHODS are explained clearly.

The method used is appropriate to the topic approached.

The body of the paper is clear and does not contain errors.

The results are relevant.

The CONCLUSION or summary is accurate and supported by the content.

The conclusions of the manuscript are based on the investigation carried out.

The list of REFERENCES is comprehensive and appropriate.

It is necessary to update the bibliography with 2-4 relevant works from 2022, 2023.

Please rate the TITLE of this paper.

[Poor] **1-5** [Excellent]

4

Please rate the ABSTRACT of this paper.

[Poor] **1-5** [Excellent]

4

Please rate the LANGUAGE of this paper.

[Poor] **1-5** [Excellent]

3

Please rate the METHODS of this paper.

[Poor] **1-5** [Excellent]

4

Please rate the BODY of this paper.

[Poor] **1-5** [Excellent]

4

Please rate the CONCLUSION of this paper.

[Poor] **1-5** [Excellent]

4

Please rate the REFERENCES of this paper.

[Poor] **1-5** [Excellent]

2

Overall Recommendation!!!

Accepted, minor revision needed

Comments and Suggestions to the Author(s):

It is necessary to update the bibliography with 2-4 relevant works from 2022, 2023.
