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Name: Zubin Jain
Student

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To the Select Committee on Deliberate Online Falsehoods - Causes, Consequences and Countermeasures

I am writing to this committee to express an often ignored viewpoint when creating legislation targeting online and electronic media that of the teenage youth which must be understood and taken into account if the issue aims to address in full. The avenues of communication that most deliberate falsehoods use to spread ranging from text messages, chat groups to social media all were initially dominated by that demographic. In many cases, some of the most notorious sources of deliberate falsehoods have originated from [teenage efforts](#) to generate profit or attention. If ignored any solutions risks being rendered out of date by the speed of technological progress as new avenues for misinformation will be created and go ignored

The committee has asked for the "motivations and reasons for the spread of such [falsehoods](#)"* and as somebody who has in the past engaged in such activity albeit not too severe degree, I feel qualified to answer. My motivation for having posted such fake information in the past was a simple motivation to alleviate boredom and I find that is the universal motivation for the generation of most falsehoods. Factors such as radical Ideology, uncontrolled forums and others that the generation of so-called "Fake News" is often attributed to merely aid to its spread rather than the initial creation

Every community has a base rate of falsehoods that are generated which I find hasn't changed much with the introduction of social media and other technology. The speed that falsehoods that spread are the main problem and critical thinking is required to address it too give an illustration let us consider a simple model for the spread of a piece of fake information. A has created a random fact "The Earth is Flat" and has told it to five people B,C,D,E and F in X time. In most cases, if the news is believed by those who it is sent then the number of people who know about it increase exponentially. It only takes 14 Spreads for the piece of information to have reached every person in Singapore. In the past, the X value for the time of the spread would have been multiple-hours at minimum giving the government time to respond via a mass media network a rebuttal. Social Media has removed that grace period and now a message could be spread to the entire population of Singapore in mere hours. Attempting to stop the generation of fake-facts is a losing proposition as it only takes a single success for the damage to be done.

Legislation should be targeted towards institutions that encourage its spread rather than those that create due to a simple scarcity of resources. Overharsh punishment created in response to this problem has room to be misused and will achieve only petty retribution. Harsh legislation against websites that encourage and abet the spread of misinformation is, therefore, the best defence. Quick responses are also essential with the traditional judicial process often failing to act quick enough to combat this problem, algorithms and agencies with the ability to freeze such

organization activity immediately with the judicial review coming later should be implemented.

Education on Reliable sources and critical thinking about the news should be spread more widely and be implemented in more schools as ensuring that such "Falsehoods" aren't spread is key in mitigating its impacts, as the manpower required for a government agency dedicated towards it is unfeasible and prohibitive. A distinction should be drawn between reliable legitimate new websites and those which are unreliable, Government Announcements should also be structured in such a way to make it easy to verify their legitimacy as confusion creates room for falsehoods

Online Falsehoods might become the next piracy as a problem created by the internet that lacks any solution but actions aimed at prohibiting its spread is still needed. The damage being wrought by fake-news has only just begun and by many estimated its worth billions of dollars, we must learn lessons from oversea failures to take into account new medium when designing to prohibition to ensure our own policies effectiveness

Regards,
Zubin Jain