

Review

Misinformation and Its Impact on Contested Policy Issues: The Example of Migration Discourses

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Abstract: Misinformation, in the form of false or inaccurate information deliberately created and spread through various channels, including social media, has become pervasive in the context of migration. An analysis of 45,000 English tweets revealed a wide range of attitudes towards migrants, including the presence of misinformation, concerns, and positive and negative attitudes. This study acknowledges the negative effects of misinformation, such as the formation of preconditions that promote false representations of migrants, foster negative attitudes, and consolidate prejudices against them. Misinformation also leads to mistrust among migrants towards official authorities and creates an environment conducive to exploitation by smugglers and traffickers. To address these issues, this study suggests corrective measures, including raising awareness, promoting evidence-based reasoning, and facilitating diverse forms of interpersonal dialogue.

Keywords: migration; misinformation; contested policy



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1. Introduction

In this study, we aim to analyze the current migration-related discussions on Twitter, highlighting the presence of a substantial volume of misinformation. Our objective is then to propose and discuss corrective measures to address the issue of migration-related misinformation. The term misinformation relates to any kind of false or inaccurate information created deliberately and spread with or without intent [1]. In contrast, disinformation is created with the conscious intention of deceiving, generating harm, or impacting various social groups [2,3]. As such, disinformation will not be addressed in this contribution, which will focus on misinformation only. Misinformation, which can include fake news, rumors, and the misinterpretation of facts, can be disseminated by known brands, by fake news sites, and by the means of manipulated or parody content [1,4–7]. According to [1], misinformation is often connected with tweaking or twisting information instead of fabricating it entirely, often recurring to the misinterpretation of facts or scientific evidence. The ambiguity and uncertainty surrounding the situation described, but also a lack of or the excessive availability of data or controversies in the interpretation of existing information, are all contributing factors towards misinformation.

Influenced by social and cultural factors, Ref. [8], as well as individual factors, such as various cognitive and behavioral biases, including risk perceptions [9,10], misinformation is a part of human reasoning and has existed for a very long time [11]. What is distinctive of current times is the speed and potentially universal outreach of this misinformation, thanks to technical innovations and available technologies. Anyone with access to the internet can fabricate, disseminate, receive, and further disseminate content that can reach millions of people within seconds. Depending on the topic, posts containing misinformation tend to spread faster than information, often reaching 87% of the total posts [12,13]. However, it is important to note that the share of misinformation can significantly vary depending on

the topic and even within sub-topics. For example, health-related studies have indicated that different sub-topics and social media platforms exhibit different proportions of misinformation, with the proportion of health misinformation on social media varying from 0.2% to 28.8% [14]. For policymakers, conducting thorough analyses becomes essential to identifying which social media platforms and specific topics or sub-topics require focused interventions. Audiences tend to spread misinformation simply because of a lack of awareness about the existence of manipulated content or its negative impacts [15], while the essential drivers remain a lack of willingness to search for alternative information and the human tendency to select information that confirms existing beliefs or worldviews [16,17]. A willingness to attract attention or because of boredom also act as contributing factors towards spreading misinformation [18].

2. Misinformation and Migration

Migration is a topic that is increasingly polarizing public opinion. Exemplary of the social, economic, and cultural transformations brought about by globalization, the debate about migration has progressively moved towards the terrain of identity, religion, culture, and social group relations, triggering emotional reactions in target audiences often linked to political projects focused on the protection of national values, traditions, and ways of life. Especially in recent years, concerns and fears about migrants' presence in host communities have been increasingly amplified, consolidating misinformation about migrants and toxic narratives about "us" versus "them". The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the debate, since it has strengthened anti-immigration positions [19,20]. Although scapegoating migrants is not a new phenomenon, particularly in times of economic downturn, the power of new technologies and social media to multiply the producers and users of information amplifies this twisted content and accelerates the dissemination of misinformation.

Prejudice and misinformation regarding migration are related problems that frequently coexist. While preexisting bias might contribute to the spread of misinformation, the distribution of inaccurate or deceptive information regarding migration can encourage prejudice and discriminatory attitudes against migrants. The portrayal of migrants as criminals or a threat to public safety is a typical form of inaccurate information about migration. This myth is frequently supported by sensationalist media coverage that highlights isolated, immigrant-related occurrences, while downplaying the numerous beneficial contributions immigrants make to society. Such false information can encourage anti-immigrant prejudice and result in discriminatory tactics and policies.

The idea that immigrants lower salaries or take employment away from native-born employees is another example of false information. Several studies have disproved this fallacy, showing that migration may actually spur economic growth and open up new job opportunities for all employees. The continuation of this false information, however, can fuel hostility toward immigrants and support for tight immigration laws. Misinformation about the causes of migration may also spread as a result of prejudice. For instance, it is possible for migrants to be accused of leaving their home countries because of poverty, violence, or persecution, when, in reality, these factors are frequently what drove them to go. The need for international cooperation to address the root causes of migration can be obscured by this false information.

Regardless of its authenticity, audiences tend to consume and recall information that is already in line with their existing beliefs and personal experiences, making emotionally charged topics such as migration more difficult to communicate in a balanced and effective way. Expressed through dehumanizing and fear-stoking language, migration is often referred to as a poison to society or described using meteorological metaphors with the aim of amplifying feelings of anxiety and fear [21,22]. Refugees and migrants are often referred to as "pouring or flooding in", "tsunamis", "waves and tides of migrants", places "swamped by migrants", or similar. Additionally, public debate offers a fertile ground for the flourishing of misinformation. Due to the narrowing of the political divergence of

long-established parties, public debate has been progressively emptied of real alternatives and the capacity to mobilize electorates towards one vision or the other. Therefore, the often-ambiguous political debate about economic and social policies increasingly appeals to the “us” versus “them” messages, often twisting and tweaking evidence-based information.

The following case studies clearly and vividly illustrate the negative consequences that misinformation in the field of migration can lead to.

The Rohingya crisis in Myanmar is an example of how misinformation can fuel violence and persecution against a particular ethnic group [23,24]. False narratives and rumors spread through social media platforms, portraying the Rohingya Muslim minority as terrorists and illegal immigrants. This misinformation contributed to the escalation of violence, forced displacements, and the mass migration of Rohingya refugees to neighboring countries such as Bangladesh.

The European migrant crisis, particularly in 2015, witnessed the spread of misinformation that shaped public opinion and influenced migration policies [25,26]. Misleading information about the scale and characteristics of the migrants entering Europe created fear, xenophobia, and anti-immigrant sentiments among the public. This misinformation impacted the reception and treatment of migrants, leading to policy changes, border control measures, and shifts in the public discourse on immigration.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also witnessed the dissemination of misinformation targeting migrant communities [27,28]. False information linking migrants to the spread of the virus, stigmatizing them as carriers of disease, has resulted in discrimination, social exclusion, and even violence against migrants in various countries. This misinformation has had implications for public health, community cohesion, and the treatment of vulnerable migrant populations.

3. Why It Is Important to Deal with Migration

Policymaking—including in the area of migration governance and the socioeconomic integration of migrants—relies on the engagement of an electorate. Ideally, policymakers and the electorate should be able to adjust their views according to evidence-based information about the outcomes of different policy choices. Misinformation about migration forms preconditions, a false representation of a given topic [29,30].

A biased perception of migration as a phenomenon that cannot be governed can prevent a more level-headed discussion on suitable policy approaches that can harness the contribution of migrants to host communities. One of the consequences would be that more voters might find appeal in politicians with partial, if not extreme, views on migration governance, creating a vicious cycle of ever-increasing political panic and ad hoc actions. Such a political climate is a trigger towards increasing social divisions up to turf battles. In its analysis of the social media messaging about migration, the anti-migration narrative is not so much about migration itself, but rather about leveraging migration discourse as a way of deviating attention from long-term structural, social, and economic challenges [31].

Differing viewpoints on migration governance elicit certain political parties to advocate for enhanced and stronger measures in origin countries. These parties propose the implementation of theoretical or less effective strategies and agreements with local governments. However, it is imperative to undertake a critical examination of the potential impact of these agreements on human rights. The effectiveness of such measures can vary, prompting scrutiny regarding their consequences for fundamental human rights. Achieving a delicate balance between migration governance and the preservation of human rights presents a multifaceted and persistent challenge that necessitates meticulous deliberation. Striving for a harmonious equilibrium that addresses migration challenges while upholding human rights standards remains an ongoing and intricate dilemma.

Formulating migration policies is therefore not only a technical question based on economic evidence. While the desire of political communities to regulate migration is legitimate, it is unfortunate that modern migration scholarship often does not reach the broader public due to simplistic messages and misinformation. The consequences are

particularly felt at the level of policymaking, especially when immigration rules are at odds with the structural causes of migration. Classic examples are structural labor demand for migrant workers in destination countries without legal channels to match this demand—resulting in increasing irregular migration and stay—or the unwillingness of countries to host refugees—resulting in an increased role of smuggling and boat migration and the risks refugees have to take to reach safe lands.

Therefore, there is a strong need for the public to understand how different policy choices can generate positive or negative socioeconomic effects, who they are beneficial to, and in what way their idea of community and society could be affected. Undoubtedly, misinformation has an impact throughout the migration cycle: in countries of origin—this is often through depicting destination societies as a mythical or idealized place of great wealth, prosperity, and opportunity, “Eldorado”—a destination that holds the promise of a better life, attracting individuals seeking improved living conditions, economic prospects, or social stability, giving false hope or unrealistic expectations [8]; in circumventing immigration rules that often ignore the complex reality of migration policymaking [32]; in fostering or hampering the socioeconomic inclusion of migrants in host communities [33]; and in the social rejection that often surrounds the return of migrants to their countries of origin—when migrants return to their countries of origin, they may encounter difficulties in reintegrating into their communities due to stigmatization, cultural readjustment, economic difficulties, and limited social support networks. The complexity of analyzing misinformation about migration lies in the frequent involvement of multiple languages, representation forms, and communication, which may be unfamiliar or not fully understandable to its recipients [34].

Corrective measures are essential to addressing the pervasive issue of misinformation surrounding migration [35]. Policymaking, public opinion, and societal attitudes towards migration should be shaped by accurate information and evidence-based knowledge.

Addressing misinformation and promoting accurate information about migration are crucial for several reasons. Firstly, this ensures that policymakers and the public have access to reliable data and evidence-based knowledge [36]. By basing policy decisions and public opinions on accurate information, more effective and informed strategies can be developed to govern migration and promote the socioeconomic integration of migrants.

Secondly, countering misinformation helps to prevent the formation of biased and prejudiced attitudes towards migration [37]. Misinformation often perpetuates stereotypes, fosters fear, and fuels negative perceptions of migrants. By promoting accurate information, societies can cultivate a more balanced and nuanced understanding of the contributions and challenges associated with migration, leading to a more inclusive and tolerant environment.

Thirdly, addressing misinformation fosters transparent and inclusive policymaking processes. When the public is well-informed about migration issues, they can actively engage in discussions and contribute to decision making. An inclusive dialogue ensures that diverse perspectives are heard, leading to policies that better reflect the needs and aspirations of communities. Additionally, it helps to build trust between policymakers and the electorate, enhancing the legitimacy and acceptance of migration policies.

Furthermore, countering misinformation contributes to the protection of human rights [38]. Misinformation can perpetuate harmful narratives that undermine the rights and dignity of migrants, exacerbating social exclusion and discrimination. By promoting accurate information, societies can uphold human rights standards, advocate for the fair treatment of migrants, and create conditions for their successful integration into host communities.

Moreover, addressing misinformation fosters social cohesion and reduces the potential for social divisions [39]. Misinformation can create divisions and tensions within societies, leading to polarized debates and the rise of extremist views. By promoting accurate information and encouraging dialogue, societies can bridge ideological gaps, promote understanding, and work towards shared solutions that benefit all members of society.

Lastly, addressing misinformation recognizes the importance of media literacy and critical thinking skills [40]. In an era of information overload, equipping individuals with the ability to discern reliable sources, evaluate information critically, and identify misinformation is essential. Media literacy empowers individuals to make informed judgments, engage in constructive discussions, and become active participants in shaping public opinion and policy discourse.

4. Data and Methodology

For the analysis of the current migration-related discussion, we collected a dataset of 45,000 recent English tweets, as of 20 April 2023, utilizing the Twitter Academic API. The dataset was obtained as a snapshot to supplement our analysis. We focused our data collection on tweets containing the keywords “migrant”, “migrants”, and “migration”.

To delve deeper into the prevailing sentiments and dominant topics in the discourse, we employed both a sentiment analysis and topical analysis on the collected tweets. For the sentiment analysis, we leveraged the powerful Microsoft Azure Machine Learning tool. This tool allowed us to determine the overall sentiment of each tweet, categorizing it as positive, negative, or neutral. The sentiment analysis ranked the tweets on a scale ranging from 0 to 1, where 0 represented an extremely negative sentiment and 1 indicated an extremely positive sentiment.

In terms of the topical analysis, we conducted an examination of the 30 most frequently mentioned words that held distinct meaning, while excluding common articles and other insignificant words. Additionally, we analyzed the top 10 liked and top 10 retweeted tweets. This comprehensive analysis provided us with valuable insights into the significant topics dominating the discussion and enabled us to identify the potential areas where corrective measures could be implemented.

We acknowledge that recent tweets offer a more accurate reflection of the current discourse; thus, the information derived from this analysis could be particularly useful for policymakers seeking up-to-date insights.

5. Results

Before delving into corrective measures, we first examined the discourse surrounding migration on Twitter. Table 1 summarizes the most frequent words. The most frequently used words in the migration discussion on Twitter were “European”, “illegal”, “ignore”, “bill”, “new”, “judges”, “UK”, “Braverman”, “pact”, and “know”. These words suggest that the discussion on migration is largely centered on European countries and their policies on illegal migration. The use of the word “illegal” suggests a negative connotation towards migration and highlights concerns over illegal immigration. The presence of words such as “judges”, “bill”, and “parliament” indicates that there is a legal aspect to the migration discourse on Twitter, with discussions surrounding legislation, policy, and decision making. The frequent use of the word “new” suggests that new policies or events related to migration are being discussed. Other notable words included “Yemen”, “Tigrayan”, and “Saudi”, which indicate a focus on specific countries and regions experiencing conflict or political turmoil. The use of words such as “refugees” and “unaccompanied” highlights concerns over the welfare and protection of vulnerable individuals during migration. Overall, the most frequently used words in the migration discussion on Twitter suggest a complex and nuanced conversation surrounding policy, legislation, legal decisions, and the welfare of the individuals involved in migration.

In Figure 1, the sentiment scores for the extracted tweets are summarized. The median sentiment score of approximately 0.60 suggests that the overall sentiment towards migration on Twitter was positive. The interquartile range, ranging from 0.40 to 0.75, indicates that in the 50% of tweets some tweets expressed a slightly negative sentiment towards migration, while some tweets expressed a moderately positive sentiment towards migration. These results suggest that there was a range of sentiments expressed towards migration on Twitter, with a slightly positive to moderately positive sentiment prevailing overall. In

total, 30.05% of the analyzed tweets were negative, 23.06% neutral, and 46.88% positive. Further analysis could provide more insight into the reasons behind these sentiments and how they are distributed among different user groups or geographical regions.

Table 1. Thirty most frequent words in the migration discourse on Twitter.

Word	Frequency
European	5560
Illegal	4584
Ignore	4179
Bill	3963
New	3702
Judges	3596
UK	3523
Braverman	3404
Pact	3381
Know	3355
Yemen	3282
Parliament	3247
Voted	3137
Labor	3019
EU's	2938
EU	2588
Suella	2447
Child	2432
Government	2153
Time	2081
Powers	1988
Tigrayan	1968
People	1825
Refugees	1814
Unaccompanied	1811
Law	1800
International	1776
Saudi	1764
Support	1761
Horrified	1752

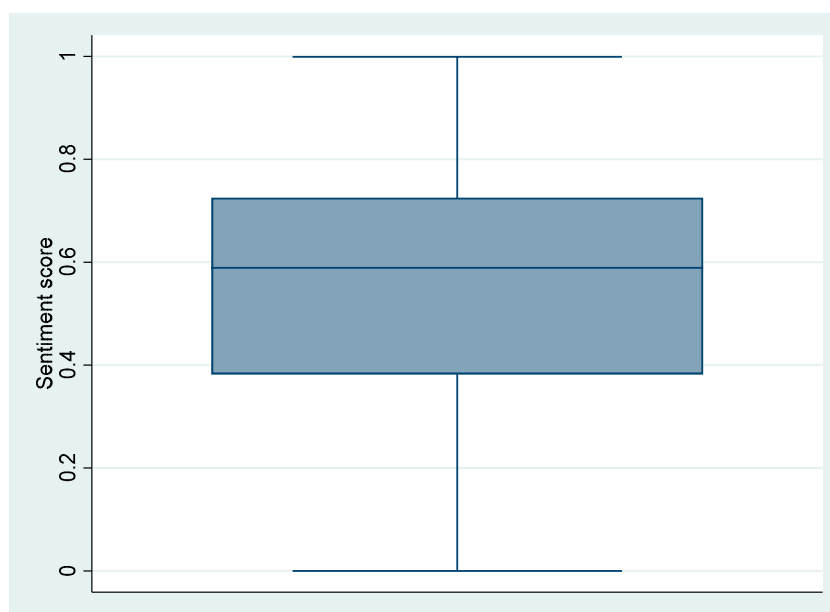


Figure 1. Box plot for the sentiment analysis of migration discourse on Twitter.

In our analysis of the collected tweets, we identified a total of 42,234 unique words and estimated the sentiment and frequency for each of them. Our findings indicate a negative and highly significant correlation (<0.01) between the sentiment and frequency of the words used. This suggests that negative words were used more frequently.

Table 2 lists 10 most liked tweets. The 10 most frequently liked tweets about migration on Twitter highlight several important topics related to this issue. One topic discussed was the treatment of migrants in the legal system. There were concerns regarding judges no longer being able to block migrant deportation flights and ministers overriding the rule of law. Another topic discussed was the role of the European Union in migration policy. The EU's Migration Pact was criticized in several tweets, with concerns that it takes away sovereignty from member states and gives too much power to the European Commission. Undocumented migrants were also a topic of discussion, with questions raised about why they are escorted to UK territory instead of being turned away. Finally, the issue of missing migrant children was a topic of concern, with tweets criticizing the lack of media attention on this issue. Overall, these tweets reveal that there were various important topics surrounding migration that Twitter users were passionate about, including the treatment of migrants in the legal system, EU migration policy, the welfare of undocumented migrants, and missing migrant children.

Table 2. Tweets with the highest number of likes.

Tweet	Number of Likes
Judges will no longer be able to block migrant deportation flights. What is your reaction?	4837
They are intent on destroying the international legal order. And we know where that leads. This is not the first time in history that dangerous hubris has infected a powerful country. It must be stopped. Ignorance is no excuse.	3557
You can't just turn up at a British airport and walk into the UK without first showing your passport and successfully passing through Customs. So why are undocumented migrants many of whom have chucked their passports away escorted to our territory when they should be turned away?	2427
Ministers overriding the rule of law is not a good look.	2084
Suella Braverman set to get powers to ignore European judges. Reminiscent of the 1933 Enabling Act. These are very dangerous times.	1897
BREAKING: The European Parliament just voted in support of the EU's new Migration Pact. It will take away national sovereignty from member states & allow the European Commission to allocate any size of "mandatory migrant relocation quotas" for all states	1359
85,000 missing migrant children . . . due in large part to open borders and a purposefully overwhelmed system. Where's the media outrage? Asking Biden what flavor of ice cream he chose today? It's time for change. It's time for accountability. It's time for security.	1355
BREAKING: The European Parliament just voted in support of the EU's new Migration Pact. It will take away national sovereignty from member states & allow the European Commission to allocate any size of "mandatory migrant relocation quotas" for all states	1285

Table 2. *Cont.*

Tweet	Number of Likes
EU—MIGRATION PACT The European Parliament has voted FOR the EU’s Migration Pact. This takes away sovereignty from countries & gives the EU commission the authority to demand “mandatory migrant relocation quotas” per country. Citizens had no voice.	1231
NEW: Rep. Chip Roy loses it on Democrats for disregarding the 85,000 ‘missing’ illegal alien children that the Biden admin says can no longer be located in the US. “Where’s the media outrage? Asking Biden what flavor of ice cream he chose today?”	1177

Table 3 summarizes the most frequently retweeted tweets. The 10 most frequently retweeted tweets about migration on Twitter covered a variety of topics. Some of the tweets discussed specific incidents involving migrants attempting to cross borders, such as the large migrant caravan that crossed illegally into El Paso, TX, and the group of migrants who attempted to rush a port of entry in Juarez, MX. Other tweets focused on the treatment of migrants, including a tweet about a group of Mexican women who help feed Central American migrants crossing the border and a tweet condemning a bill that is meant to legalize unaccompanied migrant child labor. Several of the tweets involved political figures, including a tweet about a British politician’s statement that the British people support the government’s Illegal Migration Bill and a tweet criticizing a politician’s stance on migration despite being the child of immigrants. One tweet related to a specific community, with a warning about a group of Kashmiri Muslims allegedly soliciting donations under false pretenses. Finally, one tweet discussed the treatment of migrant laborers in India and called attention to the failures of the Indian government in providing proper transportation. Overall, the tweets covered a range of topics related to migration, including specific incidents, political discussions, and human rights issues.

Table 3. Tweets with the highest number of retweets.

Tweet	Number of Retweets
I learned about las patronas today. they’re a group of mexican women who help feed central american migrants crossing the border. solidarity to these powerful women	76,819
BREAKING: A huge migrant caravan of over 1000 people crossed illegally into El Paso, TX last night, making it the largest single group we have ever seen. The city of El Paso reports Border Patrol now has over 5000 in custody & has released hundreds to city streets.	28,499
BREAKING: 9 Month Investigation Into @HHSGov Whistleblower Child Trafficking Evidence Reveals ‘Sponsor’ of 16 Year Old Unaccompanied Migrant Would “Pimp” Her to Men to Repay \$10,000+ “Debt” for Getting Across Border	18,597
950,000 views The British people back the Governments (Illegal Migration) bill” says @SuellaBraverman Help RT this to a million if you think she’s wrong	15,984
“The British people back the Governments (Illegal Migration) bill” @SuellaBraverman has told Parliament. RT this if you think she’s wrong	14,464

Table 3. Cont.

Tweet	Number of Retweets
Another video from our contact. We're told some crowd control measures were used (unclear which side of border), and a chunk of the group was repelled, and is now gathering at another smaller bridge, while some are trying to cross in the river. Waiting for more details from CBP.	8458
Suella Braverman's parents emigrated (those horrible economic migrants not from a war zone she hates). She went to Cambridge for free and didn't collect £27k debt like everyone else. Scrounger. She used the Erasmus scheme to study in France. Which she has blocked. Horrible.	5308
Please know that this bill is meant to legalize unaccompanied migrant child labor. Do not be fooled, be horrified.	5020
Alert 🚨 Kashmiri Muslims caught in Delhi asking for donations under the name of 'Help for Kashmiri Pandit migrants'; Local residents of karala village caught them red handed.	4175
2 years ago, in the month of April, the Indian BJP government failed to provide proper transportation to the migrant labourers & they had to walk 100 s of miles. Don't forget the blunders & atrocities that this government has done. MigrantLabourers	3015

6. Discussion

The topics and patterns identified in the analyzed tweets largely confirm the existing literature on social media migration discourse. Numerous studies in the field have explored migration-related discussions on platforms such as Twitter, providing valuable insights into various aspects of this discourse.

A common thread in these studies is the examination of specific topics within migration discourse. For example, researchers have focused on the portrayal of particular migrant groups [41] or regions experiencing conflict and political turmoil [42]. These studies align with the findings of the analyzed tweets, which also highlighted discussions around countries and regions such as Yemen and Tigray, emphasizing the relevance of these regions in migration conversations.

The sentiment analysis conducted in this paper aligns with similar studies that have explored the sentiments expressed in migration-related tweets. It is notable that the overall sentiment towards migration on Twitter appeared to be positive, while acknowledging a degree of uncertainty. This finding corroborates existing research that has identified a range of sentiments expressed on social media platforms, encompassing both positive and negative views towards migration [43–45]. However, further investigations are necessary to delve into the distribution of these sentiments across different user groups and geographical regions.

Moreover, the paper's examination of the most liked and retweeted tweets reflects a recurring theme in the literature. Other studies have also identified highly engaging tweets that address critical topics in migration discourse [43,46,47].

Research investigating migration discourse on social media has examined the spread of false narratives, rumors, and stereotypes, shedding light on their potential impact on public perception and policy debates [48–50].

The analysis of the topics and sentiments discussed about migration reveals a wide range of attitudes towards migrants, including the presence of misinformation, concerns, and positive and negative attitudes, emphasizing the need for effective corrective measures. In the following, we present a detailed discussion of the corrective measures identified in

the framework of a contribution to the Global Digital Compact [51], which encompasses education, awareness, fact checking, and code of conduct.

A well-functioning democratic society does not necessarily need to be guided by fully informed citizens, but an environment rife with misinformation can easily derail this democracy [52]. While challenging misinformation remains a complex, multifaceted, and multilayered task, a heterogeneity of corrective actions is more likely to achieve the expected result, in order to convey nuanced and evidence-based messages [53]. To increase their effectiveness, corrective measures should address both individual and contextual factors that foster misinformation [54], combining different strategies. This contribution offers a selection of corrective actions, according to the following approaches:

Raising awareness (content-based): In an attempt to highlight the inconsistencies of misinformed content, counter-narratives tend to respond directly, trying to delegitimize it. This approach is very likely to backfire. Instead of promoting narratives that tend to frame migrants as a positive product to be “sold to an unconvinced audience” [55], more effective, alternative narratives do not simply deconstruct a discourse, but build a completely new representation of the world, providing alternative keys for interpreting a phenomenon, with the aim of introducing long-term changes [56]. To do so, it may be more fruitful to pursue messages that explore identity, sense of belonging, and focus on broader intrinsic values such as community, love, unity, and friendship, rather than being solely issue-focused. Such messages are needed to enable access to a much wider spectrum of content beyond people’s direct opinion on the topic. In doing so, it is important to make alternative social systems appear visible and real, through hope-based messages;

Raising awareness (formats): To resonate in the current media environment, corrective actions should target different media sources and channels [57–59]. Addressing false information regarding migration necessitates a diverse strategy that makes use of a range of media outlets.

The public is largely informed about migration issues through traditional news outlets such newspapers, television news programs, and news websites. In order to help their readers comprehend difficult subjects, news organizations have a duty to report on migration in a fair and truthful manner. Social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, have become major sources of information for many people.

Together with publication in traditional media about reliable sources of information or the publication of media reports about sources of misinformation [60–63], popular culture is proving to be effective. Engaging films, TV shows, and games can transport people to alternative visions and help to expand the sense of the possible towards a much-needed change [64].

Local community organizations that assist migrants and refugees can be quite effective in eradicating myths about migration. They can collaborate with local media to provide factual information about migration concerns and offer workshops and training sessions to educate their members about the reality of migration. Academics can conduct insightful studies and analyses on topics related to migration. They can speak to the media to offer knowledgeable opinions on migration issues, as well as publish papers and reports that offer in-depth examinations of migration policy and trends. Organizations that assist refugees and migrants can offer important knowledge and viewpoints on the realities of migration. They can utilize their websites and social media platforms to share migrant experiences, offer information and analyses on migration trends, and dispel rumors and false information.

Different discussion forums should be provided for those who prefer inter-personal communication, either physically or through online formats, combining these events with info-points and information services [65,66].

Exposure to fact-checks: Statistical and scientific articles can help in offering arguments to counterbalance misinformation about migration. In this case, it is essential to refer to a trusted source of information: the neutrality of the message, legal mandate, and a

professional appearance, which includes the accuracy of the presentation and writing style, paired with institutional capacity.

Trusted sources of information such as Wikipedia can be also used [67]. It is one of the most popular online information sources and is offered in a variety of languages. Wikipedia is a useful tool in the fight against false information because of its collaborative nature, especially when it comes to migration. Wikipedia enables the gathering and dissemination of data from a wide range of sources, which is one of its advantages. This implies that knowledge about migration can come from professionals, academics, and researchers all across the world. Furthermore, it implies that articles can be amended and updated as new information comes to light. Given how complicated and dynamic the subject of migration is, this is especially crucial. Additionally, Wikipedia has a number of principles and rules that serve to guarantee the objectivity and accuracy of its entries. On Wikipedia, for instance, all its pages must adhere to the “Neutral point of view” principle, which mandates that all information be presented objectively and without bias or editorial judgment. Due to the political nature of migration and the potential for misinformation and propaganda, this strategy is especially crucial in this area.

Artificial intelligence tools can be also a source of fact checking. They can identify misinformation through the development of natural language processing (NLP) algorithms. These algorithms can be trained to recognize patterns and linguistic traits linked to erroneous information, such as the repetition of fraudulent assertions or the use of emotive language. In order to identify potentially biased or deceptive content, NLP algorithms can also be used to detect and assess the sentiment of a text. Tools for automatic fact-checking can be created using AI. These technologies can be programmed to automatically assess the veracity of the assertions made in news stories or social media posts by comparing them to information already available. This makes it possible to quickly identify and correct incorrect claims, which can be particularly helpful in preventing the spread of false or misleading information.

To increase their effectiveness, evidence-based arguments should be combined with well-crafted storytelling to move away from dry facts and make narratives more vivid and close to people [68]. Science–policy partnerships could likewise contribute to countering misinformation [69].

Code of conducts for media professionals: although “the emergence of digital technology and the evolution of the role of journalism—including much more active participation of the public—has intensified some of the traditional ethical challenges and created new ones”, codes of ethics remain one of the most widespread instruments of (self)-regulation for journalistic activity. To counterbalance the persistent weaknesses of this approach, these codes should be surrounded by some kind of institutional infrastructure—such as a media council or a leading publishing house at the national level and, for instance, a complaints department, editor’s blog, or union section on the company or at the local level—to effectively enforce accountability [70]. A code of ethics [71] offers a good example of a media professionals’ code of conduct in the field of migration. Regulatory authorities that can enforce ethical standards and regulate media practices play a vital role in this regard as well. They can establish and enforce guidelines and standards for media professionals, ensuring that accurate and reliable information is disseminated to the public.

Here are some examples of the guidelines that media professionals can use while reporting about migration. Media professionals should try to present accurate information and refrain from exaggeration or sensationalism. Any factual omissions or false statements should be immediately rectified. They should try to represent a diversity of voices and perspectives on migration issues, while including and engaging with migrants. This can help to avoid stereotyping and ensuring that marginalized voices are heard. Media professionals should try to provide a balanced perspective on migration that includes all aspects. This will help to avoid one-sided reporting. They should be sensitive to the experiences of migrants and try to avoid sensitizations.

Education: schools and other educational entities are amongst the primary stages where interaction and interpersonal relations unfold. In the framework of the Global Citizenship Education (GCE) concept, students, teachers, and headmasters are engaged in a process of expanding their worldviews and capacities to understand, meet, and relate to “others”, through socio-emotional and behavioral approaches—the so-called Learn/Think/Act approach. A concept known as “global citizen education” encourages the awareness and understanding of international concerns, as well as the growth of the values and abilities required for responsible and active citizenship in a multicultural and interconnected world. It aspires to provide people with the knowledge and civic engagement necessary to address global issues and contribute to a just and sustainable society. It aims to foster the development of abilities, including critical thinking, communication, teamwork, and problem solving, all of which are necessary for people to function well in a globalized society. It seeks to advance cultural sensitivity, tolerance, and respect for variety, realizing that many viewpoints and life experiences contribute to our ability to comprehend the world. Such an educational approach tends to foster critical thinking and a willingness to search beyond simplified messages [72–74].

7. Conclusions

This contribution offers some insights into the topic of misinformation with respect to migration and migrants. Being a highly mediatized and politicized topic, migration is a magnet for twisted and tweaked content. The danger of misinformation about migrants lies in its impact on the perception of migrants and by migrants, influencing individuals’ behaviors and political choices. Preconditions are likely to emerge, fostering prejudices and divisions that negatively affect the social cohesion and economic development of host societies.

Misinformation reinforces biases in countries of origin and destination about migration flows, triggering misconceptions and misinterpretation about the challenges and opportunities of migration policymaking and regulation. To counterbalance this wide array of potential risks to social peace and democracy, an extensive set of corrective measures is desirable to combat the misinformation about migration and migrants.

Misinformation about migration is a significant problem that can have negative effects on people, communities, and even entire nations. Therefore, it is important to educate people about migration and raise their awareness of the danger of misinformation, as well as provide them with artificial intelligence tools to identify misinformation and raise their critical thinking.

Before anything else, it is critical to realize that inaccurate information on migration can originate from a range of sources, including media outlets, social media, and even individual perspectives. This false information can come in many different forms, ranging from overstated or incorrect assertions regarding the population of migrants in a certain location to blatant lies about the causes and behaviors of migrants.

Misinformation regarding migration poses one of the biggest concerns, since it can encourage prejudice, fear, and discrimination against migrants. People may be more prone to perceive migrants as a threat to their safety, livelihoods, or culture if they believe inaccurate information about them. This could result in negative legislation, violence, and prejudice towards migrants, all of which could have disastrous long-term effects.

It is crucial to be cautious about sources of information in order to avoid the dangers connected to inaccurate information concerning migration. An attitude of being selective about news sources and social media accounts should be taught, as well as a willingness to spend time verifying any material that sounds shaky or overstated.

It is equally critical to recognize our own biases and preconceptions regarding migration. Recognizing that migrants are people like us who merit respect and dignity is important. By questioning our own beliefs and biases, this will help to stop the spread of false information about migration and build a society that is more hospitable and inclusive.

As a result, it is critical for people to exercise caution and knowledge while consuming and disseminating information regarding migration, because there are serious risks connected to misunderstandings about it. This can provide a contribution to the development of a more realistic and sympathetic view of migration and strive towards a more just society by raising risk awareness and confronting our own biases.

This study also has strong implications for policy and practice. Policymakers should focus on raising awareness and promoting evidence-based reasoning by developing awareness campaigns, incorporating media literacy education, and providing artificial intelligence tools for identifying misinformation. Initiatives should address prejudice and discrimination against migrants through intercultural dialogue, community events, and responsible media reporting. Region-specific policies and solutions should be developed, considering the nuances of migration issues in different contexts. By implementing these measures, policymakers can combat misinformation, foster inclusivity, and create targeted interventions for the well-being of migrants and host communities.

It is important to acknowledge that this study has a limitation in that it examines general migration discourse without focusing on specific countries or regions. Migration-related issues can vary across different contexts, and future research should explore the nuances and narratives specific to those particular regions. Conducting granular analyses that delve into region-specific issues and narratives would contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the unique challenges and solutions in different regions.

Moreover, while the focus on English tweets enabled an examination of migration discourse in the widely used language on social media platforms, it may inadvertently have excluded perspectives expressed in other languages. This limitation may have resulted in a partial representation of the overall discourse on migration, particularly in countries where English is not the dominant language. To mitigate this limitation, future research could consider expanding the analysis to include tweets in other relevant languages or explore the possibility of utilizing language translation techniques to overcome this language barrier. By incorporating these considerations, the study can offer a more comprehensive understanding of the migration discourse across different linguistic contexts and enhance the applicability of the findings to a broader range of countries and regions.

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