A Multidisciplinary Approach to Tackling Online Misinformation

Udo Kruschwitz University of Regensburg

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Universität Regensburg





COURAGE: A Multidisciplinary Approach to Tackling Online Misinformation

Udo Kruschwitz (joint work with many others)

https://www.upf.edu/web/courage

















COURAGE: A Multidisciplinary Approach to Tackling Online Misinformation ... and other Toxic Content

Udo Kruschwitz (joint work with many others) https://www.upf.edu/web/courage















Where to start?



... let's ask ChatGPT ...

Today's Talk





I have been invited to give a keynote talk at the ROMCIR workshop on Reducing Online Misinformation through Credible Information Retrieval. I want to present an educational approach that we follow in the COURAGE project. How should I structure my talk?

Today's Talk







1. Introduction



Who am I?







Some Activities I am Involved in

bcs registrations certifications research people Information Retrieval specialist group

Qualifications &

We're a community of IT professionals and enthusiasts who are passionate about information retrieval.

Events

Articles &

Develop your

Deliver & teach

qualifications

Q



Membership &

Welcome to our group!

If you work with search engines, develop or deploy sear research interest in the field, or if you simply want to lea we will be happy to welcome you to our group!

We bring together industry, academia and end users wit professional, intranet, enterprise and ecommerce searc

Udo Kruschwitz, Chair



dia monitoring, reputation managemen latory compliance and market



We're so thrilled to be on th @innovateuk after winning t the Best' award!

Innovate UK



Q Departments Work Policies Publication

Media tracking firm wins **Knowledge Transfe** Partnership 2015 ignal Media and Essex Universi carry off 'Best of the Best' award

ter KTP associate joins



6th April 2023

Dublin, Ireland

Information Retrieval specialist group: Search Solutions

Search Solutions is an annual conference that is usually held

LingoTowns

Help us with our research in Natural Language Processing. Your fun becomes our data as we uncover ambiguities in natural expression.

PLAY



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Selected Papers







... enough about me

ROMCIR 2023



ROMCIR 2023

The 3rd Workshop on Reducing Online Misinformation through Credible Information Retrieval - April 2nd, Dublin, Ireland

Motivation and Relevance to ECIR Aim and Themes Call for Papers Schedule (tentative) Keynote Speakers

rganizers

For these reasons, the themes of interest include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Access to genuine information
- Bias detection
- Bot/spam/troll detection
- Computational fact-checking
- Crowdsourcing for information genuineness assessment
- Deep fakes
- Disinformation/misinformation detection
- Evaluation strategies to assess information genuineness
- Fake news/review detection
- Harassment/bullying/hate speech detection
- Information polarization in online communities, echo chambers
- Propaganda identification/analysis
- Retrieval of genuine information
- Security, privacy, and information genuineness
- Sentiment/emotional analysis
- Stance detection
- Trust and reputation
- Societal reaction to misinformation



Context





... obviously this touches on much broader issues, so let's get back to our key concern here ...



...

Context



Jochen L. Leidner (He/Him) • 1st Al Professor | Scientist-Engineer | Consultant | Advisor 2h • Edited • 🔇

Lecture "Media Manipulation, Propaganda & Fake News": attempting to fill the gap that journalists left... How does Fake News production and detection work? Who are the actors behind Brexit, Trump, Ukraine? Some familiar names, some unfamiliar ones... What are the motives and goals? let us go to consult the sources.





Context





Context



The Problem





There is a growing concern that much of this criticism could also be applied to the NLP community. There is a real danger that the court of public opinion may not view our work on Risks 1.0 as part of the solution and might even see our work as part of the problem. We need to make progress on both Risks 1.0 as well as Risks 2.0.

The books mentioned above (Fisher 2022; Bergen 2022) have quite a bit to say about Risks 2.0. Many academics are mentioned (e.g., Chaslot, DiResta, Farid, Kaiser, Müller, Rauchfleisch, Schwarz), but there is relatively little discussion of our toxicity classifiers. Our classifiers may not have the impact we would hope because there are few incentives for social media companies to reduce toxicity, as will be discussed in Section 6.

tribute to those other fields. There is quite a bit of work in computer science, we will not attempt to con-Risks 1.0 (bias and fairness), but more work is needed, especially on Risks 2.0 (addictive, dangerous, and deadly).



2. COURAGE Project

COURAGE Project





COURAGE:



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Motivation: Internet Use per Country



- Overall 76% of EU citizens use the Internet daily and further
 9% use it often or sometimes
- **Smartphones** are the main means of accessing the Internet (European Commission, 2020)

Motivation: Internet Use in EU by Age



- Using online social networks is the most mentioned activity in six countries of the EU
- Overall, using online social networks is one of the three most mentioned activities in 17 countries (European Commission, 2020)



Motivation: Downsides of Social Media

78% of German Internet users aged 14-24 were already confronted with cyberbullying on social media (Newall, 2018)

Users are confronted with **racism** and **discrimination** on social media (Wang et al., 2021)

81% already dealt with hate comments (forsa, 2022)

cyberbullying and cyberhate impact on adolescents' well-being and emotions (Fulantelli et al., 2022)



Motivation: Consequences of Engaging with Toxic Content

Somatic complaints (Herge et al., 2016)

Depressive symptoms (Ybarra et al., 2011)

Suicidal symptoms (Zaborskis et al., 2018)

Emotional problems (Wigderson & Lynch, 2013)

Poorer academic performance (Wigderson & Lynch, 2013)

Less innovation, less creativity (Wigderson & Lynch, 2013)

Post-traumatic stress symptoms (Baldry et al., 2019)



Some more Facts

- 91% of 16-24 year olds use the Internet for social networking
- But: inability to deal with threats and biases (e.g. 80% believe sponsored content) [Wineburg et al., 2016; Horowitz, 2018]
- Social media literacy skills (SML) can improve users' experience in social media platforms
- The inclusion of SML interventions in schools can lead to social media-literate individuals that feel in control

Wei, L., Gong, J., Xu, J., Eeza Zainal Abidin, N., & Destiny Apuke, O. (2023). Do social media literacy skills help in combating fake news spread? Modelling the moderating role of social media literacy skills in the relationship between rational choice factors and fake news sharing behaviour. [2] Paxton, S. J., McLean, S. A., & Rodgers, R. F. (2022). "My critical filter buffers your app filter": Social media literacy as a protective factor for body image. [3] Tamplin, N. C., McLean, S. A., & Paxton, S. J. (2018). Social media literacy protects against the negative impact of exposure to appearance ideal social media images in young adult women but not men. [4] Mingoia, J., Hutchinson, A. D., Gleaves, D. H., & Wilson, C. (2019). The impact of a social media literacy intervention on positive attitudes to tanning: A pilot study. Computers in Human Behavior, 90, 188–195 [5] Schreurs, L., & Vandenbosch, L. (2022). Should I post my very best self? The within-person reciprocal associations between social media literacy, positivity-biased behaviors and adolescents' self-esteem. Telematics and Informatics, 73



What is Needed?





3. Educational Approach



Approach of COURAGE: Educational Interventions

The **COURAGE project** seeks to develop social media interventions that provide students with **hands-on experiences** to learn about the threats and dangers that can exist within such environments.

COURAGE proposes integrating educational opportunities within a **simulated social media platform**.

Virtual learning companions (VLCs) transfer learning with the help of computersimulated characters through interactive chat interface (Chou et al., 2003).

To achieve this, we explored the use of VLCs that allow users to interact directly with social media scenarios and receive immediate support, rather than teaching them in isolation from dangerous situations.



Approach of COURAGE: Educational Interventions II

- COURAGE aims at **empowering adolescents** to confidently interact and utilize social media (addressing how to deal with **misinformation** as one aspect).
- A multi-disciplinary approach building on psychology and pedagogy combined with data science and AI-driven approaches
- Building on Intelligent Tutoring Systems: Virtual Learning Companion enabling learning and interaction support with the aim to raise awareness and resilience on the part of the learners



Approach of COURAGE: Educational Interventions III

- Used in classrooms and informal settings providing a playful, adaptive and engaging setting
- Adolescents interact with a social media environment under restrictions of pedagogical responsibility and guidance
- Example component: narrative scripts implementing a collaborative learning flow pattern to raise learners' awareness and teach competencies







4. Examples

'Fake or Fact': Fake Image Detection

- Pilot study: aggregated distance of users (N = 22) to expert judgements goes down (before/after VLC interaction)
- Access to alternative sources containing the same image supports correct judgement (RIS)

Aprin et al. (2021). Is This Fake or Credible? A Virtual Learning Companion Supporting the Judgment of Young Learners Facing Social Media Content

Narrative Scripts

Narrative Scripts II

- Results for N = 125 show that narrative scripts generate intrinsic motivation, especially in interest and enjoyment (M = 4.41, SD = 1.25)
- Low perceived pressure/tension (M = 2.52, SD = 1.21)

Lobo Quintero et al. (2022). Analyzing the intrinsic motivation in narrative scripts to enhance social media awareness.

Augmenting Social Media

- Crawling new data from Twitter using Twitter API
- Analyzing crawled social media content with COURAGE API
- Providing analysis results in the social media feed

Augmenting Social Media II

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Augmenting Social Media III

5. Future Directions

Experimental Work

- School trials in Italy and Spain
- Crowdsourcing experiments (using Prolific)
- Explore **nudging and boosting** more systematically

Nudging & Boosting

Behavioural Economics

- Heuristics and biases \rightarrow Nudging
- Adaptive rationality \rightarrow Boosting

	MEDICAL QUESTION 2: Does traction help low back pain? HEALTH ISSUE: back pain - The spine is a column of bones (vertebrae) held together by muscles, tendons and ligaments and cushioned by shock-absorbing disks. A problem in any part of your spine can cause back pain. Source: Mayo Clinic TREATMENT: traction - a pulling force exerted on a skeletal structure (as in a fracture) by means of a special device Source: Merriam-Webster You can click on links below	<u>hejoful</u> : The medical treatment helps if the treatment is effective and has a direct positive influence on the specified illness. <u>inconclusive</u> : The effectiveness of a medical treatment is inconclusive if medical professionals are still unsure if the treatment will have a positive, negative or no influence on the specified illness. <u>does not help</u> : The medical treatment does not help if the treatment is ineffective and either has no effect or has a direct negative influence on the specified illness.			
Privacy risk where Red = High privacy risk Yellow = Medium privacy risk Green = Low privacy risk	Make Decision				
	24 results returned.				
	Lumbar Traction Offers No Benefit for Back Pain https://www.verywellhealth.com/ Does Traction Really Work for Low Back Pain? A study confirms that using lumbar tracti exercise for low back pain does not offer improved outcomes when compared to physical organizes along	Out of 100 websites medical issues in a s	Out of 100 websites visited for health & medical issues in a search engine:		
	O Does Spinal Decompression Really Work in Treating Low Ba	ck Pain? How many out of 10	0: .gov/.or website	g other s website	
	A Questionable Treatment Spinal decompression may help treat low back pain, but this treatment isn't a sure thing. Advertising for spinal decompression targets people with	popular Benefits			
	Generative disc disease, bulging discs, herniated discs, or spinal stenosis. Traction Therapy for Chronic Low Back Pain	will share your data wi 3rd party companies?	th ≤ 2 59	14	
	http://www.barclayphysicaltherapy.com/ The cost of health care is rising every year in the United States. And part of that econor is the management of chronic low back pain (CLBP).	mic burden Harms			
	P Traction for Low Back Pain With or Without Sciatica: An Upd Systematic Review Within the Framework of the Cochrane Collaboration	will share your data wi 3rd party companies?	th ≥ 8 11	33	
	https://www.researchgate.net/ Systematic review. To determine if traction is more effective than reference treatments placebo/sham traction, or no treatment for low back pain (LBP).				

Nudge vs. Boost

- Nudge: "A nudge, as we will use the term, is any aspect of the choice architecture that alters people's behavior in a predictable way without forbidding any options or significantly changing their economic incentives. To count as a mere nudge, the intervention must be easy and cheap to avoid." Thaler and Sunstein 2008
- Boost: "Goal of expanding (boosting) the decision maker's set of competences and thus helping them to reach their objectives" Grüne-Yanoff and Hertwig 2016

Nudge vs. Boost

- Nudges apply libertarian paternalism for desired outcomes
- **Example:** in the UK there is no need to pay pension contributions but default is that you do, i.e. opt-out (similar example: opt-in vs. opt-out of organ donation)
- **Key point:** Low cost but problems returns after removal of Nudge

Nudge vs. Boost

- **Boosts foster competencies** to produce desirable outcomes
- Example: vary sense of connection to future self, e.g.:
 - ► Your current pension contribution → No trips abroad during retirement
 - Increase your pension by $X \rightarrow 2$ trips abroad per year during retirement
- **Key point:** Higher cost but competencies remain after removal of Boost

How does it fit COURAGE?

- Boosts a particularly promising paradigm to strengthen online users' competencies and counteract the challenges of the digital world
- Seems the perfect scenario for addressing misinformation and false information, manipulative choice architectures etc.
- Educating the online users (i.e. teenagers) rather than imposing rules, restrictions or suggestions on them

Boosting and Nudging in COURAGE:Universität Regensburg Some Research Questions

- **Compared to a control environment**, to what extent are (**boosting / nudging**) effective at increasing consumption of correct information?
- Compared to a control environment, what impacts do (boosting / nudging) have on the teaching media competencies?
- To what extent are the **claims about boosting compared to nudging** evident in our scenario?

How do we test this?

- Between-group user studies using Latin square design
- Expose users to different systems (e.g. nudge vs. baseline/control) in a task-based evaluation
- Check for differences, e.g. by testing competencies (at different time intervals)

6. Conclusions

- Misinformation comes in many shapes and colours
- The problem is here to stay (only getting worse)
- One way of addressing this: detection, filtering, labelling ... (main focus of ROMCIR for the rest of the day)
- Different (*complementary*) approach: live with it, deal with it (analogy: bias in LLMs)
- That requires a multidisciplinary team (expertise in NLP, ML, education, design ...)
- I took a high-level view on the second approach

Some References to COURAGE

frontiers Frontiers in Artificial Intelligence

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Check for updates

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REVIEWED BY Chien-Sing Lee, Sunway University, Malaysia Li Liu, Chongqing University, China Jorge Luis Bacca Acosta, Konrad Lorenz University Foundation, Colombia

*CORRESPONDENCE
Dimitri Ognibene
🖾 dimitri.ognibene@unimib.it
Davide Taibi
🖂 davide.taibi@itd.cnr.it

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Dimitri Ognibene^{1,2*}, Rodrigo Wilkens³, Davide Taibi^{4*}, Davinia Hernández-Leo⁵, Udo Kruschwitz⁶, Gregor Donabauer⁶, Emily Theophilou⁵, Francesco Lomonaco¹, Sathya Bursic¹ Dene Aleiandro Lobo⁵

J. Roberto Sánchez-Reina⁵, Lidia Johanna Börsting⁷, Ulrich Hoppe⁸ Nils Malzahn⁸ and Sabrina Eimler⁷

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SCHWERPUNKTBEITRAG

Moving Beyond Benchmarks and Competitions: Towards Addressing Social Media Challenges in an Educational Context

Dimitri Ognibene¹ · Gregor Donabauer^{1,2} · Emily Theophilou³ · Sathya Buršić¹ · Francesco Lomonaco¹ · Rodrigo Wilkens⁴ · Davinia Hernández-Leo³ · Udo Kruschwitz²

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Applying Nudging / Boosting to Search

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Sample Resources

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Thanks ...

Egypt

Egypt to fine creators of weather misinformation

Egypt Independent • April 1, 2023

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