



Digital Response to the Spread of Rumors on Facebook: An Analytical Study of a Sample of Posts from the " Fake News DZ " Page During the Period from October 2020 to October 2021

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Abstract: This study aims to highlight a form of misinformation prevalent in the digital environment, particularly on Facebook, by examining how a prominent Algerian Facebook page active in combating fake news, "Fake News DZ," deals with rumors. The study employed a content analysis tool to examine a purposively selected sample of the page's posts from October 2020 to October 2021.

The findings reveal that political and health-related topics are the most active domains for rumors during the analyzed period, with manipulations of words and images serving as primary tools for their dissemination. Furthermore, the page relies on a variety of sources to debunk rumors and uses original images and detailed explanations of the falsifications as the main evidence to refute misleading information.

Keywords: *Digital Environment; Digital Response; Facebook; Rumors*

I. INTRODUCTION

Following the widespread proliferation of social media, the world has witnessed a significant increase in false news, fabricated reports, and rumors. The accessibility and ease of use of these platforms have enabled individuals to publish and disseminate content without verifying its credibility, all under the guise of freedom of expression, publication, participation, and access to information. This situation can result in security, physical, or psychological harms to individuals and societies alike, placing us in a shallow, polluted, and dubious digital environment.

Engagement in this digital space—despite its polluted nature—has become a daily necessity due to our immersion in social media in general and Facebook in particular, which has penetrated all areas of life and extended across countries and continents. Consequently, Algerian users of these platforms are not immune to their negative effects; their exposure can distort their understanding of reality or their ability to form a complete picture of events. This situation has highlighted the need for decisive digital responses to combat the spread of rumors, addressing them at their source.

Many organizations and individuals have adopted such measures within the framework of digital reform and awareness. For example, the Misbar platform, which brings together journalists from various Arab countries, works to verify the accuracy of circulating news through available applications and the extensive networks connecting these opinion leaders to reliable information sources. The platform also provides a channel to report rumors and highlight digital violations affecting the integrity and accuracy of shared information. This effort is not limited to a single organization; several initiatives have emerged, such as pages dedicated to disseminating correct information and debunking rumors.

Among Algerian pages striving to expose misinformation is *Fake News DZ*, which is the focus of this article. This page was purposefully selected after a prolonged observation of its activity and demonstrated interest in the subject. Since the way an issue is presented and addressed can directly or indirectly influence our response and acceptance, analyzing how this page handles rumors on Facebook allows us to shed light on one of its digital response mechanisms to this phenomenon. In other words, it provides insights into how rumors are managed and mitigated within the distinct environment of Facebook.”

From this perspective, the central research question is: **What digital response mechanisms to rumors are employed by " Fake News DZ" Facebook page during the analyzed period?**

Several secondary questions arise from this, including:

- What topics do the rumors displayed on the *Fake News DZ* Facebook page focus on during the analyzed period?
- What are the sources of the rumors presented on the page during this period?
- What types of rumors are published on the page in terms of source clarity and degree of falsity?

- What is the nature of the falsity contained in the news featured on the page during the analyzed period?
- What sources does the page rely on to prove the inaccuracy of the rumors?
- What evidence does the page use to refute and debunk the rumors during the analyzed period?

II. Methods and Materials:

The study aims to explore how rumors are managed on **Facebook**, focusing on the digital response mechanisms used to counter them. Through content analysis of posts from the Algerian Facebook page "Fake News DZ", the research seeks to identify the main topics, sources, and types of rumors, examine the nature of their falsity, and analyze the sources and evidence the page relies on to verify and debunk misinformation.

Study Methodology: This study falls within the scope of descriptive research, which aims to identify the characteristics and components of a phenomenon. This type of research seeks to depict specific events, phenomena, or subjects through the collection of relevant facts, information, and observations.

In this study, a survey-based approach was adopted, which involves examining the phenomenon as it exists in reality, focusing on describing and representing it both qualitatively and quantitatively. The methodology aims to describe the phenomenon of rumor dissemination on Facebook **by** analyzing a sample of posts from an Algerian Facebook page dedicated to debunking false news, namely the "**Fake News DZ**" page.

Research Population and Study Sample: In addressing the research population for this study, Facebook is highlighted as a platform that hosts false news and rumors, with specific pages dedicated to this topic serving as the field for publication. The research population for this study is represented by the *Fake News DZ* Facebook page, which was created on April 6, 2019, with the aim of exposing misinformation and false news by two Algerian founders seeking to monitor the phenomenon and attempt to mitigate it.

Facebook constitutes the environment in which this study is situated. Given the difficulty of tracking all pages concerned with rumor debunking within the available research resources and constraints, purposive sampling was deemed the most appropriate analytical approach. After monitoring several pages, *Fake News DZ* was selected due to its clear focus on the research topic, as reflected in its name and posts. Being an Algerian page primarily concerned with national public affairs, it attempts to provide a clear digital response to the phenomenon by debunking and exposing rumors, addressing both Algerian and international audiences, since the platform transcends national borders.

The time period for analysis was also intentionally chosen to ensure continuity and density of posts, providing sufficient primary material to illustrate how the page handles and responds to rumors. Accordingly, purposive sampling was used to select a set of 39 posts published by the page on Facebook between October 2020 and October 2021. The analysis was limited to this set because the page has not published new content recently. Selecting this period maintains a consistent timeframe that allows for a

comprehensive depiction of the page's publication patterns and ensures accurate answers to the study's research questions.

Data Collection Tools: The research began with a preliminary exploratory observation, which allowed for the identification of the phenomenon under study, as well as the research population and sample. However, the primary tool used for information collection was content analysis.

Content Analysis Tool: The term **content analysis tool** can be defined after separating its constituent parts, as it is composed of two words

Analysis: As defined in encyclopedias, analysis is the process of breaking down a whole (text, object, or entity) into its constituent parts.

Content: Refers to the meanings contained within a linguistic, visual, oral, or gestural medium, expressed through specific symbols arranged systematically to achieve communicative purposes with others.(Ben Mersli,1996 ,250)

Thus, content analysis is an intellectual process aimed at understanding phenomena clearly by isolating elements, identifying their characteristics, and examining the relationships between them to comprehend the meanings and ideas conveyed.

In this study, the unit of analysis was the ideas within posts selected from the *Fake News DZ* Facebook page. The categories of analysis were divided into **form** and **content**:

Form: Includes the sources of the rumors used by the page and the type of falsification or method of deception.

Content: Includes the nature of the topics addressed by the page, types of manipulation and falsification, and the evidence used to disprove the rumors.

❖ Operational Definitions of the Categories:

✓ Nature of Topics (Rumor Subject)

Refers to the sector or domain around which the rumor revolves within the digital environment (political, health, sports, economic, social, religious, environmental, educational, technological, artistic, media, military, or security).

✓ Sources of Rumors

Refers to the platform or entity that first published or transmitted the rumor digitally, including:

- **National Facebook Pages:** Pages or accounts linked to Algerian organizations, institutions, or individuals, publishing local digital content.
- **Arab Facebook Pages:** Pages/accounts from other Arab countries, sharing or transmitting rumors among Arab audiences.

- **Foreign Facebook Pages:** Pages/accounts from non-Arab countries spreading news or false content within the Algerian or Arab digital environment.
- **Media Pages:** Official Facebook accounts of newspapers, TV channels, and radio stations that may serve as rumor sources or transmitters.
- **Official Institutional Websites:** Government or official institution websites used to verify or refute information.
- **Other Social Media Platforms:** Platforms other than Facebook, such as Twitter, Instagram, Telegram, or YouTube, used for rumor dissemination.

✓ **Rumor and Fake News Classification**

The analysis of rumors requires classifying them based on two main criteria related to their origin and content:

Clarity of Rumor Source: This criterion refers to whether the original entity that published the rumor is explicitly stated in the post.

- **Known Source:** The post clearly identifies the original source of the false information, allowing the audience to trace and potentially verify its origin.
- **Unknown Source:** The post does not disclose the original source from which the rumor originated, making the process of verification and fact-checking difficult or impossible.

Accuracy Level: This criterion measures the degree to which the rumor's content aligns with objective facts, noting that a rumor can be completely false or contain elements of both truth and error.

- **Completely False:** Content that is entirely fabricated (100% untrue) and is inconsistent with verified facts.
- **Mixed Accuracy:** Content that is partially true but is mixed with or framed by misleading or false elements, rendering the final conclusion inaccurate.

✓ **Nature of Falsification in the Post**

Refers to the techniques used to manipulate or mislead, including visual, textual, and hyperlink-based methods:

- **Using Images Out of Context:** Photos from other events or locations attributed to the rumor.
- **Video Manipulation:** Altering original videos through added text, audio, or editing to convey false meaning.
- **False Written Statements:** Attributing statements to individuals or institutions that were never made.
- **Fake Links:** URLs appearing official but directing to unrelated or false sources.
- **Completely Fabricated News:** Events or reports invented entirely to mislead.
- **Wordplay/Manipulation:** Changing phrasing to distort meaning or provoke specific reactions.

✓ Sources for Verifying Rumor Falsity

References or channels used by the page to prove the inaccuracy of rumors, including:

- **Page's Own Sources:** Internal investigations or archived content.
- **Official Websites:** Trusted online platforms or government sources.
- **Facebook Accounts:** Verified or official pages providing clarifications.
- **Other Social Media Platforms:** Non-Facebook channels used for verification.
- **Print and Digital Media:** Newspapers or magazines correcting misinformation.
- **Audio-Visual Media:** TV, radio, or digital programs reporting verified information.
- **Official Statements from Concerned Authorities:** Direct statements confirming or correcting false news.
- **Eyewitnesses:** Individuals with direct knowledge of events confirming or denying rumors.

✓ Evidence Used to Debunk Rumors:

Digital tools or proof employed by the page to demonstrate falsehood, enabling audiences to verify accuracy, including:

- **Original Images:** Unaltered photos for comparison with manipulated versions.
- **Original Videos:** Unedited videos showing actual events.
- **Detailed Explanations of Falsity:** Clarifying each manipulated element in images, text, or video.
- **Contradictory Statements:** Official statements opposing the content of the rumor.
- **Absence in Official Sources:** Highlighting the lack of information on official websites.
- **Links to Verified Information:** Direct URLs to reliable sources or fact-checking platforms.

1.Theoretical Framework of the Study

1-1 . Digital Response:

Digital response refers to the way individuals, institutions, or digital systems interact with a particular event, content, or situation through digital media, such as the Internet, social media, or interactive platforms. In this study, digital response to rumors is understood as the approach adopted by Fake News DZ Facebook page in handling rumors and misinformation circulating in Facebook.” Indicators of this response are reflected in identifying the nature and topics of rumors, revealing the type of falsification they contain, clarifying their sources, and outlining the tools and methods used to verify their inaccuracy.

1-2 Definition of Rumors

According to *Lisan al-Arab* by Ibn Manzur, a rumor is described as follows: "A report spreads among people; it is propagated and disseminated widely. A rumor is said to be 'common' when it reaches everyone, so that knowledge of it becomes widespread and not limited to a few."

A **rumor** is defined as *a vague or inaccurate report, story, or description transmitted among members of a community, often by word of mouth*. Rumors typically spread during periods of social crisis and are usually centered around people or events that hold significance for members of the community. (Al-Kalbani, 2017 ,12)

From a **procedural perspective**, a rumor can be described as follows:

- a. It consists of **unreliable news** whose authenticity has not been verified.
- b. It is **not based on a responsible or credible source**.
- c. It is **transmitted among individuals through social networking sites**, particularly Facebook.
- d. It **relates to a person, idea, or topic** of interest.
- e. It can take **various forms**, such as political, economic, or religious rumors.
- f. It is **expressed through different media**, including written text, images, or videos (Amrar, 2024,1433).

1-3. Facebook:

Facebook is one of the most important social networking sites. It is not only a social forum but an easy technology base in which the user can do what he wants (Abbas Mustafa Sadiq. 2008).

The world's most famous social networking sites are listed at Harvard University in 2004, with a total of nine billion dollars. The Dictionary of Media and Communication Facebook: "A social networking site founded in 2004 that allows for the publication of private pages. It was first developed in the service of students, faculty and staff but expanded to include all people". (Hosni Awad. 2011)

III. Results and discussion :

1. Practical Component of the Study:

This section of the research paper addresses the practical aspect, specifically the content analysis of posts from the *Fake News DZ* Facebook page during the period from October 2020 to October 2021.

Technical Profile of the “Fake News DZ” Facebook Page:

- **Page Name:** Fake News DZ
- **Username:** @FakenewsDZ
- **Page Type:** Non-profit page
- **Sector:** News verification and rumor control
- **Primary Language:** Arabic

- **Country of Creation:** Paris
- **Date of Creation:** April 6, 2019
- **Geographical Focus:** Algeria
- **Page Visibility:** Public
- **Page Activity Status:** Active
- **Number of Followers:** 151,000 at the time of analysis
- **Page Creators:** Nassim and Loukman Bouider (Makrouss & Abdich, 2021, p. 441)

The following section aims to analyze these posts in terms of media usage, focusing on both static images and videos, using quantitative and qualitative approaches.

2. Presentation and Analysis of Form and Content Categories

Table 01: Nature of Topics Addressed by Rumors Analyzed from the “Fake News DZ” Facebook Page

Nature of Topics	Frequency	Percentage
Political topics	08	20%
Economic topics	03	08%
Social topics	00	00%
Legal topics	00	00%
Health topics	08	20%
Educational topics	01	03%
Technological topics	01	03%
Religious topics	03	08%
Environmental topics	05	13%
Sports topics	04	10%
Artistic topics	02	05%
Media-related topics	02	05%
Military and security topics	02	05%
Total	39	100%

Source: Prepared by the researcher

The table above illustrates the nature of topics around which the rumors analyzed from the “Fake News DZ” Facebook page revolved. The data presented indicate that political and health-related topics were the most prominent subjects of false news disseminated by the page during the analyzed period, each accounting for an equal share of 20%. Following these, sports topics ranked second with 10%, while artistic, media-related, and military/security topics each accounted for 5%. Educational and technological topics occupied the lowest positions at 3%.

The concentration of rumors on political matters can be attributed to the inherently fertile ground for debate, divergent opinions, and varying tendencies, which creates an environment conducive to the generation of both factual and misleading information, particularly in the absence or scarcity of reliable official sources. This characteristic defined the political communication environment in Algeria during the analyzed period, particularly when content contradicted the general orientation of

governing authorities and the state. Examples of posts involving political falsehoods include one published on March 20, 2021, containing images of participants in the popular protest movement with altered banners, and another including a statement from the President of the Independent National Authority for Elections regarding voter turnout.

Health-related topics held the same proportion, aligning with the temporal context of the analysis, which coincided with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the spread of hybrid virus forms, preventive measures, and vaccination campaigns—all of which drew significant public attention. The prominence of such topics relates to fundamental human needs for survival and health security, which strongly motivate behavior both positively and negatively. Among the analyzed posts, one included an image from activist “Amir DZ” showing President Abdelmadjid Tebboune in a hospital following a health setback, whereas the original image depicted a different woman; this post was published on November 11, 2021. Another example involved a post featuring a doctor providing free medical services to those in need, presented as an Algerian physician, while the original image actually showed a Palestinian doctor; this appeared on February 19, 2021. Additionally, a post containing fabricated statements by politician “Djilali Sefiane,” leader of the New Generation Party, about unemployed doctors—advising them to seek a profession instead of emigrating—was published on March 4, 2021.

Regarding sports topics, the significance of athletics—particularly football—in Algerian society is widely acknowledged, especially concerning the national team, which evokes a sense of patriotism and international sporting representation. This was heightened by the team’s notable performance under coach Belmadi, whose striking and direct statements made it plausible for rumors to be attributed to him, even when untrue. Other examples include a post from November 14, 2020, showing a child resembling player Riyad Mahrez, presented as a childhood photo, although it was actually a cropped image from a different post titled “How to Make Friends.”

The focus on other topics was comparatively minor. For instance, one post falsely reported Ethiopia launching a satellite-carrying rocket, using an altered image replacing China’s flag on the rocket with Ethiopia’s; it was published on January 10, 2021. Another security-related post displayed a masked protester with a burning background holding a sign, altered from the original image taken in Chile; it was posted on December 14, 2020. During this period, public events were not conducive to generating rumors or fabrications in these domains.

Such falsehoods represent a form of contamination that affects the digital environment across all its dimensions, with the prominence and focus of topics varying according to the context and ongoing societal events.

It can be argued that the political and health-related topics, which dominated the analysis of the “Fake News DZ” page, formed the core of the rumors due to their perfect alignment with the broader context prevailing in Algerian society during the analysis period (political crisis, COVID-19 pandemic). This alignment amplified their false news value within that specific context. Political issues represent a “fertile ground for polarization,” often exploited in the absence or scarcity of reliable official information, thereby opening the door to “deliberate misinformation” aimed at fueling debate and divergent opinions.

Health issues, on the other hand, gained paramount importance due to their direct connection to the “basic needs for survival and safety,” which Maslow considered highly significant in his hierarchy, serving as strong motivators for human behavior and the viral circulation of information. Following these were sports topics, particularly football, which resonate with “national identity and collective emotion.”

Other topics, such as artistic, educational, or technological content, ranked lower due to the absence of “hot events” that would justify their intensive circulation during the analysis period. This distribution confirms that “information pollution” is concentrated in areas that elicit the highest emotional, national, or existential engagement within the digital environment.

Table 02: Sources of Rumors Disseminated by the “Fake News DZ” Facebook Page

Sources of Rumors	Frequency	Percentage
National Facebook Pages	28	72 %
Arab Facebook Pages	01	03%
Foreign Facebook Pages	02	05%
Media Outlet Pages	05	15%
Official Institutional Websites	02	05%
Other Social Media Platforms	01	03%
Total	39	100%

Source: Prepared by the researcher

The table above illustrates the sources of rumors disseminated by the “Fake News DZ” Facebook page. The page actively engages in this domain by tracking rumors, highlighting instances of falsification, and enlightening public opinion through the Facebook platform in an effort to cultivate digital awareness—encouraging skepticism and verification before belief, which is a cornerstone of digital literacy.

The results indicate that the page primarily monitors national Facebook pages, accounting for 72% of the tracked content, followed by foreign Facebook accounts at 5%, official institutional websites at 5%, and Arab Facebook accounts at 3%. As its name suggests, “Fake News DZ” focuses predominantly on false news circulating within the Algerian digital space, while also addressing select global and Arab news. Facebook serves as the primary arena of activity, yet tracking all national rumors in the digital environment is challenging and demands substantial technical and human resources that may exceed the capacities of an individual or a small team.

In this context, a study by SAHRAWI JEHAD (Sahraoui, 2022) highlighted that Facebook represents one of the main sources for spreading rumors, accounting for 52.2% according to her findings. Examples of posts featuring false news from Algerian Facebook accounts include a post dated October 4, 2020, from the pages “Al Jazeera Algeria” or “DIMA DZ,” which displayed an image of a product from a Saudi company and falsely attributed it to a project undertaken by an Algerian from Médéa province. Instances of false news shared by institutional media on their official accounts include a post from the Algerian Public Television (EPTV) that misinterpreted some statistics regarding the number of minutes viewers spent watching its posts, dated October 14,

2020, and a post from the official website of THE SUN, which falsely reported that footballer Paul Pogba had retired, dated October 26, 2020.

Table 03: Types of Rumors Addressed by the Facebook Page Fake News DZ

		Yes		No		Total	
Types of News	Classification	F	%	F	%	F	%
According to Source Clarity	News with Known Source	39	100%	00	00%	39	100%
	News with Unknown Source	00	00%	39	100%	39	100%
According to Degree of Accuracy (or Truthfulness)	Completely False News	25	64%	15	36%	39	100%
	News Containing Both Truth and Error	14	36%	25	64%	39	100%

Source: Prepared by the researcher

The third table illustrates the classification of rumors presented by the Facebook page Fake News DZ according to the criteria of source clarity and the degree of truthfulness of the news. Analysis of the sample posts shows that all posts shared by the page explicitly mention their source, representing 100%. However, this attribution does not verify whether the page itself was the originator of the false news or merely a transmitter. The page administrators consistently highlight the name of the original page or entity to lend a sense of credibility to their posts.

Regarding the degree of truthfulness, the analyzed news varied between completely false content and news combining elements of truth and falsehood. Approximately 64% of the posts were entirely false, while 36% contained partial truth. For example, one post claimed a pomegranate weighing over 2.3 kilograms was produced in the Algerian province of Djelfa, whereas it actually came from a farm in Tafas, Daraa, Syria, owned by Yasser Azzam Al-Natour.

Posts with partially truthful images also existed. One, published on February 20, 2021, showed a man holding a giant mouse, manipulated by camera angle and proximity to exaggerate the size, originally circulated on an Israeli website rather than being related to the national team room. Another post falsely titled "Halal Toilets in Algerian Mosques," published by a Tizi Ouzou page, used an image of a foreign public restroom with no connection to Algeria or its mosques. Similarly, a post showing a fish resembling a mouse on the Ennahar TV page, claimed to have been caught by a farmer in Naciria, Boumerdès, was technically altered and entirely false.

This variation in falsity reflects the underlying objective of each fake post. Some aim to attract attention through novelty and curiosity, others seek to provoke perceived importance and public engagement, some attempt to stir division or confusion, while others play on humor or satire without explicitly stating so. Consequently, the handling and presentation of each piece of news differ according to its intended purpose and the characteristics of the target audience.

Table 04: The Nature of Falsehoods Contained in the Analyzed Posts from the Facebook Page Fake News DZ

	Yes		No		Total	
Nature of the Falsehood	F	%	F	%	F	%
Using Image Out of Context	12	31%	27	69%	39	100%
Manipulation and Modification of Videos	03	08%	36	92%	39	100%
False Written Statements	07	18%	32	82	39	100%
Fake Links (or Counterfeit Links)	00	00%	39	100%	39	100%
Fabricated News (or Fictitious News)	04	10%	35	90%	39	100%
Manipulation of Words	13	33	26	67	39	100%

Source: Prepared by the researcher

Manipulation of words and the misplacement of images are considered the most prominent methods used to falsify real news, as analyzed from the posts of the Facebook page Fake News DZ, accounting for 33% and 31% respectively. An example includes a post featuring an image of American Muslim boxers "Mike Tyson" and "Badu Jack" along with their imam, taken from the boxer's home, but published as if it were taken from a restaurant hostile to Black people and Muslims, accompanied by a provocative caption. Another example involved a photo of a bridge shaking under passing trucks, claimed to be in Algeria, while it was actually in Kazakhstan, posted on October 23, 2020. Misrepresentation through false written statements accounted for 18%, and completely fabricated news made up 10%. For instance, one post claimed that the French youth launched an intense media campaign against Interior Minister "Gérald Darmanin" after visiting the Martyr's Monument, whereas the page verified its nonexistence using links from prominent French media outlets, none of which mentioned the topic.

Manipulation and editing of videos appeared in 8% of the cases. For example, a video posted on October 30, 2020, about Algerian protesters in Paris against a fifth term, had its audio fabricated, replacing the original chants with "Tala' al-Badr Alayna." Another video published on October 29, 2020, titled "Nigeria Responds to Macron, Defends the Prophet," originally commemorated the death of a popular Senegalese figure.

These examples illustrate that rumor spreaders aim to present their content convincingly and seemingly truthfully by employing various technical methods and tools, including Photoshop, video editing software, and image manipulation applications. Consequently, the digital environment, with all these advancements, provides both means for deception and for verification, investigation, and awareness-raising. It has thus become a double-edged sword, enabling both fabrication and exposure of falsehoods, ultimately immersing us in a post-truth world where objective facts exert less influence on public opinion than emotional appeals and personal beliefs. The prevailing methods of news falsification, foremost among them the manipulation of words and the use of images cropped or altered out of context, reveal that rumor spreaders rely on the principle of "media contamination" and exploit the audience's "confirmation bias." The deployment of visually striking images or emotionally charged texts—a tactic of "emotional seduction"—serves as a superficial yet powerful means to target personal beliefs and emotions rather than objective facts.

The ease of access to digital editing tools, such as Photoshop and video montage software, has provided the infrastructure for producing “low-cost misinformation” in highly convincing forms. In this way, the digital environment emerges as a “double-edged sword”: it facilitates falsification while simultaneously enabling detection and verification, underscoring that we inhabit a “post-truth world” in which emotional appeals outweigh factual accuracy in shaping public opinion.

Table 05: Sources Used to Verify the Falsity of Rumors Published by the Fake News DZ Facebook Page

	Yes		No		Total	
Sources for Proving Falsehood	F	%	F	%	F	%
Private Undisclosed Sources	11	28%	28	72%	39	100%
Refutation Statements from the Concerned Entity	01	03%	38	97%	39	100%
Electronic and Print Newspapers	02	05%	37	95%	39	100%
Audio-Visual Media Outlets	01	03%	38	97%	39	100%
Websites	10	26%	29	90%	39	100%
Facebook Accounts	08	21%	31	79%	39	100%
Other Social Media Platforms	07	18%	32	82%	39	100%
Eyewitnesses	01	03%	38	97%	39	100%

Source: Prepared by the researcher

The table above represents the sources used by the Fake News DZ Facebook page to verify the falsity of the rumors it publishes. The page relies on its own sources, which it sometimes chooses not to disclose, accounting for 28% of cases. It also uses websites (26%), Facebook accounts (21%), and other social media platforms (18%). Printed and electronic newspapers, as well as audiovisual media, account for 5% and 3%, respectively.

For instance, in a post dated October 4, 2021, the page refuted a claim by Al Jazeera Algeria that a fire had destroyed 60,000 palm trees in Ghardaia, clarifying through the official page of the Ghardaia Civil Protection Directorate that only 60 trees were affected. In another case, eyewitnesses were used to debunk a rumor titled “Vandalism of a Mosaic Discovered in Jijel,” which had initially claimed that Islamists were responsible, while an eyewitness confirmed that the damage was caused by the contractor who discovered it by mistake (April 24, 2021).

Citing verification sources represents a form of transparency in the page’s work, although it may choose to keep its private sources undisclosed, maintaining a degree of ambiguity—especially for a page still establishing its public credibility. This strategy helps the page maintain continuity and strengthens its influence on public opinion both within and beyond the digital space. The researcher observed this in some comments where users asked the page how it obtained certain information, indicating the perceived authority of its verification.

The page’s method for confirming falsity is based on cross-checking and contradictions: it questions every report presented differently across various newspapers, tracing the original source by consulting other websites and social media platforms where the news appeared, or referring to reputable pages such as TT and MISTER M, or official media sites, often including direct links to allow followers to

personally verify the news. This hierarchy of sources does not necessarily indicate a fixed editorial preference for any particular type of source, but it demonstrates the page's flexible reliance on multiple sources to ensure verification in most cases.

The methodology of the Fake News DZ page in debunking rumors demonstrates a heavy reliance on **Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT)**, utilizing available digital platforms (websites and social media accounts) as primary tools for **comparative verification**. This approach highlights contradictions between false information and official sources (such as statements from relevant authorities) or direct evidence (like eyewitness accounts).

The page's tendency to withhold private sources in approximately one-quarter of cases raises questions about the principle of **radical transparency** necessary for fact-checking. Such withholding can weaken the audience's **trust capital**, as users naturally seek to know the origin of the debunking. This places the page in a delicate balance between protecting its competitive sources and maintaining the full mantle of credibility required to ensure its continuity and influence within the digital sphere.

Table 06: Evidence Used to Debunk Rumors on the Fake News DZ Facebook Page

Evidence Used	Yes		No		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Original Image	23	39%	16	61%	39	100%
Original Video	04	10%	35	90%	39	100%
Providing a Detailed Explanation of the Areas of Fabrication	31	94%	08	06%	39	100%
Contradictory Statements	03	08%	36	08%	39	100%
Absence of the News on Concerned Authorities' Websites	03	08%	36	92%	39	100%
Links Publishing the True News and Information	11	28%	28	72%	39	100%

Source: Prepared by the researcher

Table 06 presents the types of evidence used by the Fake News DZ Facebook page to debunk rumors. The results indicate that the page frequently relies on multiple forms of evidence to expose and demonstrate falsehoods, with detailed explanations of the inaccuracies forming the core of the digital response to misleading information. The page typically marks false news with a red stamp, signaling danger and caution, while correct news is highlighted with a green background, indicating safety. These are accompanied by textual messages clarifying the discrepancies between the false and verified information.

Regarding tangible evidence, original images of the news rank highest at 39%, followed by links to sources publishing the correct information, which reinforce the page's arguments against the spread of false news, accounting for 28% of the analyzed posts. The page also uses the original videos alongside manipulated ones as conclusive evidence of falsehood in 10% of the posts. Contradictory statements were employed as evidence in three posts within the study sample. Additionally, the absence of the news on the official websites of concerned authorities serves as an indicator of its inaccuracy,

appearing in 8% of the posts, based on the logic that the official source would publish the information first.

Evidence functions as the decisive tool for questioning ambiguity and verifying claims against posts marked as false or erroneous. The presence of multiple supporting evidences in a post reduces doubt for followers regarding the authenticity of the information presented, thereby affirming both the validity of the verified news and the credibility of the page itself.

In conclusion, combating misinformation on the Fake News DZ page relies on a **“multimedia persuasion strategy.”** (Dang, Smit, & Abidalrahman, August 2016) The page goes beyond mere linguistic debunking, adopting a clear visual-semiotic approach, where color-coded stamps (red for false, green for true) serve as **“simplified media cues”** to quickly guide the audience. The extensive use of **tangible evidence**, particularly original images and links to reliable sources, demonstrates the adoption of a **“reinforced documentation”** methodology aimed at narrowing doubt by enabling audience self-verification. This approach reflects a sophisticated understanding of **“credibility contestation”** mechanisms in the digital space.

and links to reliable sources demonstrates the page’s commitment to minimizing doubt and enhancing its credibility within the digital environment.

3. General Findings of the Analytical Study

Following the analysis of posts from the **Fake News DZ** Facebook page during the period from October 2020 to October 2021, the following results were obtained:

Topical Focus of Rumors:

Political and health-related topics dominated the rumor landscape, each accounting for 20% of the total, followed by sports-related topics at 10%. This distribution reflects the strong connection of these subjects to the daily life of Algerian citizens, particularly amid the political crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, which amplified the perceived newsworthiness of these false claims. In contrast, artistic, educational, and technological topics appeared less frequently due to the absence of “hot” events warranting intensive dissemination during the study period.

Sources of Rumors:

The findings indicate that the national environment constitutes the primary source of rumors (72%), followed by foreign accounts and official institutional websites (5% each), and Arab accounts (3%). This highlights the significance of the page’s “media and geographical proximity” and underscores Facebook’s centrality as a primary ecosystem for the propagation of false news. Additionally, monitoring these sources reveals risks associated with “institutional misinformation” and the impact of “external information warfare” on public opinion.

Accuracy of News:

All posts analyzed were attributed to a source, accounting for 100% of the sample; however, this does not confirm that the page was the original source of the news. Regarding factual accuracy, 64% of the posts were entirely false, while 36%

contained elements of both truth and falsehood, reflecting the varied objectives of these fabricated messages, which range from sensationalism and entertainment to incitement or exploiting the novelty of content.

Methods of Fabrication:

The most commonly employed techniques included word manipulation (33%) and the use of images out of context (31%). Additionally, 18% of posts contained misleading written statements, 10% presented entirely fictitious news, and 8% involved video alterations. These strategies indicate that rumor promoters rely on multiple approaches to influence audience emotions and reactions.

Digital Response and Debunking:

The page employs a diverse range of sources to disprove rumors: private sources (28%), websites (26%), Facebook accounts (21%), other social media platforms (18%), and print or audiovisual media (8%). Often, more than one type of evidence is used to debunk claims, including original images (39%), official links (28%), original videos (10%), contradictory statements, and the absence of news from official entities (8%). This approach reinforces “enhanced documentation” and allows audiences to independently verify the information.

Multimedia Persuasion Strategy:

The page goes beyond linguistic debunking to adopt a clear visual-semantic approach. Color-coded stamps (red for false, green for true) serve as simplified media cues to quickly guide the audience. The extensive use of tangible evidence, original images,

IV. Conclusion:

The dissemination of rumors constitutes a form of manipulation that can occur across both formal and informal information-sharing spaces. Rumors take diverse forms, with their originators presenting them as factual news, free from any falsification, in order to achieve specific objectives—whether to gain viewership, drive engagement, or propagate misinformation and distortion to serve hidden agendas. Such content finds a conducive and nurturing environment on Facebook, especially given its broad audience reach both nationally and globally, coupled with the availability of applications and software that allow professional-level manipulation of images and videos.

However, this digital environment also hosts actors committed to promoting accurate awareness of prevailing conditions and fostering digital and media literacy. These actors equip users with the capacity to critically evaluate information before accepting it as truth, encouraging a positive, reflective engagement rather than passive acceptance of all content circulating in this space. Among these actors, the **Fake News DZ** Facebook page stands out as a platform dedicated to exposing false news and presenting accurate information as a logical alternative, stimulating the audience’s pursuit of truth—a pursuit that has become increasingly challenging without the requisite skills.

The findings from the analysis of **Fake News DZ** posts demonstrate that the varied forms of rumors—from visual and linguistic manipulation to completely

fabricated news—necessitate a counter-strategy that goes beyond mere denial, extending to cognitive inoculation. Here, the page’s digital response is significant, exemplified by “evidence-based debunking” and a “multimedia persuasion approach.” Its role transcends mere exposure of falsehoods, equipping users with methodological tools for self-verification. This transformation—from passive consumption to active, critical engagement through the provision of accurate alternatives and documented evidence—constitutes the essence of digital media literacy.

Consequently, **Fake News DZ** does not simply provide fact-checking services; it contributes to the cultivation of an “aware digital citizenship” capable of challenging the “post-truth era” and fostering skepticism and verification as a first line of defense against misinformation.

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