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Information Disorder Behavior on Social Media: A Moral Intensity Perspective

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Information disorder on social media has severe and adverse effects on public news consumption and public attitudes and behavior. Yet, as a society, we are increasingly relying on social media, whether for advice or seeking news. Hence, there is a problem with what kind of information gets shared on social media and how we consume such information. Whenever information and behavior directly impact humans and societies, they have ethical and moral significance in decision-making. On social media information sharing, evidence shows that the morality frame increases the likelihood of sharing substantially (Valenzuela et al., 2017), and moral content increases behavior intention (Everett., 2020). However, few studies scrutinize information disorder behavior in the light of moral decision-making. In addition, there are myriad terms used by researchers in information disorder studies. While various classifications help capture the different types of information disorders, they can be problematic such as discrediting news reporting and causing miscommunications around the problem (Tandoc et al., 2018). To this end, an integrated classification of information disorders on social media is helpful for academic debates and theoretical progression.

This study adopts an indepth interpretive approach to systematically examine how the interactions between individuals' moral intensity and information disorders change information sharing intention and decision-making on social media to address these gaps in the academic literature. First, we argue that information sharing on social media is a function of moral intensity, context- and issue-dependent. Second, we build upon Wardle and Derakhshan's (2018) three information disorders, namely misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation, to show that information sharing is also a function of the information disorder type. Our results suggest that information sharing on social media has different mechanisms based on individuals' moral intensity interpretations in proximity, temporal immediacy, and consequences. There are similarities and differences across three information disorders. In the end, we put forth research propositions for future research. This research in progress will contribute to theory-building about online behavioral ethics in general and information disorder behavior on social media in particular.

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