

# Systematic Literature Review on Driving Factors of COVID-19 Related Fake News Sharing on Social Media

Haixiao Kong<sup>1</sup>, Mastura Mahamed<sup>1</sup>, Zulhamri Abdullah<sup>1</sup>, Wan Anita Wan Abas<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Communication, Faculty of Modern, Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Malaysia

Correspondence: Haixiao Kong, Department of Communication, Faculty of Modern, Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Malaysia.

Received: July 9, 2023

Accepted: August 21, 2023

Online Published: August 29, 2023

doi:10.11114/smc.v11i7.6228

URL: <https://doi.org/10.11114/smc.v11i7.6228>

## Abstract

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the news sharing behavior of social media users has exacerbated the proliferation of fake news, contributed to significant negative impacts on the public and society. This study aimed to explore the driving factors of COVID-19 related fake news sharing on social media and identify interventions to combat its dissemination. A systematic literature review under the guideline of Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) was conducted using various databases, resulting in several key findings. Individual motivations such as information sharing, socialization, altruism, and self-promotion were identified as significant drivers of fake news sharing. Cognitive and emotional factors like trust in online information, perceived information overload, and social media exposure were also predictors of fake news sharing. Cultural and religious factors, as well as news content characteristics, were found to be correlated with COVID-19 fake news sharing. Facebook and WhatsApp emerged as the most commonly used platforms for sharing fake news. To address this issue, collaborative efforts are necessary involving individuals, social media platforms, technological institutions, governments, and public agencies. The study provides comprehensive insights into the driving factors behind COVID-19 related fake news sharing on social media and presents potential interventions to mitigate its spread. These findings can increase public awareness of the underlying reasons for fake news sharing and assist governments and public health institutions in devising strategies to handle fake news during future health crises.

**Keywords:** driving factors, COVID-19, fake news sharing, social media

## 1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic as an infectious disease outbreak originated Wuhan in China, and spread all over the world during the past three years, resulting in a significant number of morbidity and mortality. According to the data from the Johns Hopkins University (JHU) coronavirus resource center, as of January 6, 2023, an estimated 662 million people around the world had been afflicted with the virus, resulting in roughly 67 million fatalities. To curb the spread of the pandemic, lockdowns, and isolation orders have been implemented, which increased people's reliance on social media, not only for COVID-19 related information but also for socialization, entertainment, and communication (Kemei et al., 2022). Although the availability of social media provided useful information and valuable prevention strategy, it has resulted in a negative phenomenon named infodemic (Rathore & Farooq, 2020). The massive information accompanied by the infodemic is related to the virus, disease, treatment, and vaccines, however, most of the information is unverified and inaccurate, generally known as fake news (Rocha et al., 2021).

Fake news concerning COVID-19 can have catastrophic psychological, public health, and social influences. Besides altering individual perceptions, fake news can result in irrational preventative behavior and threaten public health and safety (Gupta et al., 2022; Yusoff, 2022). Fake news and the infodemic of COVID-19 caused human psychological disorders like fear, panic, and depression (Rocha et al., 2021). Fake news breeds "risky citizen behavior", distrust and attacks on health professionals, disobeying safety precautions such as wearing masks and refusing vaccinations, and even engaging in protests and undermining governmental health regulations (Kemei et al., 2022). Despite challenging public health, fake news associated with COVID-19 also led to discrimination and physical harassment against Asian populations, who are seen as the source of the pandemic virus, and the devastation of 5G telecommunication, which has

been regarded as aiding tools for virus transmission (Rocha et al., 2021).

The driving factors underpinning the widespread dissemination of COVID-19 related fake news on social media vary considerably. For example, conspiracy theories and rumors about COVID-19 are frequently backed by fake news. This type of information is used as a means for different political parties to undermine opponents and advance specific ideologies (Gagliardone et al., 2021). By creating and disseminating sensational COVID-19 disinformation or fake news on social media, some profit-minded businesses obtain income from advertising and sale of some specific food, supplement, or treatment that are said to be useful for COVID-19 prevention and therapies (Mesquita et al., 2020). Other personal factors, such as information seeking, high trust in information sources, self-promotion, and social media fatigue could also trigger the creation and sharing of COVID-19 fake news (Apuke & Omar, 2020a; Talwar et al., 2019). Although these research findings have been achieved, studies on understanding the driving factors of COVID-19 related fake news sharing on social media are just beginning (Apuke & Omar, 2020b; Islam et al., 2020; Laato et al., 2020), more studies need to conduct to tackle this specific issue.

The world health organization (WHO) along with numerous agencies has made calls to design and develop interventions curbing the trend of COVID-19 related fake news sharing, especially on social media platforms. The first step in creating interventions is to comprehend why people share this unverified and inaccurate pandemic news via social media (Laato et al., 2020). Due to the evolution of COVID-19, the results of prior empirical studies focusing on such topic are comparatively scattered, localized, and inconclusive to the detriment of scholars' understanding of the issue as a whole. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to identify, through a systematic review, the driving factors of COVID-19 related fake news sharing on social media of the current literature. This systematic review has two specific goals: 1) to synthesize present studies, identify and categorize the tested factors that drive the behavior of COVID-19 related fake news sharing on social media; 2) to provide potential interventions that can curb COVID-19 related fake news sharing on social media.

## 2. Methods

According to Liberati (2009), a systematic literature review is a valuable tool for academic research, due to its tendency to reduce biases, increase reliability and promote the communication of research findings. Klassen et al. (1998), and Weed (2006) once demonstrated that comprehensiveness, transparency, and rigorousness are the key features of systematic literature review.

To explore the driving factors for sharing COVID-19 related fake news on social media and potential interventions proposed by the current evidence, we conducted a systematic literature review following the guidelines of Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses, also called PRISMA(2020) (*PRISMA*, n.d.). We reviewed the articles that examined driving factors, motivations, as well as influencing factors for sharing COVID-19 related fake news on diverse social media platforms. To be specific, all the scholarly papers published spinning from November 2019 to March 2023 were searched for this systematic review, using certain keywords like COVID-19, fake news sharing, misinformation, and social media. The following sections elaborate on the PRISMA checklist:

### 2.1 Research Questions

We propose two research questions (RQs) to support a knowledge synthesis of present literature on the driving factors for COVID-19 related fake news sharing, as given below:

RQ1: -what are the driving factors of COVID-19 related fake news sharing on social media?

RQ2: -what are the potential interventions for curbing COVID-19 related fake news sharing on social media?

### 2.2 Search Strategy

The key search strategy is a literature search process that targets academic papers concerning the driving factors of COVID-19 fake news sharing on social media, spinning from November 2019 to March 2023. PubMed, Scopus, CNKI, Cochrane, and Web of Science were selected as the databases, for the reason that they include peer-reviewed papers in the fields of behavioral science, medicine, mass communication, and psychology. Key search terms and their variations were manipulated using wildcard operators and Boolean to identify relevant articles. These key search terms are given below:

“Motivation”

- “Motivation”, “gratification”, “determinants”, “influencing factors”

“COVID-19”

- “COVID-19”, “COVID19”, “pandemic”, “SARS-Cov”, “Coronavirus”

“Fake news sharing”

- “Fake news sharing”, “false news sharing”, “misinformation sharing”, “infodemic sharing”

“Social media”

- “Social media”, “social network”, “Twitter”, “WeChat”, “Weibo”, “Facebook”

We have four inclusion criteria, 1) the articles are associated with the driving factors of COVID-19 related fake news sharing on social media, 2) the type of article is peer-reviewed, 3) the article is published in English or Chinese language, 4) the published duration is from November 2019 to Marth 2023. However, the articles were excluded if the study was grey literature (informally published, non-commercially, or unpublished).

After searching based on the above strategy, there are 527 relevant articles were retrieved. Among them, 252 articles from Scopus, 153 articles from Web of Science, 76 articles from PubMed, 44 articles from CNKI, and 2 articles from Cochrane. After carefully identifying and removing duplicates, we got a total of 378 articles (Fig. 1.). The titles, abstracts, keywords, author names, journal names, and publication years of the identified papers were exported to MS Excel spreadsheets for the next screening step.

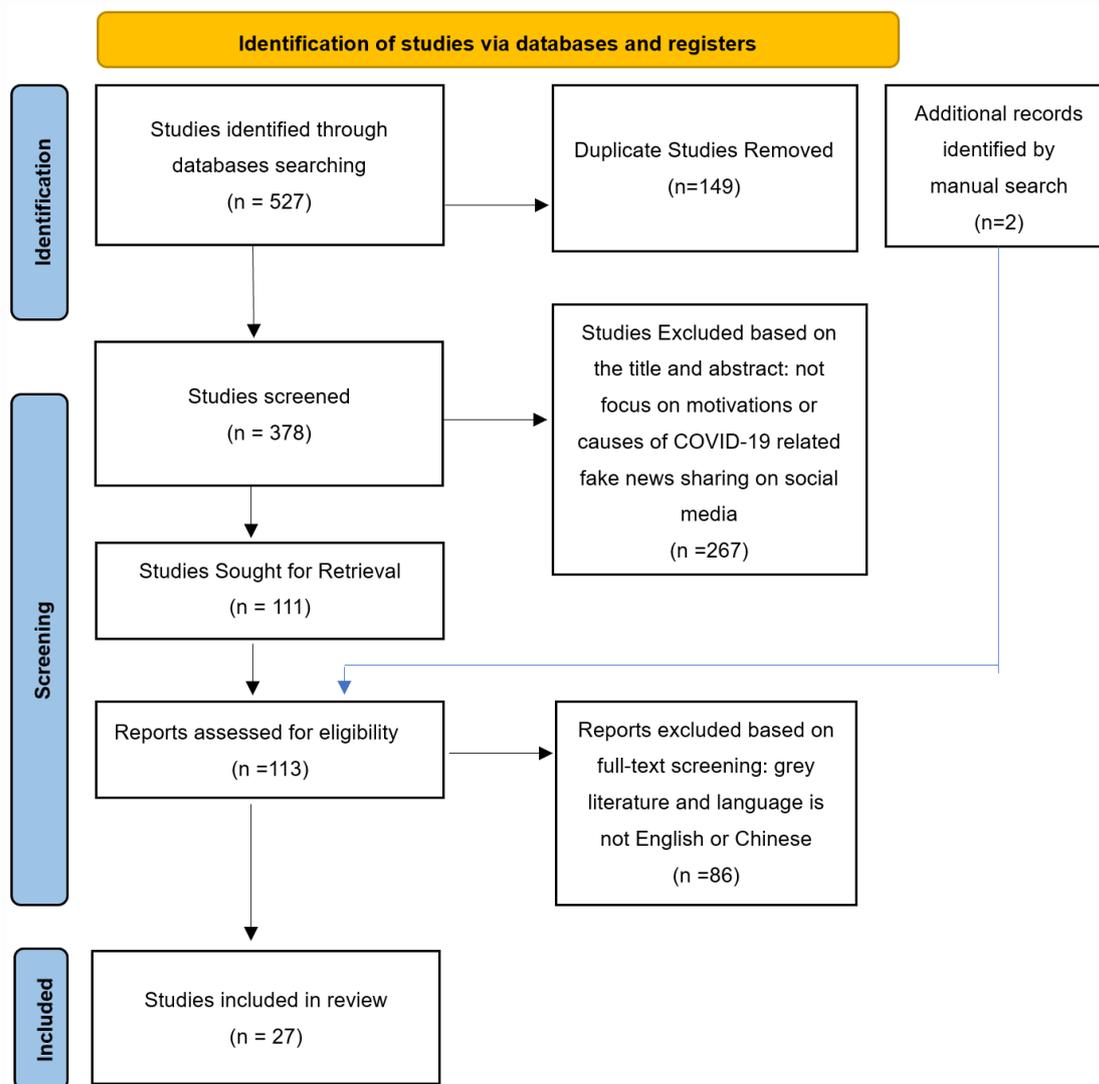


Figure 1. PRISMA flow diagram

### 2.3 Screening and Eligibility Assessment

Next, two independent reviewers screened the results of 378 articles based on titles, abstracts, and keywords. We excluded 267 articles that were not original, not involving any social media platforms, and did not highlight the theme of driving factors or causes for the behavior of sharing COVID-19 related fake news, such as articles concentrate on detecting and combating fake news related to COVID-19, etc. We also run a manual search, which resulted in the inclusion of two additional articles.

Then the two reviewers assessed the eligibility of these 113 remaining studies by carefully screening the full texts independently, removing 86 studies that did not match the inclusion criteria and including the remaining 27 articles. During this period, different opinions of the remaining articles were discussed and resolved by consensus. The PRISMA (Fig. 1.) process of exclusions were shown below.

2.4 Data Extraction

Drawing from the 27 selected articles, the authors extracted and analyzed the following components in the full text: (i) the driving factors of COVID-19 related fake news sharing on social media; (ii) potential interventions for curbing the behavior of sharing COVID-19 related fake news on social media.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Characteristics of Selected Articles

For this systematic literature review, we identified 27 articles published from January 2020 to Marth 2023. Fig.2 shows the potentially eligible articles per year. Among them, just three articles were published in the year 2020, the number of articles published in 2021 is 8 and 9 for 2022. Noteworthy, in the first quarter of 2023 alone, we found 7 relevant articles, and, probably, the number of articles published in 2023 on similar topics will probably exceed the number of articles published in the previous two years. This trend demonstrated the growing academical interest in fake news sharing and COVID-19.

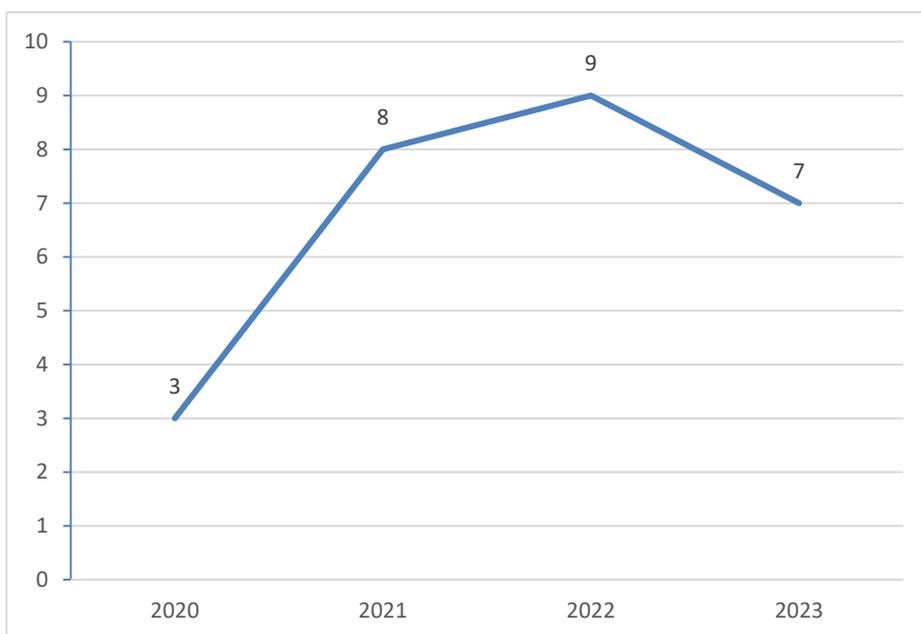


Figure 2. Numbers of potentially eligible articles

These 27 studies we included involved 15 countries and regions. We can see the distribution of countries and regions in Fig.3 five studies were published from Nigeria, three studies each from America, Bangladesh, and Malaysia, followed by two each from China and India. Only one article published each from Australia, Canada, German, Jordan, Korea, Singapore, Sultanate of Oman, Taiwan, and the United Kingdom focused on the topic. Analysis of key features of these selected studies for this systematic literature was shown in Appendix A.

Figure 3. Countries distribution of included articles

Figure 3. Countries distribution of included articles

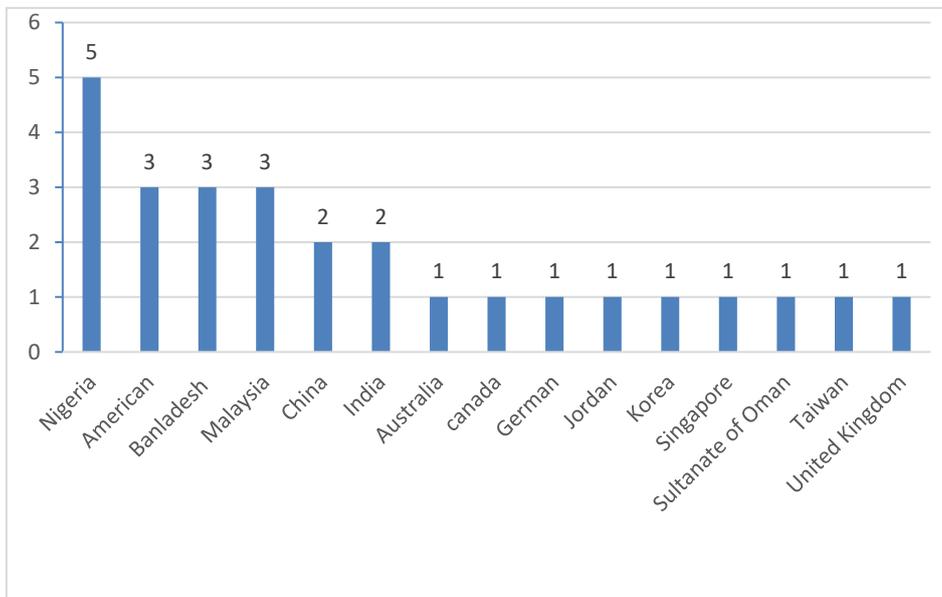


Figure 3. Countries distribution of included articles

Analysis of all the selected studies revealed that 63% of these studies investigated specific social media platforms, while the rest studies were conducted based on a wide range of social media platforms, and the authors did not explicitly identify specific social media platforms. In the context of fake news sharing about COVID, Facebook (48%) is the most studied platform by scholars, far more than WhatsApp (35%), Twitter (10%), Instagram (4%), WeChat (3%), the data can be seen from Figure 4.

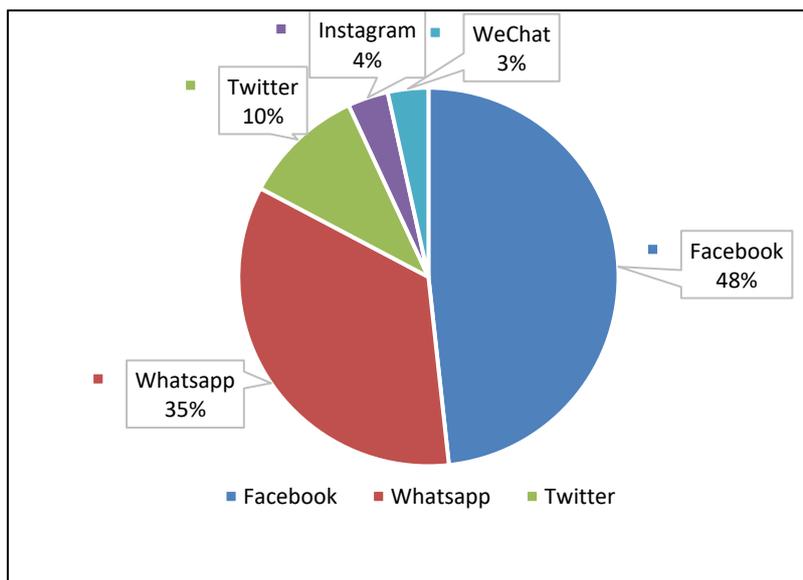


Figure 4. Popular social media platforms sharing COVID-19 related fake news

The widespread application of Facebook for fake news sharing research could probably be explained by its special functions and features. For example, Anne and Shyam (2015) once proposed a concept called Facebook sharing affordances, which means Facebook has powerful and easy-to-use communication features (e.g., updating personal status, geolocation, sharing photos and videos), users are allowed and encouraged to post, comment, and share news stories through various features provided by Facebook. This made actual contribution to the dissemination of fake news online. What’s more, according to a recent study conducted by Princeton University, Facebook spread fake news faster than any other social media platforms (Guess et al., 2020), and users consumed fake news six times more than factual news on Facebook during the 2018 (Dwoskin, 2021). Therefore, we can conclude that the problem of spreading and sharing fake news on Facebook is serious enough, which in turn has triggered a strong interest among scholars to study it.

### 3.2 Driving Factors of COVID-19 Related Fake News Sharing on Social Media

Evidence has shown that COVID-19 fake news shared by social media users had significantly contributed to the distrust of governments as well as public health institutions all over the world, which brought threats to the stability and development of society (Alkhair et al., 2023).

As a result, research focusing on the driving factors of social media users' fake news sharing behavior has attracted attention in several disciplines during the pandemic. In our study, based on the features of driving factors, we combined and summarized similar factors into four categories for better presentation, as shown in Table 1:

- 1) Individual motivations
- 2) Cognitive and emotional factors
- 3) Cultural and religious factors
- 4) News content characteristics

1) Individual motivations. Our review found that studies focusing on the relationship between individual motivations and COVID-19 fake news sharing were mainly theoretically based on the uses and gratifications theory (UGT). With a concise framework, UGT was frequently used to explain how the perceived gratifications influence users' news sharing behavior. In the context of COVID-19 related fake news sharing, UGT also provides a useful studying approach.

Analysis data of this systematic review indicated that information sharing, socialization, and altruism were the major motivations of COVID-19 related fake news sharing on social media, followed by self-promotion, status-seeking, instant information sharing, information seeking, and self-expression respectively. For example, prior studies have found that information sharing was stem from people's need of helping one another, especially during the pandemic, people would share information, not caring whether it is true or false as long as it contains preventive measures or interventions on COVID virus (Apuke & Omar, 2021a).

There have been conflicting viewpoints on the effect of entertainment and pass time on COVID-19 related fake news sharing. Balakrishnan et al., (2021) claimed that entertainment was significantly predicting the behavior of fake news sharing during COVID-19, while Apuke & Omar, (2020b) hold the opposing opinion that entertainment was not associated with fake news sharing. Similar contradictory results can be seen on the role of pass time (Apuke & Omar, 2021a; Balakrishnan, 2022). Therefore, more studies are needed to verify the effect of entertainment and pass time on fake news sharing in different contexts.

2) Cognitive and emotional factors. Research associated with people's cognitive capability and emotional factors mostly drawing from the cognition load theory, affordance theory, stimulus-organism-response (SOR) theory, and big five personality traits theory. These theories explain the various factors that cause changes in people's behavior from a psychological perspective. For instance, an individual's trust in online news, digital images, or information sources was suggested to be significantly predicting the behavior of COVID-19 fake news sharing on Facebook and Twitter (Kurfi et al., 2021; Laato et al., 2020; Samya et al., 2023), followed by perceived information overload (Apuke & Omar, 2021b; Bermes, 2021; Huang et al., 2022). This is not surprising as evidence from recent studies demonstrates that in the time of pandemic, a massive amount of related information was shown on social media which contributed to people's negative emotions like anxiety, fear, and fatigue (Gupta et al., 2022).

As a result, individuals are less likely to verify the accuracy of information before sharing. This to a large extent lead to the further proliferation of fake news (Lobato et al., 2020). In addition, ignorance of fake news, lacking critical thinking, and previous belief in science was mentioned to be positively associated with fake news sharing of COVID-19 (Balakrishnan et al., 2021; Mahamad et al., n.d.; Nurse et al., 2022). In summary, human cognitive abilities and emotions can largely influence people's behavioral intentions toward an event, especially in times of crisis.

3) Cultural and religious factors. Some research concluded that cultural background and religious beliefs frequently influence COVID-19 related fake news sharing. Alaazi et al., (2023) mentioned that owing to the strong cultural ties and the specific religious faith, people were easily susceptible to the fake news of COVID-19 originating in their land of birth and spreading quickly. Ghasiya & Sasahara, n.d. (2022) claimed that the conflict between different ideologies and religions facilitated the dissemination of pandemic fake news in India.

On the contrary, Agle & Xiao, (2021) suggested that religious commitment was only slightly, or non-significantly connected with COVID-19 related fake news sharing. According to our analysis of the selected articles, scholars in black communities or religious countries have placed greater emphasis on the influence of cultural and religious factors on the sharing of fake news. In contrast, studies in other countries or regions have focused more on individual motivations, people's cognitive abilities, and emotional factors.

4) News content characteristics. Some authors point out that certain news content characteristics were associated with

fake news sharing during COVID-19 (Che Ching et al., 2022). For example, news focusing on personal experiences or opinions received more retweets and likes on Twitter (Kothari et al., 2022). Fake news with high efficacy is positively related to people's sharing intention. In other words, people were more likely to share COVID-19 information when the message contained highly effective and protective actions (Song et al., 2023).

Notably, it has been pointed out that the news content characteristics associated with COVID-19 are not sufficient to influence people's fake news sharing behavior alone; specific news characteristics tend to influence people's actual behavior by eliciting emotions of panic or concern (Tellis et al., 2019).

Table 1. Driving factors of COVID-19 related fake news sharing on social media

Factors	Variables	Source
Individual motivations	Information Sharing	Apuke et al. (2020), Mahamad et al. (2021), Sampat et al. (2022)
	Pass time	Apuke et al. (2021), Balakrishnan et al. (2022),
	Socialization	Apuke et al. (2020), Apuke et al. (2021), Oberiri et al. (2021)
	Altruism	Apuke et al. (2020), Apuke et al. (2021), Balakrishnan et al. (2021), Wee et al. (2023),
	Entertainment	Laato et al. (2020), Balakrishnan et al. (2021)
	Self-promotion	Apuke et al. (2020), Laato et al. (2020)
	Status seeking	Apuke et al. (2021), Mahamad et al. (2021),
	Information seeking	Oberiri et al. (2021)
	Self-expression	Apuke et al. (2021)
Cognitive and emotional factors	Trust in online information	Samuli et al. (2020), Samya et al. (2023), Apuke et al. (2021), Kurfi et al. (2021), Rasul et al. (2022)
	Perceived information overload	Samuli et al. (2020), Apuke et al. (2021), Alena et al. (2021), Huang et al. (2022),
	Individual's beliefs	Saling et al. (2021),
	Ignorance	Balakrishnan et al. (2021), Kurfi et al. (2021),
	Self-efficacy	Ahmed et al. (2022),
	Attitude toward verifying information	Ahmed et al. (2022),
	Subjective norms	Ahmed et al. (2022),
	Hope & Confusion	Lu et al. (2022)
	Anxiety	Huang et al. (2022), Freiling et al. (2023),
Cultural and religious factors	Cultural & Religious discrimination	Janet et al. (2023)
	Religious ideology	Ghasiya et al. (2022),
News content characteristics	News focused on personal experience or opinions	Kothari et al. (2022)
	News with high efficacy	Song et al. (2023)

### 3.3 Potential Interventions for Curbing COVID-19 Related Fake News Sharing

After identifying the driving factors of fake news sharing behavior on social media platforms, scholars have proposed several potential interventions to curb the sharing and spreading of COVID-19 related fake news online. The current

review summarized these potential interventions from three perspectives: individuals, social media platforms and technology institutions, and governments and public health institutions. The details information can be seen in Figure 5.

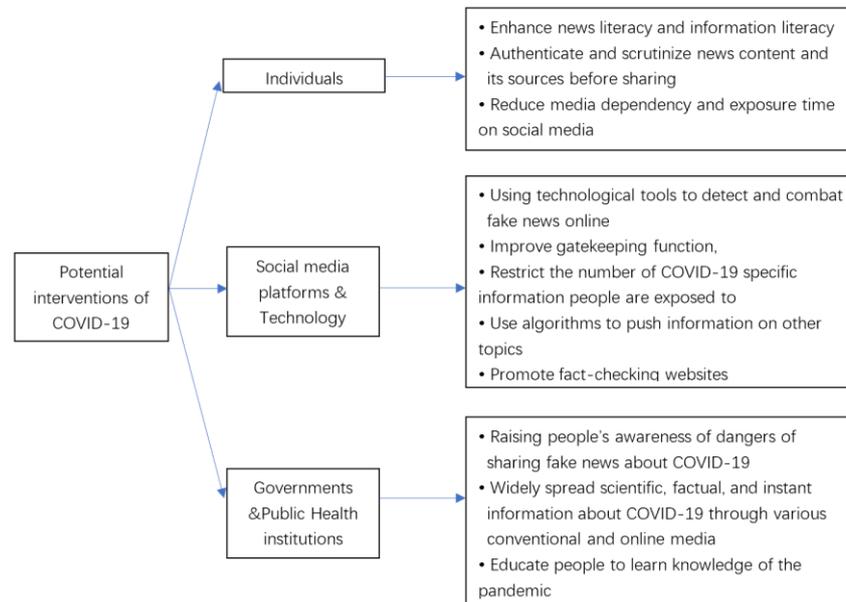


Figure 5. Potential interventions for curbing COVID-19 related fake news sharing

Individuals’ efforts in enhancing news literacy, media literacy, and information literacy of social media were highly addressed by several scholars. Studies have shown that individuals with high cognitive ability were better at truth discernment and weaker belief in misinformation (Pennycook & Rand, 2019), then reduced intentions of fake news sharing. Thus, educational campaigns focusing on media literacy should be implemented to raise people’s capability to judge the credibility of news and separate facts from views (Balakrishnan et al., 2021).

Meanwhile, people were encouraged to check and scrutinize the accuracy and reliability of online news content and its sources before sharing, especially during COVID-19 (Freiling et al., 2023). Sharing news without authentication could contribute to the proliferation of fake news, which exerted a negative impact on others and damaged one’s reputation (Apuke & Omar, 2020b). Studies also found that reducing exposure to social media news and the time spent on social media were effective ways for curbing fake news sharing about COVID-19 (Habes et al., 2023; Wu, 2022). Excessive social media dependency can cause information overload for users, and negative emotions of anxiety and worry make people more susceptible to fake news. At this time, individuals could seek emotional support from close ones rather than alleviating their negative emotions via herding (Zhang et al., 2022).

Studies analyzed in our review suggested that social media platforms and technology institutions had the responsibility to take measures to detect and curb COVID-19 related fake news sharing on social media. For example, Balakrishnan et al., (2021) claimed that the media and technology companies should improve “gatekeeping” skills in controlling fake news at its source by using technological tools. Huang et al., (2022) advocated that effective fact-checkers should be set up to filter out a large amount of COVID-19 related fake news and algorithms could be used to push news on different topics to avoid users’ exposure on COVID-19 news. In addition, social media should provide users with better functions, such as enabling individual users to flag news content and sources they believed to be false; and setting up a third-party system to allow users to evaluate the veracity of news (Khan & Idris, 2019). The extensive application of artificial intelligence and machine learning methods had also greatly improved the detection and combating of COVID-19 related fake news (Meel & Vishwakarma, 2020).

Governments and public health institutions have also played an important role in curbing the sharing of COVID-19 related fake news on social media platforms. To cope with the infodemic, governments, and public health institutions should widely spread scientific, factual, and instant information about COVID-19 through various conventional and online media(Kothari et al., 2022). Studies revealed that people with a high level of education and belief in science were less likely to share fake news (Saling et al., 2021). Moreover, all relevant authorities should make good efforts to increase people’s awareness of the potential dangers associated with sharing news without verifying during this pandemic (Shehata & Alnadabi, 2022). Besides, social media users’ cognitive, affective, and behavioral tendencies should be focused by the governments, and free consulting centers should be set up to help address various psychological issues due to COVID-19 (Balakrishnan et al., 2021).

#### 4. Conclusion

The purpose of this review is to address the gaps in previous literature and answer the following research questions: Why do users share fake news on social media? The findings of this review indicate that in the context of COVID-19 pandemic, media use motivations of individuals, users' cognitive levels, and emotional factors are important factors driving the behavior of fake news sharing. Second, use's fake news sharing behavior is also influenced by their religious and cultural backgrounds. Lastly, news with high efficacy content also stimulates user's intention to share without verify.

This review has theoretical, practical, and academical significance. Regarding theoretical implication, this study provides insights into the scientific knowledge of mechanisms and factors that lead to the rapid dissemination of fake news on social media platforms. At the same time, this research reveals the cognitive and psychological processes that make people susceptible to the influence of fake news.

Practically, the results of this review can help researcher and stakeholders to develop intervention strategies. We found that the spread of COVID-19 related fake news is a complex and tricky process that requires a collaborative effort among individuals, social media platforms, technological institutions, governments, and public health agencies to cubing this trend. In terms of individuals, reducing social media dependence and correcting false cognition have proven effective, but more importantly, developing critical thinking and improving information literacy so that individuals are equipped to critically assess the credibility of news. Meanwhile, it is a challenge for social media platforms and technology institutions to optimize platform and system functionality to better detect fake news content and its sources. In addition, governments and health agencies need to take advantage of their status wisely and take responsibility for educating the public and disclosing information instantly.

#### Acknowledgments

Acknowledge colleagues who assisted in conducting the study or critiquing the manuscript. Do not acknowledge the persons routinely involved in the review and acceptance of manuscripts peer reviewers or editors, associate editors, and consulting editors of the journal in which the article is to appear. End this paragraph with thanks for personal assistance, such as in manuscript preparation.

Sample: We greatly appreciate the valuable contributions of our community advisory committee members. We would also like to thank the XXX Foundation and every team member who took the time to participate in this study.

#### Authors contributions

Sample: Dr. AAA and Dr. BBB were responsible for study design and revising. Prof. CCC was responsible for data collection. Prof. DDD drafted the manuscript and Prof. CCC revised it. All authors read and approved the final manuscript. In this paragraph, also explain any special agreements concerning authorship, such as if authors contributed equally to the study.

#### Funding

Identify grants or other financial support (and the source, if appropriate) for your research.

Sample: This work was supported by YYYY Foundation [project number 888899999].

#### Competing interests

Sample: The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

#### Informed consent

Obtained.

#### Ethics approval

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Redfame Publishing.

The journal's policies adhere to the Core Practices established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

#### Provenance and peer review

Not commissioned; externally double-blind peer reviewed.

#### Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

### Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

### Open access

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

### Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

### References

- Agley, J., & Xiao, Y. (2021). Misinformation about COVID-19: Evidence for differential latent profiles and a strong association with trust in science. *BMC Public Health*, 21(1), 89. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-020-10103-x>
- Alaazi, D. A., Olanlesi-Aliu, A., Tunde-Byass, M., Sekyi-Otu, A., Mohamud, H., & Salami, B. (2023). What contributes to COVID-19 online disinformation among Black Canadians: A qualitative study. *CMAJ Open*, 11(3), E389-E396. <https://doi.org/10.9778/cmajo.20220197>
- Alkhair, K. H., Yusof, M. H., Itam, M. F., Fisal, Z. A. M., Yatim, H. M., & Manaf, R. A. (2023). *Analysing Public Health Impact of Misinformation During COVID-19 Pandemic using the Socio-Ecological Model: A Systematic Review*.
- Apuke, O. D., & Omar, B. (2020a). Modelling the antecedent factors that affect online fake news sharing on COVID-19: The moderating role of fake news knowledge. *Health Education Research*, 35(5), 490-503. <https://doi.org/10.1093/her/cyaa030>
- Apuke, O. D., & Omar, B. (2020b). User motivation in fake news sharing during the COVID-19 pandemic: An application of the uses and gratification theory. *Online Information Review*, 45(1), 220-239. <https://doi.org/10.1108/OIR-03-2020-0116>
- Apuke, O. D., & Omar, B. (2021a). Fake news and COVID-19: Modelling the predictors of fake news sharing among social media users. *Telematics and Informatics*, 56, 101475. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2020.101475>
- Apuke, O. D., & Omar, B. (2021b). Social media affordances and information abundance: Enabling fake news sharing during the COVID-19 health crisis. *Health Informatics Journal*, 27(3), 146045822110214. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14604582211021470>
- Balakrishnan, V. (2022). COVID-19 and fake news dissemination among Malaysians – Motives and its sociodemographic correlates. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, 73, 102900. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdrr.2022.102900>
- Balakrishnan, V., Ng, K. S., & Rahim, H. A. (2021). To share or not to share – The underlying motives of sharing fake news amidst the COVID-19 pandemic in Malaysia. *Technology in Society*, 66, 101676. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techsoc.2021.101676>
- Bermes, A. (2021). Information overload and fake news sharing: A transactional stress perspective exploring the mitigating role of consumers' resilience during COVID-19. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 61, 102555. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2021.102555>
- Che Ching, L., Hasan, H., Omar, M. A., Salleh, N., Kuok Tiung, L., & Modili, C. (2022). Information exposure, consumption, lifestyle, and inclination towards behavior change during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Asian Journal of Applied Communication*, 12(S1), 47-59. <https://doi.org/10.47836/ajac.12.s1.05>
- Dwoskin, E. (2021, September 10). Misinformation on Facebook got six times more clicks than factual news during the 2020 election, study says. *Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2021/09/03/facebook-misinformation-nyu-study/>
- Freiling, I., Krause, N. M., Scheufele, D. A., & Brossard, D. (2023). Believing and sharing misinformation, fact-checks, and accurate information on social media: The role of anxiety during COVID-19. *New Media & Society*, 25(1), 141-162. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448211011451>
- Gagliardone, I., Diepeveen, S., Findlay, K., Olaniran, S., Pohjonen, M., & Tallam, E. (2021). Demystifying the COVID-19 Infodemic: Conspiracies, Context, and the Agency of Users. *Social Media + Society*, 7(3), 205630512110442. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051211044233>

- Ghasiya, P., & Sasahara, K. (n.d.). Rapid Sharing of Islamophobic Hate on Facebook: The Case of the Tablighi Jamaat Controversy. *Social Media*.
- Guess, A. M., Nyhan, B., & Reifler, J. (2020). Exposure to untrustworthy websites in the 2016 US election. *Nature Human Behaviour*, 4(5), Article 5. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-020-0833-x>
- Gupta, A., Li, H., Farnoush, A., & Jiang, W. (2022). Understanding patterns of COVID infodemic: A systematic and pragmatic approach to curb fake news. *Journal of Business Research*, 140, 670-683. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2021.11.032>
- Habes, M., Elareshi, M., Mansoori, A., Pasha, S., Salloum, S. A., & Al-Rahmi, W. M. (2023). Factors Indicating Media Dependency and Online Misinformation Sharing in Jordan. *Sustainability*, 15(2), 1474. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15021474>
- Huang, Q., Lei, S., & Ni, B. (2022). Perceived Information Overload and Unverified Information Sharing on WeChat Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Moderated Mediation Model of Anxiety and Perceived Herd. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 837820. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.837820>
- Islam, A. K. M. N., Laato, S., Talukder, S., & Sutinen, E. (2020). Misinformation sharing and social media fatigue during COVID-19: An affordance and cognitive load perspective. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 159, 120201. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2020.120201>
- Kemei, J., Alaazi, D. A., Tulli, M., Kennedy, M., Tunde-Byass, M., Bailey, P., Sekyi-Otu, A., Murdoch, S., Mohamud, H., Lehman, J., & Salami, B. (2022). A scoping review of COVID-19 online mis/disinformation in Black communities. *Journal of Global Health*, 12, 05026. <https://doi.org/10.7189/jogh.12.05026>
- Khan, M. L., & Idris, I. K. (2019). Recognise misinformation and verify before sharing: A reasoned action and information literacy perspective. *Behaviour & Information Technology*, 38(12), 1194-1212. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0144929X.2019.1578828>
- Kothari, A., Walker, K., & Burns, K. (2022). #CoronaVirus and public health: The role of social media in sharing health information. *Online Information Review*, 46(7), 1293-1312. <https://doi.org/10.1108/OIR-03-2021-0143>
- Kurfi, M. Y., Msughter, M. E., & Mohamed, I. (2021). Digital Images on Social Media and Proliferation of Fake News on Covid-19 in Kano, Nigeria. *Galactica Media: Journal of Media Studies*, 3(1), 103-124. <https://doi.org/10.46539/gmd.v3i1.111>
- Laato, S., Islam, A. K. M. N., Islam, M. N., & Whelan, E. (2020). What drives unverified information sharing and cyberchondria during the COVID-19 pandemic? *European Journal of Information Systems*, 29(3), 288-305. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0960085X.2020.1770632>
- Lobato, E. J. C., Powell, M., Padilla, L. M. K., & Holbrook, C. (2020). Factors Predicting Willingness to Share COVID-19 Misinformation. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, 566108. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.566108>
- Mahamad, T. E. T., Ambran, N. S., Azman, N. A. M., & de Luna, D. B. (n.d.). *Insights into social media users' motives for sharing unverified news*.
- Meel, P., & Vishwakarma, D. K. (2020). Fake news, rumor, information pollution in social media and web: A contemporary survey of state-of-the-arts, challenges and opportunities. *Expert Systems with Applications*, 153, 112986. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eswa.2019.112986>
- Mesquita, C. T., Oliveira, A., Seixas, F. L., & Paes, A. (2020). Infodemia, Fake News and Medicine: Science and The Quest for Truth. *International Journal of Cardiovascular Sciences*, 33, 203-205. <https://doi.org/10.36660/ijcs.20200073>
- Nurse, M. S., Ross, R. M., Isler, O., & Van Rooy, D. (2022). Analytic thinking predicts accuracy ratings and willingness to share COVID-19 misinformation in Australia. *Memory & Cognition*, 50(2), 425-434. <https://doi.org/10.3758/s13421-021-01219-5>
- Pennycook, G., & Rand, D. G. (2019). Lazy, not biased: Susceptibility to partisan fake news is better explained by lack of reasoning than by motivated reasoning. *Cognition*, 188, 39-50. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cognition.2018.06.011>
- PRISMA. (n.d.). Retrieved April 14, 2023, from <http://www.prisma-statement.org/PRISMAStatement/>
- Rathore, F., & Farooq, F. (2020). Information Overload and Infodemic in the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Journal of the Pakistan Medical Association*, 0, 1. <https://doi.org/10.5455/JPMA.38>
- Rocha, Y. M., De Moura, G. A., Desidério, G. A., De Oliveira, C. H., Lourenço, F. D., & De Figueiredo Nicolete, L. D. (2021). The impact of fake news on social media and its influence on health during the COVID-19 pandemic: A

- systematic review. *Journal of Public Health*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10389-021-01658-z>
- Saling, L. L., Mallal, D., Scholer, F., Skelton, R., & Spina, D. (2021). No one is immune to misinformation: An investigation of misinformation sharing by subscribers to a fact-checking newsletter. *PLOS ONE*, *16*(8), e0255702. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0255702>
- Samya, S. S. R., Tonmoy, Md. S. I., & Rabbi, Md. F. (2023). A cognitive behaviour data analysis on the use of social media in global south context focusing on Bangladesh. *Scientific Reports*, *13*(1), 4236. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-023-30125-w>
- Shehata, A., & Alnadabi, K. (2022, October 15). *Factors affecting undergraduate students' information sharing behaviour when dealing with COVID-19 misinformation: The theory of reasoned action* [Text]. University of Borås. <https://doi.org/10.47989/irisic2221>
- Song, H., So, J., Shim, M., Kim, J., Kim, E., & Lee, K. (2023). What message features influence the intention to share misinformation about COVID-19 on social media? The role of efficacy and novelty. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *138*, 107439. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2022.107439>
- Talwar, S., Dhir, A., Kaur, P., Zafar, N., & Alrasheedy, M. (2019). Why do people share fake news? Associations between the dark side of social media use and fake news sharing behavior. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, *51*, 72–82. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2019.05.026>
- Tellis, G. J., MacInnis, D. J., Tirunillai, S., & Zhang, Y. (2019). What Drives Virality (Sharing) of Online Digital Content? The Critical Role of Information, Emotion, and Brand Prominence. *Journal of Marketing*, *83*(4), 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022242919841034>
- Wu, M. (2022). What Drives People to Share Misinformation on Social Media during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Stimulus-Organism-Response Perspective. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *19*(18), 11752. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph191811752>
- Yusoff, S. H. (2022). GUEST EDITOR'S NOTE: THE ROLE AND IMPACT OF MEDIA DURING COVID-19. *Asian Journal of Applied Communication*, *12*(S1), 1-4. <https://doi.org/10.47836/ajac.12.s1.01>
- Zhang, H. (Thomas), Tham, J. S., & Waheed, M. (2022). The Effects of Receiving and Expressing Health Information on Social Media during the COVID-19 Infodemic: An Online Survey among Malaysians. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *19*(13), Article 13. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19137991>

Appendix A. Characteristics of Selected Studies

Author	Country	Theory/Framework	Study Design	Platforms
Sampat et al. (2022)	India	Stimulus-organism-response (SOR) theory; uses and gratifications theory; big five personality traits theory	Survey	WhatsApp; Facebook
Samya et al. (2023)	Bangladesh	NA	Survey	Facebook
Matchanova et al. (2023)	American	NA	Experiment	social media platforms
Freiling et al. (2023)	American	partisan motivated reasoning and partisan selective sharing	Experiment	Facebook
Ghasiya et al. (2022)	India	NA	content analysis	Facebook
Saling et al. (2021)	Australia	NA	online survey	CoronaCheck-newsletter
Apuke et al. (2020)	Nigeria	Uses and gratifications theory	online survey	Facebook; WhatsApp
Wee et al. (2023)	Taiwan	Appraisal theory psychological distance and construal level theory	paper-based questionnaire	NA
Apuke et al. (2021)	Nigeria	Affordance theory Cognition load theory sociocultural-psychological-technology model	online survey	Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter
Balakrishnan et al. (2021)	Malaysia	uses and gratifications theory self-determination theory (SDT)	online survey	Facebook; WhatsApp
Vimala et al. (2022)	Malaysia	NA	online survey	Facebook; WhatsApp
Ahmed et al. (2022)	Sultanate of Oman	theory of reasoned action	online survey	NA
Habes et al. (2023)	Jordan	Media System Dependency Theory	Experiment	social media platforms
Ahmed et al. (2022)	Singapore	cognitive theory; big five personality traits theory	Survey	NA
Wu et al. (2022)	China	Stimulus-organism-response (SOR) theory	Survey	social media platforms
Lu et al. (2022)	United Kingdom	coping theory	Survey	WhatsApp
Huang et al. (2022)	China	cognitive overload approach; coping theory	Survey	WeChat
Alena et al. (2021)	German	theories of Transactional stress and psychological resilience	Survey	WhatsApp; Facebook; Instagram
Laato et al. (2020)	Bangladesh	the theory of affordance; cognitive load theory	Survey	Facebook
Samuli et al. (2020)	Bangladesh	the theory of health perception; information overload	Survey	Facebook
Kurfi et al. (2021)	Nigeria	Technological determinism theory Perception theory	online survey	NA
Mahamad et al. (2021)	Malaysia	NA	online interview	NA
Oberiri et al. (2021)	Nigeria	uses and gratifications theory social networking sites dependency theory social impact theory	online survey	social media platforms
Janet (2023)	Canada	NA	interview	WhatsApp and Facebook
Song (2023)	Korea	the theory of social sharing of emotions	Online Experiment	social media platforms
Kothari et al. (2022)	American	information diffusion model	mixed method	Twitter
Apuke et al. (2021)	Nigeria	Uses and gratifications theory	online survey	Facebook; WhatsApp