



**Disinformation:
A lethal virus for democracy that erodes trust in public institutions**

**Desinformação:
Um vírus letal para a democracia que corrói a confiança nas instituições
públicas**

Gabriela Araújo Silveira¹

Antonio Roazzi²

Veronica Cucchiarini³

Alexsandro Medeiros do Nascimento⁴

ABSTRACT

Disinformation is currently used by elected leaders or those who aspire to power to arouse suspicion about governments, research institutions, political parties, and legal systems, in order to arouse feelings of skepticism, frustration, and indignation in the population and thus garner more political support. In Brazil, the spread of disinformation phenomena is related to serious social problems, such as vaccine hesitancy, invasion of democratic institutions, and electoral crimes, with serious consequences for life in society. Thus, the research seeks to bring theoretical contributions to the theme, still little explored in the national context, in order to assist in the proposition of public policies that can strengthen the population's confidence in Brazilian public institutions and, thus, allow the State to continue acting in the interest of the people and ensuring their social and economic well-being, without running the risk of power falling into the hands of private interests.

Keywords: disinformation; public institutions; public policies.

RESUMO

A desinformação é utilizada atualmente por líderes eleitos ou que almejam alcançar o poder para levantar suspeitas sobre os governos, as instituições de pesquisa, os partidos políticos e os sistemas jurídicos, a fim de despertar sentimentos de ceticismo, frustração e indignação na população e, assim, angariar mais apoio político. No Brasil, a disseminação de fenômenos desinformativos está relacionada a problemas sociais graves, como hesitação vacinal, invasão de instituições democráticas e crimes eleitorais, trazendo consequências graves para a vida em sociedade. Assim, a pesquisa busca trazer contribuições teóricas para o tema, ainda pouco explorado em contexto nacional, a fim de auxiliar na proposição de políticas públicas que possam fortalecer a confiança da população nas instituições públicas brasileiras e, assim, permitir que o Estado continue atuando no interesse do povo e garantindo seu bem-estar social e econômico, sem correr o risco de o poder cair nas mãos de interesses particulares.

Palavras-chave: desinformação; instituições públicas; políticas públicas.

¹ Gabriela Araújo Silveira. PhD student in Business Administration at the Federal University of Pernambuco (UFPE). E-mail: gabriela.silveira@ufpe.br Brazil. <http://lattes.cnpq.br/1180292781269932>.

² Antonio Roazzi. D.Phil - D.Phil, Department of Psychology, Federal University of Pernambuco (UFPE). E-mail: roazzi@gmail.com <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6411-2763>. <http://lattes.cnpq.br/6108730498633062>. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Antonio_Roazzi.

³ Veronica Cucchiarini. PhD in Cognitive Psychology, Department of Economics, University of Milano-Bicocca – Scientific coordinator of the Behavioral Insights Bicocca (BIB), Italia. E-mail: veronica.cucchiarini@unimib.it

⁴ Alexsandro Medeiros do Nascimento. Doutor em Psicologia Cognitiva pela Universidade Federal de Pernambuco (UFPE). Professor vinculado à Universidade Federal de Pernambuco (UFPE). E-mail: alexsandro.mnascimento@ufpe.br. Brasil. ORCID iD: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9981-8384>



Disinformation, a pervasive and detrimental force in contemporary society, undermines public trust in democratic institutions and distorts public discourse. This phenomenon, characterized by the intentional spread of false or misleading information, poses significant challenges to the integrity of democratic processes and the functioning of public institutions. The impact of disinformation is evident in various global contexts, as demonstrated by recent political events and social movements.

A critical instance of disinformation's influence was observed during the 2016 U.S. presidential election, where misinformation significantly swayed public opinion and voting behavior. This event is well-documented in studies such as Levitsky and Ziblatt's (2018) work on democratic erosion. Similarly, the 2022 Brazilian Presidential Election witnessed the strategic use of disinformation, affecting the electorate's perception and decision-making process (Santos & Pereira, 2023). These cases highlight the need for a comprehensive understanding of disinformation's mechanisms and its effects on society.

Furthermore, the prevalence of disinformation has been linked to increased skepticism towards scientific knowledge and a decline in public confidence in critical institutions. A survey conducted by Yale University (2020) demonstrated a significant drop in public trust in climate science following exposure to disinformation. This erosion of trust extends to other areas, such as public health, where misinformation regarding vaccines has led to hesitancy and public health crises (Frugoli et al., 2021; Galhardi et al., 2022; Cucchiarini et al, 2023).

Addressing disinformation requires a multifaceted approach, involving media literacy, public policy reforms, and efforts to enhance critical thinking among the populace. The need for such measures is underscored by the profound impact disinformation has on democratic values, social cohesion, and the credibility of information sources.

In this paper, we explore the various dimensions of disinformation, its impact on democratic institutions, and the strategies needed to combat its spread. Our analysis aims to contribute to the broader understanding of disinformation and to propose effective solutions for preserving the integrity of public discourse and democratic institutions.



CHALLENGING DEMOCRATIC NORMS: PRESIDENTIAL ACTIONS AND THEIR IMPACT ON PUBLIC TRUST

In August 2017, Donald Trump, the former president of the United States, while still in office, granted a pardon to the controversial former Arizona sheriff Joe Arpaio, who was convicted of violating a federal court order that prevented him from practicing racial profiling, in addition to making indirect criticisms of the country's judiciary. Although the constitutional power of pardon of the chief executive is unlimited in the United States, historically, presidents have exercised it with great restraint, seeking advice from the judiciary and never granting pardons for self-protection or political gain. Trump has boldly violated these norms (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018).

Trump also violated democratic norms when he denounced the legitimacy of the election. Pronouncing phrases like *"We're too big, but they're trying to steal the election. Votes cannot be cast after the polls close"* (Venaglia, 2020) and *"We will never give up, we will never admit it. We will stop the theft of elections"* (G1, 2021), the former U.S. president called into question the reliability of elections and the electoral system in the country in the eyes of its citizens, which can have serious consequences for democracy (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018).

According to Levitsky and Ziblatt (2018), in a poll conducted before the 2016 election, 84% of Republican voters said they believed that a "significant number" of fraud had occurred in U.S. elections, and nearly 60% said they believed that illegal immigrants would "vote in significant numbers." In a new poll conducted in 2017, 47 percent of Republicans believed Trump had won the popular vote, compared with 40 percent who believed Hilary Clinton had won, meaning that about half of Republicans said they believed the U.S. election was rigged. In another 2017 poll that asked respondents whether or not they would support postponing the election if Donald Trump said the election should be postponed until the country was confident that only eligible U.S. citizens would vote, 52 percent of Republicans said they would support a postponement.

Years later, the results of the research remain valid. After President Joe Biden was elected in the 2020 U.S. election, many U.S. citizens were still skeptical about the outcome and suspicious of the electoral process. According to an interview with BBC



News, when asked about the elections, answers such as "*The whole thing is dirty. You've got a guy who was elected under dirty circumstances, and now he's president, "I think the election was rigged, with mail-in ballots. I think only people who are no longer with us voted"* and "*I think we're going to have to go back to voting in person, with ID*" (BBC, 2021). Distrust of the election results was one of the recipe's ingredients that culminated in the storming of the U.S. Capitol, a symbol of political power.

On January 6, 2021, a joint session of Congress was taking place in the United States to confirm Joe Biden's victory in the 2020 presidential elections when supporters of then-President Donald Trump stormed the Capitol building. Driven by dissatisfaction with Trump's loss of the election and convinced that the election was rigged, the attackers destroyed objects of historical significance and threatened the lives of congress members. Hours after the attack, Donald Trump spoke out on his social networks, reinforcing the idea that the elections were rigged (CNN, 2022).

In Brazil, after the victory of candidate Luís Inácio da Silva in the 2022 elections, there was a similar act in Brasilia, the federal capital. On January 8, 2023, supporters of former President Jair Bolsonaro invaded the buildings of the Three Powers. According to investigations, the act had been planned by the aggressors since January 3, 2023, two days after the inauguration ceremony of the president-elect, and, as in the U.S. case, was motivated by dissatisfaction with the election results and distrust of the electoral process (Estadão, 2023).

When experiencing facts against democracy, it is worth reflecting that attacks against democracy tend to start slowly, almost imperceptibly. Elections continue to be held, opposition politicians still have seats in Congress, and independent newspapers still circulate. Every step to subvert democracy is taken under the guise of legality so that none of them appears to threaten the democratic regime (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018).

In order to achieve or remain in power, political leaders seek to arouse feelings of skepticism, frustration, indignation, and anger against *establishment parties*. To do this, they rely on the help of social networks to disseminate news and opinions that are not always true but corroborate their ideas and discourses in a phenomenon known as disinformation (Empoli, 2019). An example of this can be seen in Italy during the Covid-19 pandemic. Italy was one of the countries hardest hit by the virus. Although the issue



is predominantly scientific, the discussion about managing the pandemic inevitably intertwined science and politics. In this scenario, some right-wing political groups used disinformation via social media to undermine the decisions of the incumbent government, thereby gaining increasing power (the right-wing coalition subsequently won the elections in 2022). According to a study by Caldarelli and colleagues (2021), the impact of untrustworthy posts tweeted by political groups is significant, reaching 22.1% in right-wing and center-right communities. In absolute terms, a staggering 96% of all unreliable links shared by political groups originated from these communities. This phenomenon reflects, through a digital lens, the current trend of right-wing populism.

Although the term *disinformation* refers to fake news for many people, it is much broader, comprising different types and levels, such as distortion, omission of context, news bias, and information overload (Heller, Jacobi & Borges, 2020). Therefore, before continuing the discussion, it is crucial to present the concept and types of disinformation.

DISINFORMATION

Disinformation is a wide-ranging phenomenon that encompasses all types of manifestations that can be misleading, whether written text, an image, or even poorly communicated or biased speech. These manifestations can be classified according to intentionality into disinformation and misinformation. The concept of disinformation would be disinformation with the intent to deceive, while misinformation would be the unintentional sharing of misinformation (Fallis, 2015). Adding to the discussion, Georgiadou *et al.* (2018) bring misinformation, characterized as "information based on reality, used to inflict harm on a person, organization, or country."

Table 01 presents the types of disinformation listed by Heller, Jacobi and Borges (2020) based on the studies by Wardle (2016), Volkoff (2004), and Pariser (2012).

Table 01. Types of Disinformation

Author	Type	Concept	Example
	Satire or parody	It is not intended to harm, but it can potentially deceive those unaware of the context.	Memes
	Fake Connection	When headlines, illustrations, or captions don't confirm the content.	News

Wardle (2016)	Misleading content	Misleading use of information to fit an issue or individual.	Biased headline
	False context	When genuine content is shared with false contextual information.	Junk news ⁵
	Imposter content	When genuine fonts are imitated.	Plagiarized scientific article
	Manipulated context	When genuine information or image is manipulated to deceive.	Deep fake News
	Manufactured content	Fresh content, which is 100% false, created to deceive and harm.	Fake News
Volkoff (2015)	Concealment of information	When information is hidden in a piece of content to make it more attractive.	Some government texts
	Informational overload	Excessive information with the intention of saturating the attention and, consequently, the meaning of certain content.	Infodemic
Pariser (2012)	Lack of information	When you don't look for information because there's no interest or because you don't know where to look or even know it exists.	Informational bubble ⁶

The prevalence of disinformation in today's society can have at least two explanations: (1) the low criticality and verification of information and (2) the influence of emotional, religious, political, and social factors.

On the one hand, the absence of critical interpretation and fact-checking of sources contributes to the dissemination and consumption of misleading information, contributing to the generalization of disinformation, which Leite & Matos (2017) call "zombification".

In line with the authors, other studies indicate that disinformation phenomena are associated with lower analytical thinking and schooling (Oliver & Wood, 2014; Swami *et al.*, 2014; Douglas *et al.*, 2016; Alba *et al.*, 2018). For example, Swami *et al.* (2016) explain that people with an educational background tend to have skills to solve problems independently, influence their environment, and take an active stance in their lives, reducing the chances of believing and endorsing misleading information.

In another study, Swami *et al.* (2014) concluded that belief in disinformative content is negatively correlated with an analytical thinking style and open-minded thinking and positively related to an intuitive thinking style and need for closure. In other words, stronger belief in these types of content is associated with a lower tendency to

⁵ News that is "characterized by taking the context of a given subject to give another meaning to that news or fact" (Aidar & Alves, 2019, p. 19).

⁶ "[...] too much information, some accurate and some not, that makes it difficult to find reliable sources and guidance when needed." Available at: https://iris.paho.org/bitstream/handle/10665.2/52054/Factsheet-Infodemic_por.pdf?sequence=14. Accessed on: 31 ago. 2020.



rely on analytical and careful processing of information, which gives the individual the tool and space to evaluate them critically, and a greater tendency to rely on intuitive and frugal information processing, because it requires low cognitive effort.

On the one hand, in the context of post-truth, what seems to matter to the final consumer of information is the convergence of this information with his opinion, that is, factors of a personal nature prevail over reason and facts (Fallis, 2015; Floridi, 2010; Wardle, 2016).

Norris and Iglehart (2019) state that, over time, generational changes presuppose profound changes in the prevailing social and cultural norms. These changes are due to two factors: (a) gradual changes in the composition of society through processes of population replacement, where each day marks the departure of some older citizens and the entry of new ones, and (b) the historical experiences lived, which will influence the characteristics of the social body of the time. These changes cause older generations to realize that some of their most cherished core values are being eroded and to experience a widening gap between the norms of the world they were born into and the world they live in, becoming especially prone to feeling threatened.

Norris and Iglehart (2019) identify four main generational cuts: (a) the interwar generation, which lived through both World Wars and the Great Depression (1900-1945); (b) the Baby Boomer generation, who came of age during the increasing affluence and expansion of the welfare state during the post-World War II era (1946-1964); (c) Generation X, which socialized during the counterculture era of sexual liberalization and student protest (1965–1979); and (d) the Millennial generation, which came of age under the era of neoliberalism, economics, and globalization associated with Reagan and Thatcher (1980-1996).

These shifts in values motivate the rise of right-wing populists when the rising tide of social liberalism among the younger, college-educated population is combined with a profound disillusionment with the performance of major political parties and leaders. The grievances and resentments exploited by right-wing populists have helped legitimize xenophobic and misogynistic forces, making bigotry respectable in some circles and providing an avenue for its expression at the ballot box. Appeals resonate



among traditionalists for whom rapid social change and long-term demographic shifts have eroded the world as they knew it (Norris & Iglehart, 2019).

Furthermore, D'Ancona (2018) reports that in an opinion poll conducted in 2014 with more than 53,000 people in more than a hundred countries, it was pointed out that a third of the world's population believed that the Holocaust was recorded perfectly in historical accounts and 30% stated that it was probably true that "Jews still talked a lot about what happened to them in the Holocaust." In the author's words, *"in a worrying omen for the future, those under the age of 65 were more likely to say that they thought the facts about the genocide had been distorted"* (pp. 77 and 78, D'Ancona, 2018), which presupposes the influence of the generational range on the belief in alternative explanations for unquestionable facts.

Still, on personal factors, research indicates that belief in disinformation is a byproduct of perceived exclusion from the power structure (Parsons *et al.*, 1999) and that members of groups that have low status due to their ethnicity or income are more likely to believe in misinformation phenomena (Uscinski & Parente, 2014)

In this regard, Bird and Bogart (2005) analyzed the belief in false content about HIV among African Americans and concluded that a substantial number of the individuals surveyed believed in this content, among them that "whites want to keep the number of African Americans low," that "poor and minority women are sometimes forced to be sterilized by the government," that "the government tries to limit the growth of the African-American population by encouraging the use of condoms" and that "medical and public health institutions use poor and minority people as guinea pigs to experiment with new methods of birth control."

Albarracín *et al.* (2022) also conducted studies on ethnicity and beliefs in misinformation content and concluded that people of color are more likely to believe in conspiracy theories. Specifically, non-white participants were more likely to conclude that Obama was not born in the United States, that the U.S. government created the HIV epidemic, and that the link between the MMR vaccine and autism was covered up.

Other studies also point out the likelihood of believing disinformation content is higher among disadvantaged or voiceless groups (Hofstadter, 1964; Sunstein & Vermeule, 2009). Albarracín *et al.* (2022) concluded that income and financial losses



have an association with belief in conspiracy theories, more specifically, groups with lower incomes, who have experienced financial losses in previous years or who have experienced an adverse change in their social position tend to believe false explanations of facts.

Considering a political and social scenario of uncertainties, individuals fear what may happen and seek the truth alone, often through alternative means, becoming skeptical of the institutions that control their lives (Albuquerque & Quinan, 2019).

DISINFORMATION AND TRUST IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

Belief in disinformative content inevitably induces deviant behavior, such as skepticism about all public data distributed by institutions targeted for injury (Keeley, 1999). Institutions are accused of using a health crisis to repress citizens, exaggerating the dangers posed by climate change, and rigging elections (Van Prooijen, Spadaro & Wang, 2022).

Whereas public institutions, such as government, research institutes, political parties, and legal systems, have the functions of protecting citizens against threats of personal loss, such as unemployment, health and housing problems, and serving as a model for the construction of social norms and values, distrust of these institutions eliminates the sense of social security and the perception of citizens feeling like a member of a worthy group (Van Prooijen, Spadaro & Wang, 2022).

In contemporary times, public institutions are experiencing a crisis, suffering a series of questions, especially concerning their ability to meet some demands of modern society, such as social justice, ethical construction, solidarity, and the democratization of knowledge (Oliveira, 2020).

Brazil has faced a severe institutional and political crisis since 2014. The public and the main media outlets began to question democratic institutions on their debate agendas. Since then, a series of political events based on a supposed anti-corruption agenda and extensive media coverage has eroded the population's trust in democratic institutions (Oliveira, 2020).

More recently, with the health crisis resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic, it was possible to feel more closely the impacts of the institutional crisis that has been dragging



on for some years in the country. The National Immunization Program (PNI), created in 1973, was responsible for advancing vaccination in the country. By adopting measures such as the unification of the vaccination schedule, the combination of routine vaccination with campaign strategies, investment in national production, the expansion of demographic, age, and vaccine coverage, and the promotion of evaluative, epidemiological surveillance, and health education policies, the PNI was able to eradicate poliomyelitis and measles in Brazil. Strengthened by the Unified Health System (SUS) and internationally recognized as a reference in the field of public health, the Program was fundamental in building awareness of vaccination as a right for the entire population (Massarani *et al.* 2021; Carvalho *et al.*, 2022

However, the National Immunization Program (PNI) found itself hostile to vaccination against the Covid-19 virus. The circulation of false information with a scientific appearance, especially information with accusatory content against political and health institutions, is still a precursor of anti-vaccine attitudes and vaccine hesitancy, as well as responsible for the loss of trust in research institutions by the population (Massarani *et al.* 2021).

Brazilian research institutions that are referenced in health in the country, such as Fiocruz and the Butantan Institute, which have signed technology transfer agreements for the production of immunizers against Covid-19 in Brazil and producers of two vaccines against the disease, have divided the debate on science and health with non-scientific social actors. Armed with questions about the efficacy and safety of vaccines, these actors shook the solid foundations of knowledge-producing institutions, which lost credibility for part of Brazilian society (Carvalho *et al.*, 2022).

In addition to questioning knowledge produced by institutions created and qualified to provide reliable information, professionals, their methods, and the institutions themselves are put in check. By questioning the institutions responsible for the production of knowledge, distrust and indifference to science are fostered, generating changes in the behavior of thousands of people, who begin to believe and make decisions no longer based on genuine knowledge but on the information that seems more convenient or practical in a given circumstance (Duarte & César, 2020).



Cassiani, Selles, and Ostermann (2022) add that the doubts and uncertainties inherent to the scientific production process end up being interpreted as the fragility and inconsistency of science, endorsing the discourse that science is unreliable. This facilitates the circulation of alternative explanations that, due to their linear and simplistic appearance, are embraced by people and begin to compete with scientific ideas and evidence, affecting the ways of supporting and producing public policies. Thus, when part of the population began to naturalize the fires in the Amazon and the Pantanal territories using the geographical and climatic characteristics of the regions as justification, the reduction of environmental policies and surveillance in the areas did not attract due social attention. Similarly, the scientific denialism disseminated during the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in a cut in funding for scientific research, threatening projects in several areas, including research aimed at combating the disease and consequently in loss of life.

Thus, the dissemination of disinformation undermines the knowledge produced by schools, universities, scientific research institutions, and journalism, institutions whose social function is to promote information, guaranteeing the right of each individual to seek the truth freely and to awaken citizens' reflection on issues that involve interest and social interaction. Despite the efforts made by these institutions to restore the trust that has been shaken in society, there is still much to be done in defense of the credibility of these institutions (Oliveira, 2020).

Van Prooijen, Spadaro, and Wang (2022) reinforce that distrust of public institutions results in the weakening of social relations and constructive collective behaviors. For the authors, the feeling of distrust against public institutions, specifically, undermines (1) political engagement, such as the exercise of citizenship through voting and the defense of rights through peaceful means; (2) civic cooperation, such as concern for the safety of others and the payment of taxes; and (3) prosocial behavior, such as donation and volunteering.

In this way, democracy loses its ability to share a common notion of truth, which is fundamental to social life; knowledge specialists and traditional institutions of knowledge production lose credibility; the symbolic contract that gives these institutions the social authorization to postulate about the facts is called into question; and lay



individuals who conquer space on social media through the visibility and recognition of their followers are increasingly present (Keen, 2007; Aggio, 2021).

THE IMPACT OF MISINFORMATION ON DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Undermining the population's trust in public institutions seriously affects social life. Reflecting on a Yale University survey, it was observed that the dissemination of questionable materials about global warming significantly impacted public trust. Post-exposure to these materials, public confidence in scientific knowledge regarding climate change declined from 71% to 57% between 2008 and 2010, highlighting the influence of misinformation on public opinion (Yale Program on Climate Change Communication, 2020; D'Ancona, 2018). Recent political events further underscore the impact of misinformation. The U.S. Capitol invasion in January 2021, fueled by false claims of election fraud, exemplifies how disinformation can provoke direct assaults on democratic institutions (Nichols, 2021; Tiedemann, 2023; West, 2021). Similarly, in Brazil, the 2023 insurrection, driven by misinformation about election outcomes, mirrored such democratic threats (CNN, 2022; Estadão, 2023). It is also interesting to highlight a study carried out by Avaaz and the Brazilian Society of Immunizations (SBIIm), which revealed that, of the 13% who said they had not been vaccinated or had not vaccinated a child under their care, more than half (57%) pointed to the lack of need for vaccination or the risk of harmful side effects as a reason beliefs considered incorrect by SBIIm and the World Health Organization (Frugoli, Prado, Silva, Matozinhos, Trapé, & Lachtim 2021; Galhardi, Freire, Fagundes, Minayo & Cunha, 2022; SBIIm, 2019).

In such scenarios, it is imperative for establishment politicians to promptly intervene to safeguard the integrity of democratic institutions, even if it means joining forces with rivals temporarily. A notable example of this phenomenon occurred in the 2017 French presidential election. Following his defeat in the first round, conservative candidate François Fillon urged his supporters to back the centrist candidate, Emmanuel Macron, as a strategic move to prevent Marine Le Pen, a far-right candidate, from winning the presidency. This instance reflects a broader trend in modern politics where traditional political rivalries may be set aside to preserve democratic norms and institutions (Evans & Ivaldi, 2018); Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018).



More recently, in the 2022 Brazilian Presidential Election, the electoral alliance led by Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, representing the Workers' Party (PT), and his running mate Geraldo Alckmin from the Brazilian Socialist Party (PSB), signified an unprecedented political coalition. This alliance, known as 'Brazil of Hope,' united nine diverse political entities (PT, PSB, PV, PCdoB, PSOL, Rede, Solidarity, Avante, and Agir), spanning a broad spectrum of ideological positions from left to center. This coalition was a strategic move to consolidate efforts to safeguard democratic principles in Brazil against the backdrop of increasing political polarization (Santos & Pereira, 2023). This coalition represented a confluence of parties with varying ideological, political, economic, social, and environmental stances, converging on a unified platform primarily focused on the defense of democracy (Teixeira, 2022).

In contexts where public education is undervalued, viewed primarily as a fiscal burden and social inequality and political corruption prevail, it becomes imperative to advocate for robust public policies. These policies are crucial for bolstering public institutions to safeguard the State's role in serving the populace and preserving social and economic equity without running the risk of power falling into the hands of private interests. This is particularly relevant in regions experiencing systemic challenges to governance integrity and public service efficacy (OECD, 2009).

Moreover, comprehending the factors contributing to public skepticism towards institutions is vital. This understanding aids in developing effective strategies to rebuild public trust. Contemporary research shows that misinformation, political manipulation, and historical governance failures contribute significantly to this distrust. Addressing these issues is essential for re-establishing faith in public institutions, which play a pivotal role in disseminating knowledge, promoting social welfare, and upholding democratic principles (Armingeon & Guthmann, 2014).

FINAL WORDS

In the face of the multifaceted challenges posed by disinformation, it is clear that a multifaceted response is needed. This study underscores the urgency of implementing comprehensive strategies that address the root causes of disinformation and its far-reaching impact on society. Governments, media organizations, educational institutions,



and civil society must collaborate to foster an environment where truth and factual information prevail.

Educational initiatives emphasizing critical thinking and media literacy are crucial in equipping individuals with the skills to discern reliable information from falsehoods. Media organizations should commit to responsible journalism, avoiding sensationalism, and providing balanced, fact-checked reporting. Governments must enforce regulations that hold those disseminating disinformation accountable while protecting freedom of speech.

Moreover, public policies focused on transparency, accountability, and inclusivity are vital in restoring public trust in institutions. These policies should aim to make institutions more accessible and responsive to the needs of the populace, thereby strengthening the democratic fabric of society.

As this study illustrates, the fight against disinformation is not only a matter of curtailing false narratives but also a broader struggle to preserve democratic values and the integrity of public institutions. In this ongoing battle, every stakeholder has a role in safeguarding the truth and upholding the pillars of a healthy, informed, and engaged society.

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About authors and contact:

Gabriela Araújo Silveira

PhD student, PPG in Administration, Federal University of Pernambuco (UFPE)

E-mail: gabriela.silveira@ufpe.br

Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/1180292781269932>

Antonio Roazzi

D.Phil, Department of Psychology, Federal University of Pernambuco (UFPE)

E-mail: roazzi@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6411-2763>

<http://lattes.cnpq.br/6108730498633062>

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Antonio_Roazzi

Veronica Cucchiarini

PhD in Cognitive Psychology,

Department of Economics,

University of Milano-Bicocca, Italia

Scientific coordinator of the Behavioral Insights Bicocca (BIB)

E-mail: veronica.cucchiarini@unimib.it

Alexsandro Medeiros do Nascimento

Doutor, Departamento de Psicologia – Universidade Federal de Pernambuco (UFPE) –

Coordenador do Laboratório de Estudos de Autoconsciência, Consciência, Cognição de Alta Ordem e Self (LACCOS)

E-mail: alexsandro.mnascimento@ufpe.br

<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9981-8384>