

DOUBLE TROUBLE

Disinformation and Hate Speech

Disinformation and hate speech are two powerful tools that can be used to manipulate people and create chaos in society.

DIS INFORMATION

HATE SPEECH

Disinformation is false or misleading information that is spread intentionally to deceive people. It can be spread through various channels, including social media, news outlets, or spread by political leaders in their speeches. The impact of disinformation can be severe, leading to confusion, distrust, and even violence. Disinformation can also undermine democratic institutions.

Hate speech is any speech that attacks a person or group on the basis of their race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexuality, or any other characteristic. It can be subtle or overt, and can have a profound impact on the targets of the speech. Hate speech can lead to stigmatisation. Societal discrimination, physical and other kinds of harassment, and violence, including gendered violence where women and children are vulnerable. Hate speech does and can create a climate of intimidation, fear and division in society.

DIVIDE AND RULE

When disinformation and hate speech are combined, the results can have devastating consequences for everybody. Disinformation can be used to spread false narratives about specific groups, which can then fuel hate speech and bigotry. This can lead to real-world consequences, such as hate crimes and violence leading to a rift between communities. Politicians, who often stand to benefit from such social divisions, can directly or via intermediaries, deftly combine disinformation and hate speech to inflame passions. This can be done through speeches, songs, whatsapp forwards, social-media posts and at meetings held behind closed doors. Citizens exposed to this dangerous cocktail become angry at perceived insults and ready to defend imaginary attacks on their identity - religion, sect, caste. Thus distracted, citizens may ignore critically important real-world issues like corruption, unemployment and price-rise to rally behind divisive leaders.

It is important to be vigilant and check for the authenticity of what we hear and see before believing and sharing it with others. Here are some tips to double check disinformation and stop hate:

WHAT WE CAN DO

1. Doubt first, believe later: Always be sceptical of tall claims and fear mongering. Don't believe any claim or news or offer without double checking it first.

2. Use common sense: Use your common sense and critical thinking skills. If the news sounds too good or bad to be true, it probably is. If the information elicits extreme reactions from everyone around you, it should be doubted. If a politician is deploying the information, be doubly alert.

3. Look for evidence, fact-check the information: Google the information back to its source. Is the source reputable and trustworthy? Is the claim supported by photographs, videos and quotes? Has the claim been previously covered by mainstream, reputable newspapers or online fact-checking websites?

4. Listen carefully, analyse the language used: Disinformation often uses sensational language and exaggerates the facts. Check if the language used is objective and factual. Hate speech and disinformation is always aimed at agitating its audience. Is the claim agitating you? It might be fake.

5. Watch out for 'Confirmation bias': Confirmation bias is the tendency to seek out, interpret, and remember information in a way that confirms one's pre-existing beliefs and attitudes, while ignoring or downplaying contradictory evidence. It can lead to flawed decision-making and reinforce existing biases.

6. Think critically: Finally, use your critical thinking skills when reading a whatsapp forward or hearing a politician speak. Be skeptical of stories that confirm your existing beliefs or opinions.

No disinformation! No hate speech!

Don't trade your right to a peaceful and prosperous life with chaos and violence. Those who seek to create trouble in the society have something to gain out of it. What are you gaining?

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