Chapter 17

The Impact of Misinformation and Preferences of News Sources on Institutional Trust Perception in the COVID-19 Process

Selman Selim Akyüz
Selcuk University, Turkey

ABSTRACT

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the flow of misinformation that appeared in the mass media and especially on social media and was defined as "Infodemic" by the World Health Organization (WHO). In this study, the relationship between the level at which 1.319 social media users in Turkey have been exposed to misinformation during the COVID-19 process, and their views on which sources spread suspicious and misinformation the most and the level of trust in institutions during the pandemic process were investigated. Participants followed developments in the pandemic on social media; 61% were exposed to false information about COVID-19 every day, and most encountered suspicious information on Facebook and Twitter. Social media users who participated in the study found that the institutions they least trusted were the World Health Organization (WHO), pharmaceutical companies, political opposition of Turkey, and traditional media.

INTRODUCTION

Trust is one of the most important determinants in the Healthy Execution and reproduction of both interpersonal and social relations. Problems can arise in terms of cohabitation and public order when people do not trust each other, different social groups and institutions. From a sociological point of view a high level of trust increases the trend of interpersonal and public order cooperation. Trust reproduces

cooperation and cooperation reproduces trust. Low-trust societies seem to be quite poor in terms of social capital (Sargut, 2003).

Pandemics arise as periods when social trust is irreparably weakened in the long term. This effect in Spanish flu (Akbaş, 2020), has led to increased social uncertainty and insecurity throughout the world in the Covid-19 process (Siders & Ward, 2020). People have problems trusting individuals and societies due to the lack of knowledge about who and how to transmit the disease to them as well as institutions for reasons such as the fear, level of danger and treatment caused by the disease.

During the first 6 months of the outbreak there are studies that show that people's trust in institutions has increased (Bunker, 2020) but after the outbreak has completed one year, in this sense, the number of studies that reveal the picture in Turkey is limited.

The World Health Organization has defined "Infodemic" and has taken important decisions to combat it. This "false information outbreak" (Akyüz, 2020) has led to the spread of misinformation about measures and treatment an another threat that endangers human health. Deaths have been caused by underestimating the disease by believing false information or by improper prevention and treatment practices (Spring, 2020b).

In the literature section of the study, information and researches on trust and intitutional trust, social media, misinformation and the Covid-19 process were discussed. In the second part, field research from quantitative research methods was applied and a survey was conducted with 1.319 people reached via the internet. During the Covid-19 process, participants tried to determine their views on news consumption habits, misinformation and perception of trust.

INSTUTIONAL TRUST PERCEPTION AND PANDEMIC PROCESS

Looking at the definitions made about the concept of trust, it seems that some of the definitions focus on expectation on the other side and some on the desire to remain vulnerable to the other side (Kalemci Tüzün, 2007) It is defined as confidence, sense of involvement, and trust without fear and doubt (Aslan, 2016).

Institutional trust is defined as the trust that individuals have in political, social and economic institutions and the system. Preliminary determinants of trust are expressed as knowledge and institution-based trust, account, cognitive and personality-based trust. Knowledge-based trust is built on the predictability of the other: *"Knowing the other adequately and being able to predict their behavior". In this context, the knowledge-based trust relationship is not about threat or fear, but about the relationship based on the knowledge that the sides have about each other* (Kalemci Tüzün, 2007).

Lack of knowledge about people, institutions and events makes it difficult to recognize and makes it difficult to create a sense of trust. The Covid-19 pandemic originated in obscurity. The world was forced to meet this major outbreak, which occurred almost a hundred years after the Spanish flu, but problems in the production and access of scientific knowledge to humans have made it difficult to know the virus and its effects.

Individuals' sense of confidence that their lives are under their control has been undermined and the environment of uncertainty has increased threat perception and anxiety (Doğan & Düzel, 2020). In this context, the pandemic exists as a major crisis that shakes the social and economic order as well as the sense of trust in institutions, causing uncertainty, fear, anxiety (Bozkurt, Zeybek, & Aşkın, 2020). Uncertainty about disease and virus also reduces confidence in science (Kreps & Kriner, 2020).

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