

Factors Contribute to Fake News Spreading in Malaysia: A Case Study among PTD Cadet

*Faktor Menyumbang Penyebaran Berita Palsu di Malaysia:
Kajian Kes Dalam Kalangan Kadet PTD*

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Abstract

Misleading information and news circulating in Social Networking Sites (SNS) such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter have led to an increasing trend of 'fake news'. This technology and modernisation in fake news spreading scenario happened in worldwide even though numerous numbers of laws and policies intervention have been implemented. Malaysia, a fast-developing country that has a high user of SNS as well as high internet penetration rate, is sadly still not information literate. Malaysian should emphasise more on information/ media/ digital literacy skill. Hence, this paper will study the factors contributing to fake news spreading in Malaysia. Therefore, these preliminary studies were conducted to identify the main factors that significantly contribute to this fake news rising patterns. A total of 196 respondents from PTD Cadet 2017 intake at INTAN Bukit Kiara participated in this study. The questionnaire has been chosen as the primary mechanism for this research to collect data and analysed by using Software Package for Social Study (SPSS) version 21 to determine the relationship between independent and dependent variables in this study. These findings will be beneficial and strengthen Malaysia new policies to mitigate the risk of spreading fake news as well as helping to boost the Malaysian media literacy rate.

Keywords: SNS, fake news, media literacy, SPSS

Abstrak

Penggunaan *Social Networking Site (SNS)* seperti Facebook, Instagram, Twitter menyumbang kepada peningkatan penyebaran berita palsu. Dalam mengejar teknologi dan dalam arus permodenan, negara-negara di dunia ini tidak boleh lari dari fenomena penyebaran berita palsu. Walaupun pelbagai usaha dan bentuk kawalan dari segi pelaksanaan undang-undang telah diwujudkan, namun angka penyebaran berita palsu tidak menunjukkan tanda-tanda untuk berkurang. Malaysia merupakan salah sebuah negara yang pesat dengan mempunyai peratusan pengguna SNS yang tinggi dalam landskap sosial media, tetapi pengguna-pengguna SNS di Malaysia masih tidak mampu menganalisis dan mengetahui tahap kesahihan sesuatu maklumat. Rakyat Malaysia harus meningkatkan kemahiran menganalisis dan seahihkan berita dan maklumat di SNS. Sehubungan itu, kajian ini dijalankan bagi mengenal pasti faktor utama yang menyebabkan peningkatan penyebaran berita palsu di Malaysia. Seramai 196 responden dari Program Diploma Pascasiswazah INTAN bagi sesi 2017 telah dipilih sebagai sampel dalam kajian ini. Borang kaji selidik digunakan selaku instrument utama dalam pengumpulan data serta data-data akan dianalisa menggunakan Software Package for Social Study (SPSS) version 21 untuk melihat hubungan pembolehubah bersandar dan pembolehubah tidak bersandar dalam kajian ini. Hasil kajian ini akan memberi manfaat dalam pembentukan dasar-dasar baru dalam mengurangkan penyebaran berita palsu dengan menjadikan pengguna-pengguna sosial media di Malaysia lebih matang dan celik dalam mengenal pasti kesahihan sesuatu maklumat.

Kata kunci: Media sosial, berita palsu, literasi media, SPSS

Introduction

In this millennial era, social media has become social phenomenon in society's daily life. Everybody in the world can feel 'sociable' wherever they do couple of swipes or taps on their smartphone and tablets. Social Networking Site (SNS) for instance Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube are always become people choice when it comes to internet activities. Every minute, millions source of information including photos and videos will be uploaded in SNS and millions of people will likes, share and spreading the information easily. Malaysia as one of the fast- developing country are facing this technology and modernization phenomena. The pros of using new media platform in gaining information are they are fast, save money, save time and save energy but the cons is the validity, reliability, accuracy and precision of the news is full of uncertainty. Therefore, this may lead to disinformation/ misinformation and 'fake news' spreading in Malaysia.

Problem Statement

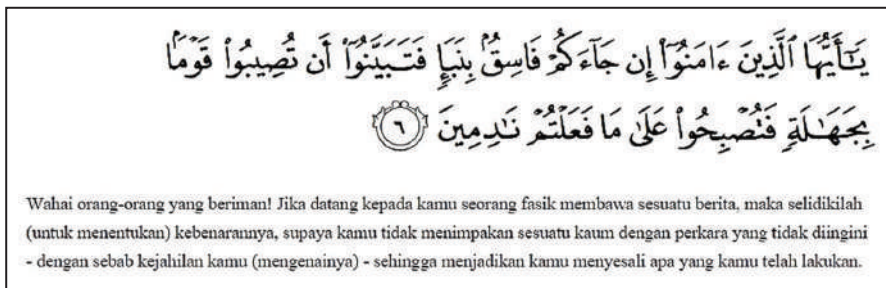
In this millennial era, people are exposed of a lot of information easily. On the daily basis, vast number of news and article were published and posted in the internet. Moreover, the connectivity of digital platform around the world make everything news shared and spreading rapidly. The ability of exchange information are much greater pace than ever before. It is reported by (Global Digital Report, 2019) in Figure 1, shows that 7.676 billion of world population using internet and 3.484 billion recorded as social media users as of January 2019.



Figure 1. Statistic for the world's internet, mobile and social media users
Source: Global Digital Report (2019)

In Malaysia, out of 32 million people in the country, 24.5 million users have an access to internet (MCMC, 2017a). Besides that, according to (Kemp, 2013) Malaysian internet users also recorded 90% registered social media accounts. MCMC identified that Internet and social media penetration within this country was rapidly spreading in urban area such as Klang Valley and Putrajaya which indicated 71% and 89% users respectively (MCMC, 2014). This show that Malaysian is rather to spend more time online than reading book, listening to radio or watching television. With the number of social media users growth greatly year by year, it has become the best platform for delivering information and making them really worth at this era. In line with government policy, the use social media as one step of government ensure delivery of government meet the needs and aspiration of people (MAMPU, 2012).

Despite having fun socialize with friends, sharing news and information in social media, tendency to spread “fake news” might highly occur. Malaysia may have high user and penetration rate, but still not information literate. Malaysian should emphasize more on information/ media/ digital literacy skill. Armed with the understanding of the Qur'an through the surah Al-Hujurat verse 6,



Source: Surah Al Hujarat, verse number 6

Based on the recent statistic, it is recorded that misuse of social media including fake news cases increased by 21percent from 4,919 cases in year 2016 up to 6,725 cases in 2017 (Bernama, 2017). In fact, MCMC found that nearly 75percent of fake news was spread through Facebook (Berita Harian Online, 2017). In addition, out of 2000 fake account were investigated under Section 233 of Communication and Multimedia Act 1998 (New Straits Times, 2017). Government has initiated Communication and Multimedia Act 1998, fact-checking website likes www.sebenarnya.my and most recently on 11th April 2018, Anti-Fake News Act 2018 to counter fake news spreading in Malaysia.

Anti-Fake News Act 2018 was published with immediate enforcement with seek high punishment to offenders referring to RM500,000 fine or maximum 10-year jail term (Anti-Fake New Act, 2018). Many initiatives and effort have been done by government to overcome fake news spreading scenario in Malaysia. However, there is no sign that the number of fake news have decreased. Therefore, this research is conducted to study the main factors that contribute to fake news spreading in Malaysia.

Research Objectives

The aim of this article is to:

- i. identify main factors that contributed to fake news spreading in Malaysia;
- ii. evaluate whether the social networks will influence fake news;
- iii. evaluate whether motivation will influence fake news;
- iv. evaluate whether tools will influence fake news.

From the objective above, researcher has identified four things to be focused and aimed in this study. First, author highlight on main factors that contributed to fake news spreading in Malaysia. Subsequently, author will aim to explore the effect of social networks, motivation and tools towards fake news spreading in Malaysia as studied by previous researcher by Gu, Kropotov and Yarochkin (2017). Therefore, the questionnaire had been distributed to PTD 2017 cadets to examine the most significant factors contribute to fake news spreading in Malaysia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Fake News

Defining the term “Fake News” is one of debatable topic that have never come out with satisfactorily resolved. Many researchers have their own point of view in determining the best definition of fake news. Generally, fake news is defined as misinformation or disinformation that influence the reader. Synonymously defined as campaign, propaganda, information warfare and hacking. Cambridge Dictionary defined fake news as false stories that appear to be news which spread on the internet by using media sources to create influence in political view, or as

a joke. According to Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) fake news is defined as completely made up, manipulated to resemble credible journalism to attract maximum attention. Modernization and technology is the main reason of the rise of fake news. Research done by Gu et al. (2017) stated that there are three factor made fake news can be successful and these factors as known as Fake News Triangle.



Figure 2. Image of fake news triangle

The factors of every single items in the fake news triangle will be peeled of and explained with supported by literature review from previous study. From there, this study will evaluate all the three factors to determine the most significant factor causes spreading of fake news in Malaysia.

Social Network Sites

Social Networks Sites (SNS) make fake news more urgent matter than ever before. It has become a world concern on spreading the fake news around the globe. Study done by previous researcher found that 90% of online users globally use social media in variety of task and daily activities (Taprial & Kanwar, 2012). A studied by Pickard (2017) expressed on the role of gatekeeper (SNS) causes spreading fake news to currently rapidly than before. By definition, SNS can be define as web-based services that allow individual to share, articulate, share, connect and view of their list of connections those made within the system (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). There are some SNS that have become global phenomenon for the past few decades starting from Friendster (2002), Myspace (2003), Facebook (2006),

Twitter (2006), Instagram (2010) and many mores. Figure 3 show the most popular SNS in the world with indicated the number of total users as of April 2018. Facebook dominate the chart with more than 2000 million users followed by YouTube and Instagram.

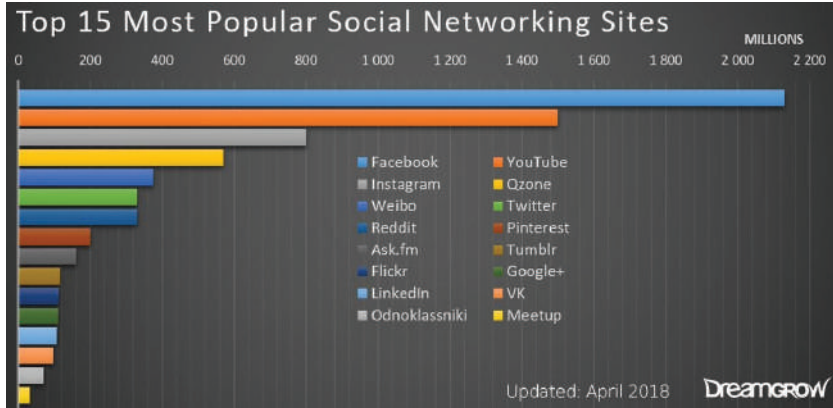


Figure 3. Top 15 most popular social networking sites 2018 in the World
Sources: Dreamgrow (2018)

In reflect of that, the most active SNS used in Malaysia were Facebook too with 97.3% social media user have an Facebook account at the end of year 2016 (MCMC, 2017b). Therefore, this study focuses on Facebook as an element spreading fake news because it is the most popular SNS in Malaysia.

Facebook

Facebook was founded by Mark Zuckerberg in 2004 to provide information resources, maintaining contact with friends, reunite old friends, and meet people with similar interest, ties to other people, sharing articles and news, and so forth (Wellman & Gulia, 1999; Eyadat & Eyadat, 2010). Several researchers proved that people who avoid major news use Facebook as platform to believe fake news to be genuine (Balmas, 2014; Mocanu, Rossi, Zhang, Karsai, & Quattrociocchi, 2015). Facebook is consider as one prominent sources of news in Malaysia. Reported by Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalisme (2016) revealed that 69% of Malaysian get information and news from social media primarily Facebook. Facebook role as spreading fake news and misinformation has increased years by years. Malaysia Communication and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) Network and Security Enforcement Chief Zulkarnain Mohd Yasin said “The most social media application abused by internet users in Malaysia was Facebook at 70%” (The SunDaily, 2017).

Lack of Media Literacy

Malaysia is consider as active social media penetrate in this region but still cannot differentiate between the real and fake news. This is because lack of media literacy. Media literacy is the ability to access, evaluate, analyze and create message in a variety form (Livingstone, 2004). Another studied by Silverstone (2004), described media literacy as a moral underpinning in doing critical and civic activity. The knowledge of media literacy make people able to make right decision in using the internet and digital application. Media literacy traditionally known as information literacy, information skills and currently known as digital literacy. Researcher believed the increasing trend of fake news spreading in Malaysia have relation on lack of media literacy. The school in Malaysia should implement information/ media/ digital literacy to discern truth effectively when searching for latest news and information online as recommended by several experts Hinrichsen & Coombs (2013) and Churchill, Trust & Holmes-henderson (2014). Media literacy help children to access, evaluate and analyze media message. They have some skills to identify bias, spin, misinformation and lies on media.

Motivation

Fake news is driven by many motivations and range of reasons, but it is often spread because of financial and political motivated (UK Parliament Post, 2017). A study by Gu et al. (2017), also indicated the motive of fake news is driven by financial and political reason.

Financial

One of reason fake news spreading is because financial purposes or in other word profit oriented. The mechanism is simple. When a user views new content or new article, the hosting website will display advert to generate money. According to Techcrunch (2012), a large portion of click will benefited from increased revenue. Living proved by a prolific Facebook-focused fake news writer Paul Horner he make \$10,000 a month from AdSense (Abby Ohlheiser, 2016). In other stories, Macedonian teenagers who create fake news stories make money \$5,000 a month. Four out of five successful post that they write and share on social media are false. Gu et al. (2017) also believed the motivation for fake news to spread is because of profit. It can be profit off both individual and organization and non-organizational body for example Facebook and Google are example of company that gain profit when something goes viral on the site, even if it not true.

Political

In the millennial era, social media and search engine are become the main platform for politician to create more followers. However, they are driven by also profit and non-profit organizational to support their political thought. Academician have founds the motive of fake news is for political events during US and French Presidential Election Campaigns (Howard, Bradshaw, Kollanyi, Desigaud, & Bolsover, 2017). The political fake news techniques are commonly being used today to make them are become more available (Gu et al., 2017). There is one research done by Thijssen (2017) to evaluate possible outcome for election from influences of fake news. Hence, it is show that fake news has become a new urgent matter and tools in new media. Fake news will relatively contribute to societal discussion about pros and cons of fake news uses that affect to change in voting behavior for voter in democracy countries around the globe.

Tools

The fundamental of spreading fake news requires tools. There are several type of tool that there are several potential software tools that has been discussed on underground forums to abused, leveraged to spreading fake news (Gu et al., 2017). Sensational headlines also play it role as tools to spread fake news (Gabiolkov, Ramachandran, Chaintreau & Legout, 2016).

Software Tools

There are a lot of software tools available in online underground market assisting in amplified fake news spreading for instance Automatic Social Media Account (Bots). This type of tools will automatically interact with other users. The host can manipulate items to be trending by setting all their likes, comments and share to ensure that fake news look more popular and real. In year 2016, there are about 23 million bots account in Twitter (Wolley & Howard, 2016). There are some other tools has been used to promote fake news likes click fraud, the sale of human, Black Hat Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and bot traffic (Gu et al., 2017). Among them, the most popular tools of many organization is 'search engine optimization'. This tools play role to increase the visibility of the websites on search engines and at the same time increase number of visitors. There are some extremist organization or individual manipulate the Google Rank Algorithm, so that their webpages will appear as top rank searched and dominated the search engine.

Sensational Headlines

Sensational headlines with eye-catching title always make their reader want to read or click. The problem of this sensational headlines is there were designed to be believed and shared. This often growth number of fake news spreading from the uncertainty of sources. Reader is likely to be left with the initial impression they seen on headline (Chesney, Liakata, Poesio, & Purver, 2017). Previous study also founded that 60% of shared URLs on Twitter are not clicked the linked before sharing after influences by sensational headlines (Gabiolkov et al., 2016). The idea of selling newspaper, book, articles with sensational and interesting headline still active today. This may bring to misleading cases and directly impact on spreading fake news to the people.

Methodology

This chapter will discuss on the research methodology that were used for data collection and also analysis of the study. Firstly unit of analysis, followed by sampling technique, research instrument and data collection and data analysis procedure. Simple random sampling has been used due to the time constraint of this study is short period and to reduce cost effectively. According to Sekaran (2003), questionnaires are very common way of collecting the data. Questionnaire contains the questions that stimulate prompt the respondents to provide required response. The questionnaire is suitable if the data to be obtained is fairly clear and quantitative in nature. Besides, it is anonymously completed, thus it allows the respondents' information to be keep in private and unknown for the researcher. Other than that, questionnaire also is a reformulated written set of questions, in which respondents record their answer, usually within rather closely defined alternatives. The questionnaire is an efficient data collection mechanism when the researcher knows exactly what is required and how to measure the variables of interest.

Therefore, questionnaire has been chosen as the main mechanism for this research in order to obtain the data. It is an efficient data collection mechanism and relatively inexpensive. The main advantage of this technique is that it can collect all the data with the completed response within the short period of time (Sekaran, 2003). In addition, the questionnaire can be administered personally, mailed to the respondents electronically distributed. A total of 196 questionnaire were useable for futher data analysis. This sample size should be considered adequate for exploratory analysis according to Krejcie and Morgan (1970) as

The primary data for this study was collected through self-administered questionnaires. This method was chosen because of the design of structured questionnaires would collect all the complete data and information needed within a short period of time. The questionnaires were distributed to 196 respondents of PTD 2017 cadet. Any doubts that the respondent might have on any question in the questionnaires were identified and clarified on the spot.

Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis of this study is PTD cadet 2017 intake that study in INTAN Bukit Kiara, Kuala Lumpur. This study use close-ended questionnaire which comprises the types of scales which are nominal, ordinal and interval. The questionnaire are divided into three (3) part which is A, B and C. Researcher used three (3) measurement which is nominal, ordinal and interval scale on the questionnaire that is distributed to measure all the variables accordingly.

In Part A, first and foremost, researcher used nominal scale as to assign the subject to certain categories or group (Sekaran, 2003). Nominal scales are used in the Part A of questionnaire to measure the demographic area such as gender, age and categorized it. Besides, ordinal scales are also used by researchers. Ordinal scale not only categorized the variables in such a way as to denote differences among the various categories, it also rank-orders the categories in some meaningful way (Sekaran, 2003). This scale of measurement is used to measure demographic area such as education level, social networking websites responden working with, time spend using social networks sites. The respondent only need to tick in the appropriate box provided. It is purposely to obtain the respondents' personal data.

In Part B and Part C, the interval scale are used to measure factors that respondent things contribute to fake news spreading in Malaysia. The Likert-scale in consist of six (6) point statements of preferences ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree (Figure 4).

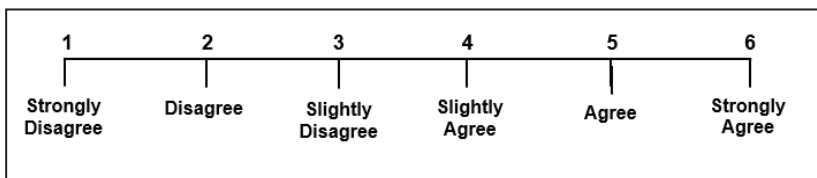


Figure 4. Likert-scale of six point statement

Sampling Technique

Sampling is the process of selecting sufficient data from the population which make it easier to generalize and analyse. In this study, simple random sampling has been used to select the sample size from target population who are PTD cadet 2017 intake. The 196 samples are determined using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) as sample size from the population of 398 PTD cadet 2017 (Figure 5). This research is conducted with a set of questionnaire given to PTD cadet 2017 randomly distributed in Kampus Utama, INTAN Bukit Kiara, Kuala Lumpur.

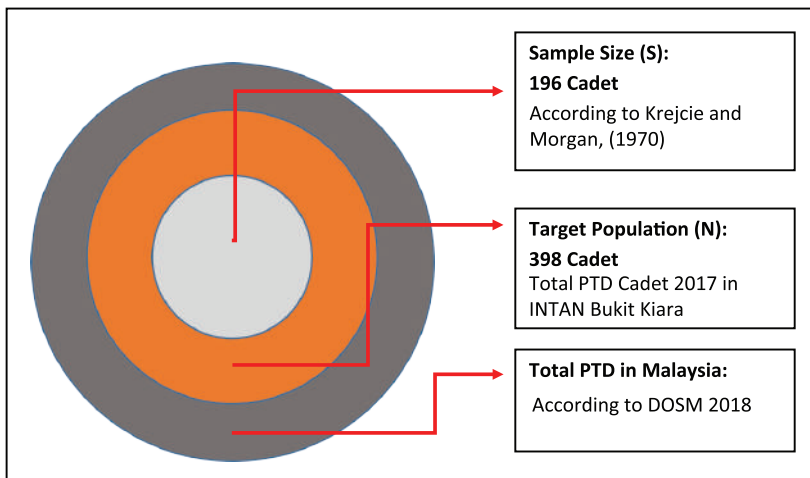


Figure 5. Sampling method for this research

Data Collection Procedure

The questionnaire has been chosen as the main mechanism for this research to collect the data. It stimulates prompt the respondent to provided required response. The questionnaire is an efficient approach data collection mechanism when it comes to quantitative study where researcher know what exactly required and how to measure the variables of interest. In addition, the questionnaire can be administered personally, linked generated by google form and distributed via WhatsApp to the respondent electronically. The advantages of this technique is data collection process can be done within short period of time. The questionnaire was designed to gather relevant data based on the framework as shown in Figure 6. The questionnaire developed consist of concept, dimension and element of this study.

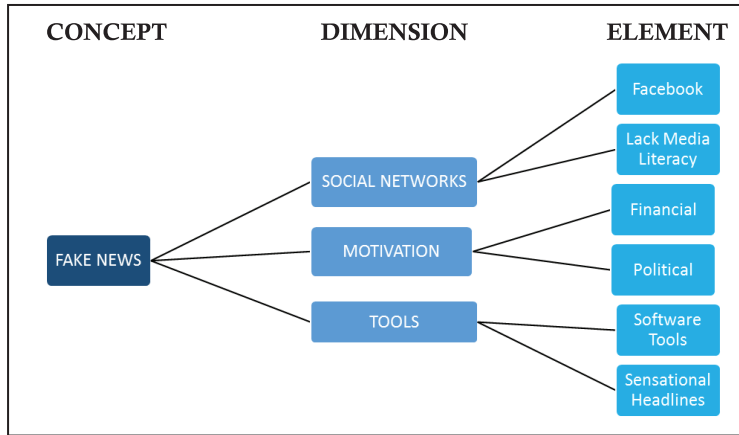


Figure 6. The concept, dimension and element framework

Apart of primary data, the secondary data also is used in this study. The author makes some library research to obtain the secondary data. This data had been taken from online journals, books, websites as well as unpublished material like conference proceedings and press released by local media players to increase the validity and precision of this study.

Sampling Technique

Cronbach Alpha analysis were used in order to determine the reliability of questionnaire of this research. The content and face validity for the questionnaire is perform the pilot test. The questionnaire was revised and eliminate the unneeded items after testing the questionnaire to 20 people. The rule of thumb for Cronbach's Alpha coefficients is show in Table 1 as referred to Sekaran & Bougie (2012).

Table 1. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient

Cronbach Alpha	Internal Consistency
0.90 – 1.00	Excellent
0.80 – 0.89	Good
0.70 – 0.79	Acceptable
0.60 – 0.69	Questionable
0.50 – 0.59	Poor
0.00 – 0.49	Unacceptable

Data Analysis

The data has been collected through questionnaire was analysed by using Software Package for Social Study (SPSS) version 21. Descriptive statistic such as frequency count and percentages were used to describe for demographic detailed. All the demographic details in Part A will be summarize into one table. For Likert scale in Part B and Part C the result will be evaluated, analyse and obtained from SPSS tools. In order to determine relationship between independent variables and dependent variables, Pearson Correlation Coefficient are used at Figure 7.

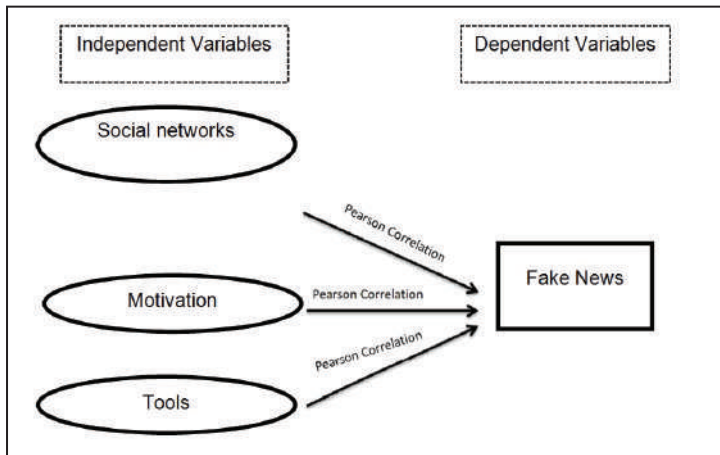


Figure 7. Pearson Correlation analysis

Pearson Correlation analysis is to investigate the relationship between independent and dependent variables of interest either have positive or negative correlation. According to Field (2009), the rule of thumb for interpretation of correlation coefficient is as Table 2.

Table 2. Interpretation of correlation coefficient

Size of Correlation	Interpretation
.90 to 1.00 (-.90 to -1.00)	Very high positive (negative) correlation
.70 to .90 (-.70 to -.90)	High positive (negative) correlation
.50 to .70 (-.50 to -.70)	Moderate positive (negative) correlation
.30 to .50 (-.30 to -.50)	Low positive (negative) correlation
.00 to .30 (.00 to -.30)	Negligible correlation

FINDINGS & DISCUSSIONS

Presents the result of the data analysis from descriptive analysis including frequency and percentage, Reliability Test and Pearson Correlation Analysis. Result will be present into two parts. The first part explained about descriptive analysis of data based on demographic profile followed for every single items in Part A. Next, the second part explains on the Pearson Correlation Analysis for interval Likert Scale questionnaires on Part B and Part C.

Demographic Profile (Descriptive Analysis – Part A)

In this research, descriptive analysis is being used. There were several demographic factors that have been tested on the questionnaires. As the feedback, author tabulated the frequency and percentage every single factors and explained the possibility what it would be with supported by previous researcher's findings. All 116 respondents' profile are summarized in table below.

Table 3. Demographic profile of the purposive sample, (N = 116)

Details	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	61	52.6
Female	55	47.4
Age		
21-25	27	23.27
26-30	77	66.37
31-35	11	9.35
35 >	1	0.01
Education Status		
Degree	86	74.1
Master	30	25.9
PhD	0	0.0
Social Network Sites do you have an account with?		
Facebook	106	33.4
Twitter	55	17.4
Instagram	99	31.2
YouTube	57	18.0
Daily spend time using social network sites?		
Less than an hour	7	6.0
1-2 hours	26	22.4
3-4 hours	37	31.9
4-5 hours	19	16.4
5 hours and more	27	23.3

Based on the result on Table 3, it shows that the male respondents are slightly more than female respondent which cover 52.6% of this sample while female only 47.4%. In this research, respondent are specifically divided into 4 interval range of age between age 21 to 35 because PTD Cadet Entry requirement should be not exceed age of 35. From the findings, age of respondent from 26 to 30 have become the majority of the respondent with indicated 77 cadet followed by age from 21 to 25 with covers 27 cadet. 11 respondents are between age of 31 to 35 and 1 respondent are above 35. Majority of the respondent's education status are degree holder with 74.1% or 86 people while master holder covers 25.9% or 30 people.

In this analysis, shows that all respondent are generally have more than 1 social media account. Facebook become the most popular choice to have an account with covers 33.4% followed by Instagram with 31.2% while YouTube and Twitter indicated 18% and 17.4% respectively. To concluded, Facebook and Instagram are the main platform of social media used by PTD Cadet. Table 3 also summarizes the daily spending time using networking sites per day. Most of the respondents are using social networking sites about 3-4 hours per day which covers 31.9% or 37 cadet. The second highest are more than 5 hours with took 23.3% from total sample of 116 cadets. 22.4% respondent use 1-2 hours to use social networking sites while 16.4% using it for 4-5 hours per day. Only 7 respondent use social networking sites below than an hour per day.

Pearson Correlation Analysis (Part B and Part C)

There is no negative sign found from every variables shows that all have positive correlation. As one variable increase, the other variable also increase. In this analysis, the strength of relationship between independent variables and dependent variable were determined. Study by previous researcher Cohen (1998) suggested that $r = 0.10-0.29$ is small strength, $r = 0.30-0.49$ considered as medium strength and $r = 0.50-1.00$ is large strength. Based on the result, Social Networks variable have large strength with value or $r = 0.715$. Motivation variable have medium strength with value of $r = 0.481$ while Tools variable indicated as small strength with value of $r = 0.252$. The p value is lower than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$) for all variable and shows that the result is significant. Based on the result at Table 4, all the independent variable has significant relationship with dependent variable. Therefore, all alternate hypotheses in this research are accepted and all null hypotheses are rejected. The most significant factors that contribute to fake news spreading in Malaysia is Social Networks.

Table 4. Pearson correlation test.

Pearson Correlation Test/ Variable	Social Networks	Motivation	Tools
Pearson Correlation, r value	0.715	0.481	0.252
Interpretation	Large	Medium	Small
Significant (2 Tailed), p value	0.000	0.000	0.006
Interpretation	Most Significant	Significant	Significant

Conclusion

As a conclusion, this study is early attempts to investigate the most significant factor contribute to fake news spreading in Malaysia. Based on the variables tested on the finding, most variables shown positive relationship toward fake news spreading in Malaysia and social networks was indicated as most significant factor in amplifying fake news spreading. Subsequently, this study provides clear understanding on the fundamental of fake news spreading phenomenon in Malaysia. With many information obtained from finding, a responsible party can plan their next step, action, evaluation and planning on how to reduce and counter this phenomenon.

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