News Item

The connectivity trade-off from social media misinformation | The Interpreter

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> Rumours and falsehoods on social media spread faster than the truth. A recent study conducted in the United States found evidence that polarising political content (such as left vs right) is particularly likely to go viral. And there can be real world consequences of misinformation. Another study conducted in Germany has demonstrated that anti-refugee sentiment on Facebook predicts crimes against refugees.
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> In the Global South – a term used to refer to regions of Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Oceania – these studies are corroborated by events that resulted in physical violence in the past years. In 2018, Facebook admitted its platform was used to incite violence in Myanmar. In the same year, the spread of false and inflammatory content on Facebook contributed to more killings in Nigeria. In Indonesia, online misinformation (hoaxes) has also sparked offline violence in 2019. In 2020, misinformation spread on WhatsApp was responsible for a deathly mob lynching in India.
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> When misinformation from a platform spurs real-world violence, the consequences can be felt by many.
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> Nevertheless, while often responsible for hosting inflammatory content, Facebook also attempts to help improve the connectivity in countries in the Global South.
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