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Abstract

A fresh coronavirus outbreak started in Wuhan, China, in January 2020 and spread over the world as a pandemic in March 2020. People all throughout the world have been influenced by the COVID-19 epidemic in a number of ways, including spread and received a news. Objective of this research to determine the socioeconomic status involve of level of education, type of occupation and salary of Pahang residents' perspectives on fake news during the COVID-19 pandemic. A survey was conducted with 130 respondents from the state of Pahang. Additionally, the study was done online. According to the level of education, altruism factor was found higher than other factors in the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM)/ Sijil Pelajaran Tinggi Malaysia (STPM), Diploma, Degree, and Master levels of education (M=3.27, M =3.49, M =3.64, M =3.50). The factor of instant news sharing, however, was higher than other factors at others level of education (M = 4.00). Altruism factor was higher in all occupations than other variables, including student, government servant, private sector, housewife, self-employed, and others (M =3.50, M =3.45, M =3.79, M =3.50, M = 3.08, M = 3.93). Factor of instant news sharing, altruism, and socialisation all had the same mean (M=4.80) among retirees. In comparison to other factors, the results for the salary category of less than RM2,500, RM2,501-RM4,850, and RM4,851-RM10,970 had a high altruism factor (M=3.51, M=3.52, M=3.43). However, the characteristics of self-promotion, socialisation, amusement, and fake news sharing were higher than instant news sharing for salary categories of RM10,971 and above (M=5.00).

Keywords: Socioeconomic status, Fake News, COVID-19, Malaysia

Introduction

In late December 2019, a continual occurrence of an unknown acute respiratory tract infection has been documented in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China (Elengoe, 2020). The World Health Organization (WHO) temporarily termed this unknown infection to new virus 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) on 12 January 2020 and on 12 February 2020, WHO officially named this infectious disease as coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) (Liu et al., 2020). Based on WHO (2020), the outbreak of COVID-19 has been accompanied by a large amount of misleading and false information about the virus, especially on social media and this ongoing misinformation about the COVID-19 was called as an "infodemic." Besides, WHO (2020) also stated that COVID-19 is the first pandemic in history in which technology and social media are being used on a massive scale to keep people safe, informed, productive and connected. Social media platforms have provided an unprecedented opportunity for people all over the world to start sharing information and knowledge, and they have also created an environment in which fake news can be spread just as easily (Alkhateri et al., 2021). A lot of Malaysians use the internet every day to read news, watch videos, and stay in touch with friends through social media.

According to Digital Business Lab (2022); Veeriah (2021), Malaysians spend an average of eight hours and five minutes every day online, including two hours and 58 minutes on social media. According to another report, YouGov Asia Pacific (YouGov Apac), an international market research organization, Malaysians spend an average of five hours and 47 minutes per day on social media, with 17% spending more than nine hours (Ariff, 2019). People in Malaysia use social media at least 86% of the time, as of January 2021. As of 2016, only 62% of Malaysians were on social media. This is a 24% increase from 2016. YouTube has the most users with a penetration rate of 94%, followed by Facebook with 89% and Instagram with 75% (Digital Business Lab, 2022). Fake news can influence people's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviour by its ubiquity, and thus, in a report from the World Economic Forum (WEF), they say that it is one of the biggest threats to modern society (Vicario et al., 2016). People's attitudes toward the internet and social media are progressively shifting. The speed with which information spreads on social media is unbelievable, and the results of this study will help us figure out if social media is giving people the right or wrong information about the COVID-19 outbreak (Allcot & Gentzkow, 2017; R et al., 2020). The spread of fake news on social media, especially during the pandemic of COVID-19, has become a big problem for a lot of Malaysian businesses and government because during Movement Control Orders (MCO), people started spreading the fake news quickly (Karim & Bakar, 2021).

Research Background

Fake news can influence people's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviour by its ubiquity, and thus, in a report from the World Economic Forum (WEF), they say that it is one of the biggest threats to modern society (Vicario et al., 2016). During the pandemic of COVID-19, the spreading of fake news on social media has become a big threat to numerous Malaysian industries and institutions (Yatid, 2019). Fake news has gotten out of control because of the new rule requiring Malaysians to work and stay home during Movement Control Orders (MCO) (Nordin et al., 2021). Despite the government do their best efforts to break the COVID-19 chain, a few uneducated individuals continue to propagate misleading information about the virus, they still delivering information to the public through social media sites such as Instagram, WhatsApp, Twitter and Facebook (Kadir et al., 2021).

According to Ngadiron et al (2021), based on a study done by the Institute of Strategic and International Studies Malaysia (ISIS), 70 percent of the 363 fake news stories about government action are about COVID-19 and how viruses spread in the community. Out of 43 cases of spreading false information about COVID-19, the MCMC has identified 18 suspects. According to MCMC statement, six suspects have already been charged in court. According to the statement, Through the Cyber Crime Committee, the MCMC and the Royal Malaysian Police (PDRM) are coordinating to combat the continuous propagation of fake news, particularly about COVID-19, which can be confusing and cause conflict among netizens. (Nurul Hidayah, 2020; Wan Mohd Nor, 2020). Therefore, this research aims to determine the socioeconomic status involve of level of education, type of occupation and salary of Pahang residents' perspectives on fake news during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Methodology

In this study, the researchers employed a cross-sectional survey methodology. Using this method, they could efficiently and inexpensively quantify the study subject's exposures and results (Wang & Cheng, 2020). In order to prevent common technique bias, we reassure the responder that the study would be anonymous and confidential (Chang et al., 2010). In this study, probability sampling was used. Because lacked a sampling frame, the researchers chose this sampling strategy. G*Power analysis indicates that the recommended sample size for the F-Test in Linear Multiple Regression is 92, with a fixed model and an R2 divergence from zero. However, in this study, the researchers were successful in gathering 130 participants. Google Forms is being used by the researchers to disseminate the questionnaire. The researcher then completes the questionnaire in an excel worksheet to remove any inaccurate data. The state of Pahang in East Malaysia was chosen as the sample location. The research participants who will be chosen to reply to the survey and complete the questionnaire must be at least 18 years old.

The survey that will be used in this study has been modified from research based on earlier researchers that is pertinent to this study. The instruments that will be used in this study have all passed the requirements for validity and reliability because they were all taken from validated studies (Apuke & Omar, 2021). Altruism (Plume & Slade, 2018), instant news sharing, sociability, and entertainment (Thompson et al., 2019), self-promotion (Islam et al., 2019), and fake news sharing on COVID-19 are the five factors that make up the questionnaire based on Users and Gratification Theory (Chadwick & Vaccari, 2019; Talwar et al., 2019). There were five Likert scales in this survey. On this scale, things that have a lot of meaning are clustered together. A score of 1 denotes strongly disagree, a score of 2 denotes disagreement, a score of 3 denotes neutrality, a score of 4 denotes agreement, and a score of 5 denotes great agreement. Data collection will take place over a two-month period beginning in June 2022 and ending in July 2022. The data was analyse using descriptive analysis to determine their mean.

Results and Discussion

The highest respondent's level of education was diploma (N=58). In Table 1, the study shows that the factor of altruism is high compared to other factors in level of education Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM)/ Sijil Pelajaran Tinggi Malaysia (STPM), Diploma, Degree and Master ($M=3.27$, $M=3.49$, $M=3.64$, $M=3.50$). However, in others level of education, the factor of instant news sharing is higher than other factors ($M=4.00$).

Table 1
Level of Education

	Instant News Sharing	Altruism	Self-promotion	Socialisation	Entertainment	Fake News Sharing
Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) / Sijil Pelajaran Tinggi Malaysia (STPM)	Mean 3.18	3.27	2.60	3.14	2.28	2.15
	N 15	15	15	15	15	15
Diploma	Mean 3.34	3.49	2.61	3.19	2.63	2.21
	N 58	58	58	58	58	58
Degree	Mean 3.25	3.64	2.07	3.02	2.17	1.70
	N 25	25	25	25	25	25
Master	Mean 3.14	3.50	1.94	2.72	2.23	1.78
	N 29	29	29	29	29	29
Others	Mean 4.00	3.87	3.58	3.47	3.17	2.33
	N 3	3	3	3	3	3

According to Table 2, the factor of altruism is high compared to other factors in any type of occupation, including student, government servant, private sector, housewife, self-employed, and others ($M = 3.50$, $M = 3.45$, $M = 3.79$, $M = 3.50$, $M = 3.08$, $M = 3.93$). The mean among retiree is the same among factors of instant news sharing, altruism and socialisation ($M = 4.80$).

Table 2
Type of Occupation

	Instant News Sharing	Altruism	Self-promotion	Socialisation	Entertainment	Fake News Sharing
Student	Mean 3.48	3.50	2.71	3.21	2.46	2.29
	N 48	48	48	48	48	48
Government Servant	Mean 3.06	3.45	2.30	2.95	2.49	1.93
	N 50	50	50	50	50	50
Private Sector	Mean 3.46	3.79	1.79	2.82	2.00	1.70
	N 13	13	13	13	13	13
Housewife	Mean 3.08	3.50	1.44	2.65	2.13	1.49
	N 4	4	4	4	4	4
Self Employed	Mean 2.50	3.08	1.84	2.73	2.21	1.68
	N 8	8	8	8	8	8
Retiree	Mean 4.80	4.80	2.00	4.80	2.00	1.00
	N 1	1	1	1	1	1
Others	Mean 3.93	3.67	3.04	3.67	3.08	2.07
	N 6	6	6	6	6	6

Table 3 shows that respondents from the salary category below than RM2,500, RM2,501-RM4,850 and RM4,851-RM10,970 has a high factor of altruism compared to other factors

($M=3.51$, $M=3.52$, $M= 3.43$). However, for salary category of RM10,971 and above, the factors of self-promotion, socialisation, entertainment and fake news sharing are higher than instant news sharing ($M=5.00$).

Table 3

Salary Category

		Instant News Sharing	Altruism	Self- promotion	Socialisation	Entertainment	Fake News Sharing
Below RM2,500	than Mean N	3.35 79	3.52 79	2.55 79	3.15 79	2.50 79	2.10 79
RM2,501 RM4,850	- Mean N	3.14 26	3.52 26	2.32 26	3.18 26	2.47 26	2.22 26
RM4,851 RM10,970	- Mean N	3.13 24	3.43 24	1.77 24	2.50 24	2.01 24	1.37 24
RM10,971 above	Mean N	4.80 1	3.40 1	5.00 1	5.00 1	5.00 1	5.00 1

Discussion

Descriptive analysis of the aforementioned data reveals that altruism is a high-ranking factor in comparison to other factors any level of education. The factor of instant news sharing, however, is more higher in others level of education. The factor of altruism is also highly in any type of occupation, including student, government servant, private sector, housewife, self-employed, and others. When compared to other criteria, the salary ranges between RM2,501 and RM4,850 and RM4,851 and RM10,970 have the highest altruism factor. The characteristics of self-promotion, socialisation, amusement, and fake news sharing, however, are more important than instant news sharing for wage categories of RM10,971 and above. According to our research, people are more likely to be charitable regardless of their education level, type of occupation, or salary category as a result of the impacts of the Covid 19 on their desire to get more information and to help others with their sharing. Due to this situation, the altruism factor in socioeconomics status among Pahang Perspectives on fake news during the Covid 19 pandemic. There are undoubtedly gaps in the study. First of all, this study's sample size is too tiny to allow for universal generalisation. The study's quick turn-around time is another possible drawback. Additionally, participants in this study had to be at least 18 years old. Another recommendation for future research is to pay more attention to teenagers because they more engage in using social media.

Conclusion

The conclusion based on this research that altruism factor was the highest factor that lead perspectives on fake news during the Covid-19 pandemic. With these findings, we showed that the important factors on fake news are altruism. In the Pahang setting, spreading false information could not be motivated by malice but rather by the urge to inform a group on what is perceived to be useful information, particularly during a pandemic. By using Users and Gratification Theory in this research, our study has shown fresh angles on how socioeconomics status among Pahang's perspective on fake news especially when pandemic happened.

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