

# The Negative Effects of Rumours and their Dangers in the Community on Social Media

Mahdi Saad Kareem<sup>a\*</sup>, Nabeel Imran Mussa Al-Khalidi<sup>b, a,b</sup>Department of Sociology, College of Arts, Al-Qadisiyah University/Iraq, Email: [nabeel.khalidi@qu.edu.iq](mailto:nabeel.khalidi@qu.edu.iq)

The current study's problem revolves around revealing the role that social media plays in developing social and informational awareness of rumours among the Iraqi citizens to learn how to use these sites to develop social awareness of the truth of those rumours. This study has an important significance, which is the disclosure of the actual reality of rumours, social awareness and information in communication sites, and its importance lies in being a recent study dealing with a vital issue whose effects have been reflected at present on many societies. The study aims to identify the motives and goals of rumours in social networking sites, and to identify the most important means that contribute to and increase the transmission of false news and rumours. The study reached a number of recommendations, including holding seminars and scientific seminars through the various media on the dangers of spreading rumours through social networks, imposing control on social networks to prevent their use in spreading and circulating rumours, and giving importance to the honest media because of its importance in confronting rumours, hosting scientists and specialists to alert social media users of the religious, social and economic risks of spreading rumours, educating individuals on communication sites and encouraging those exposed to rumours to inform the relevant security services.

**Key words:** *Rumours, social media, community, social problems.*

## Introduction

One of the most prominent features of the contemporary era is a world rippled by successive changes in various fields of social, cultural, political, scientific and technological life, it touches the emergence of many social issues and problems on the local and global scene,

which have imposed themselves on all countries at the same time. So the current period carries many challenges, which we must face with a scientific vision and confidence in our ability to achieve the maximum benefit from this new climate, and avoid negatives that can harm our interests without worrying about ourselves or failing to contribute to the development of its features. The rumour is a basic problem in every mysterious and other circumstance as a tool to cause confusion and chaos, it makes societies unable to absorb the historical imperatives that influence the direction of their movement and growth on the ground, it is not easy to know how dangerous rumours hindered the emergence of societies from their crises in a timely manner and to discover how they operate from them, the rumour deepens and extends the crisis as well, and exacerbates situations of confusion and chaos that affect reality, more seriously, the concerned authorities and the media should work to deal with and confront them as rumours are of no importance and are not facts, thus, the rumours swell and become so influential in such situations that the authorities and the media are sometimes unable to cope with them.

### ***The Problem***

The current study tries to answer the following questions:

1. What are the motives and goals of the rumours on social media?
2. What are the most common means that contribute to and increase the transmission of false news and rumours?
3. Is the social, economic and religious environment related to rumours?

The rumour is one of the most dangerous and most deadly social phenomena in social, political, economic and psychological changes, perhaps the main reason behind its danger on social construction is its loss of real credibility, which leads to wrong decisions and actions that affect individual and national capabilities and impede the proper decision-making mechanism. It has been noticed recently that rumours spread and quickly circulate among members of society, especially through social networks, which change the content of the rumour and the way it spreads in society, because of the different nature and characteristics of the incubating environment for these rumours. These networks have been allowed for proliferation that may threaten public security and create confusion and discord in society. The problem of the study is illustrated by the negative impact of the rumours, and their danger to society and many aspects of life, I think that many of us believe in the seriousness of rumours and the necessity of combating them and fighting their spread, but some of us may unintentionally submit in many cases by contributing to spreading them directly or indirectly, it can be summarised and clarified, through the rumours that exist and spread in most of the present societies, and they have various dangers.

Our society today is exposed to many risks due to the spread of rumours on various social media sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. increasingly unprecedented. Considering that it is one of the most influential means of communication in forming the social reality perceptions of its users due to the great mass of these media, in addition to its relative freedom to treat and provide more social perspectives, it also deals with topics in bolder ways and has the ability to provide answers and solutions to many social problems. Therefore, the problem of the current study revolves around revealing the role that social media plays in developing social and informational awareness of rumours among the Iraqi citizens to learn how to use these sites to develop social awareness of the truth of those rumours.

### ***The Significant of Studying***

The scientific significance of the topic is clear by being one of the most important topics that have attracted the attention of various Arab research institutions, it is also a new topic, as it deals with the development of the means of communication represented by the Internet and social networks, as it has caused widespread controversy among those concerned about their ability to influence societies, it has become a powerful complement to traditional media. As well, this study is a scientific project that is useful in educating society and its cultural institutions about rumours, knowing how to deal with them and insight into their reality, and the ways in which society members can confront and combat rumours, and reduce their influence on society. Also, this study has other importance in that it aims to reveal the actual reality of rumours and social and information awareness in the communication sites, its importance also lies in being a recent study dealing with a vital issue whose effects have been reflected in many societies at the present time.

### ***The Aims***

The current study is aimed at:

- Knowing the motives and goals of rumours on social media.
- Knowing the means that most contribute to and increase the transmission of false news and rumours.
- Knowing the social, economic and religious environment for rumours.

### ***The Concepts of the Study***

***Rumour:*** is the dissemination of information (Abu Aqoub ,2003); rumours collect the rumour, and the widespread and useful ideas and news are called, and confrontation is harmful. As for the rumour in the idiomatic scientific definition, there are differences about it according to the nature of the science that studies the rumour, whether it is sociology,

psychology, or political science. The humanities still use multiple and different approaches to study the concept, which leads to a dispute between its various schools. Some said that rumours most commonly are: the negative impact on the soul, and work to spread turmoil, and lack of confidence in the hearts of individuals and groups, (Tantawi 2001), that was an attempt to define rumours, but it focused on the effect of the rumours, he mentions at the beginning of the definition the negative effect on the souls, which is the effect of the rumour and then suggests that the rumours work to spread turmoil, then he concludes that the rumour leads to mistrust, which is also one of the effects of the rumours, but the definition did not show us the true rumours, and the author did not mention the methods by which they spread and when? And where?

The rumour was also known as information or ideas that people pass on without them being based on a reliable source known for its authenticity, the rumour promotes a different story that is not based on reality or is an exaggeration, that is in the secret of news that contains a small part of the truth, it is transmitted by pronouncement or through cost or expressive movement, and aims to influence human thinking and its emotions and imagination in a way that makes it add to the common words, and at the same time it becomes more widespread and attractive (Abdullah 1997). Pierre defined it in his dictionary of psychology as a vague or inaccurate report or a story or description that is transmitted between members of society by the spoken word often, and tends to spread in times of crisis, and revolves around people or events that represent importance to individuals in light of the availability of vague information about these people or events (Reber 1985). As for Devonzo & Bordia's definition, the rumour is a claim, fabricated news, incident or story that is circulated in the absence of verification of the criteria for truth, or the existence of a specific source for it (Owen 2009).

**Communication:** communication is the verb of a connection, continuing its rope, its linking to the connection, what is related to the thing. Al-Layth said everything was connected to something between him and a link, and the crowd was connected, and he was called so and so his mercy is connected by a link, and between them is the link of any connection and an excuse.

**The Concept of Communication in the Language:** denotes the inclusion of something to something so that it can be suspended and connected against abandonment. So and so mercy has reached a link, and the thing has been connected to something with a link, and communication against the stubbornness (Al-Rawas ,Al-Habes , Al-Shaqsi 2015). The word translated into "communication," originally derives from the Latin word "Communis," refers to the common thing and communicates it (communicare). That is, it broadcasts and participates. "We share information, ideas, or sharp situations together." (Badr ,1982). Charles R. Wright defines communication as the process of transferring meaning or

significance between individuals (Charles 1999). As seen by Bernard Berelson, and Jerry A. Steiner Gray A. Steiner is the transmission of information, desires, feelings, knowledge and experiences, either orally or using symbols, words and images with the intent to persuade or influence behaviour (Berelson Steingeer 2004).

**Communication in Sociology:** means the exchange of self-conditions and their dissemination between individuals such as ideas, emotions and beliefs through the language which is the main communication tool, as well as simulation and suggestion (Madkour 1975). So it is a form of social interaction, as one of the social phenomena in people's lives based mainly on influencing attitudes, values, trends, standards, patterns of behaviour and patterns of thinking, and building a social perception of social life (Ja`d, 2002). In spite of the multiple definitions, they are related to what has already been defined to them, as some may define them as the association of a group of computers located in a place through some cards and electronic circuits, allowing a kind of integrated operation of the data required by the user in various institutions such as schools and universities, for example (El-Hady,2001).

**The Concept of Social Media:** is one of the concepts that relates to the virtual community, which has become famous in a way that deserves attention, as the academic interest in social networking issues and the virtual community has increased, since the Internet with its interactions became part of the daily life of millions of people, the term virtual society is no longer one of the concepts that stops attention when it is heard, as it has become general and widespread, not at the level of scientific analyses, but has become a common concept among internet users (Rhingold 2000):

In another definition, it is a group of networks on the Internet that appeared in the second generation of Web2 and allows communication between individuals in the virtual community environment, provided that there are common interests between these individuals and this communication occurs through direct contact such as sending messages or viewing personal files of others and following up their news and available information about them. (Hatimi,2015), has provided many definitions for social networking sites, but the definition provided by both Boyd and Ellison "defined as " in studies interested in the topic, and this is because they are considered among the first students in the field, where they know networks. Social media is services that exist on the web, allowing individuals to build public or semi-public personal data through a limited system, which enables them to make a list for those who wish to share contact and see their lists as well (Hijab. 2007). Social networking sites are defined as sites that allow users to create public or private personal pages within an elaborate system, and to show a list of their alms to those who participate in the communication process (Al-Harbi,2013).

## **The Sociological Dimensions of Rumours: Their Characteristics, Functions, Goals, and Motives.**

*A Historical View of the Rumour:* Rumours are considered one of the most dangerous weapons that threaten societies in their values and symbols, as their danger exceeds armed wars between countries. Some countries even use them as a lethal weapon that has a great effect in the moral or psychological wars that precede the movement of the military machine. Its danger does not stop at this point, yet it is the most economically dangerous and the most socially dangerous. The rumour is not a developed phenomenon, rather it was created from the beginning of creation. Humans used it a lot to destabilise security and stability as they launched it and believed it and were influenced by it to crystallise in the arms of its culture throughout the ages, formed and coloured by the features in each time that it appears in. Rumours aim at many moral matters, so it is called the moral war or psychological war. Its danger is used against individuals that are compatible with their mood and thinking, attracting them to be tools repeating it without realising how dangerous it is, especially in a time during which the speed of its spread has multiplied. Everyone knows that the market for rumours in our Arab societies in the current period is characterised by more popularity, where rumours vary and become personal, political, or economic, but their effect affects people.

Various rumours, whether short or long, hostile or destructive, are among the most dangerous lethal weapons for human societies. Rumours can be likened to the poisonous dagger that stabs the innocent from behind, taking advantage of the most depressing human characteristics of cowardice and villainy, and this weapon is often ravaged by a community or civilisation's assets. Rumours have worried rulers since the dawn of time to the point that some of them spied on their subjects with specialised employees who conveyed to them the rumours that people were whispering about.

It is unbelievable that in society, from the earliest historical eras until our present time, in which there were rumours that spread among people, regardless of their shape, their types were varied, and their goals differentiated, and that is only because rumours are in fact a social phenomenon inherent in human existence and also considered as being derived from the nature of social life and collective formation.

*Conditions for Spreading Rumours:* There is no doubt that rumours are of great danger to society, a social epidemic and a phenomenon that all people must join together to resist and eliminate. Allport & Postman believe that rumour is like any human phenomenon, and it spreads according to one or two conditions that must be interacting with each other to create a climate of rumours.

**The First Condition:** is importance, and the second is ambiguity. The first condition is limited to the fact that the topic of the rumour involves something of importance for both the speaker and the listener. This ambiguity can arise from the lack or shortness of news, from its conflict or lack of confidence in it, or from some emotional tensions that make the individual unable or even not ready to accept the facts presented by the news. There is a third condition which is the psychological preparation to accept and repeat it (Al-Khasht 1995).

**Characteristics of Rumours:** Rosnow & Fine and other social scientists have mentioned the following characteristics (Al-Khasht 1995):

- a- Rumour is the process of disseminating information: especially if it is related to an important topic and spread in circumstances where it cannot be verified. But if it is considered an expression of what is going on in the minds of people, it can be used as indicators of public opinion, or as a propaganda method, as happens in electoral battles.
- b- It is easy to start the rumour and it is not easy to stop it. It falls at the speed of a snowball, but rather at the speed of light and sound together through satellites and the Internet at the present time to reach all parts of the universe in a few seconds as the world has become one small village.
- c - The rumour may be true: that it may be based on the information contained in the rumour on an origin of the truth. For example, a rumour about the amendment or dismissal of the government, or about the existence of an infectious disease, an increase in the prices of food supplies, defeat or victory in the war, which may be achieved.

**Functions of Rumours:** Rumour, regardless of its absolute good or bad intention, is a tool for psychological war, whether the target is a person, institution, or political or social system. Its most important functions are "explaining, interpreting, justifying, reducing, and dropping feelings of turmoil, anxiety, or fear and terror, hatred, suspicion or emotional tensions in the target audience in the event of a mysterious situation, especially in times of crises, disasters, wars, prosperity and economic depression. These circumstances are the motives that contribute to the production and promotion of rumours.

**Rumours Goals and Motives:** We have to distinguish between the goals of the rumour and its motives. If the goals always come ahead, the motives always come in the driving dynamics that motivate the process of creating and promoting the rumour. The motives come first, followed by behaviour, then the goals.

**Motives Objectives:** The objectives can be explained in some detail as follows:

- a. **Targets of Rumours at the Individual Level:** If there are political, and perhaps moral, justifications for rumours issued by a state to defend itself against the enemy in a state of

war or conflict - then the rumours of individuals against each other remain morally unjustified, and continue to express the use of vile means against the other.

**b- Targets of Rumours at the Level of Groups** (Al-Harbi, 2013). There are rumours spread among groups, such as students, workers, and social groups, such as lawyers, doctors, etc., as well as economic rumours that circulate between companies about each other. Here are some of its goals at this level:

**c- Targets of Rumours at the State Level:** Rumours aimed at the international level to influence the opinions and feelings of the positions and behaviour of hostile, neutral or friendly groups, in support of a current policy or goals or a military moment, in conditions of war or crises and confrontations of all kinds (Abdullah,1997).

Rumours generally aimed - as a psychological weapon of war - to demoralise the opponent, eliminate his will to fight or resist, create an atmosphere of distrust, create confusion and lack of ability to judge accurately and distinguish between the true and the false of the news (Amer, 2015).

### **The Social Role of Social Media in Spreading Awareness and Circulating Information**

Man, by his nature, is a social being who likes to live in groups and does not like to be isolated from others and what is going on around him in this world. In communicating with others and knowing what is going on in this world, these methods have gradually evolved from the appearance of man on the face of the earth to the present day.

Social communication is one of the topics that has received wide and increasing attention from researchers in the field of human and social sciences. Researchers describe it as one of the necessities of social life itself, the basis of social interaction. In light of the broad social mobility and technological developments that have occurred and have led to a tremendous amount of information and knowledge, the question arises about the effect of the digital revolution, the growth of social networks on the individual, on his relationships and on his thinking. It is no longer unknown that the digital revolution contributed to the emergence of virtual groups brought together by intimate relationships competing with the traditional social structure. It presents its members to further change the prospects for their ideas, values, and attitudes, and their convictions, which will be reflected inevitably on their behaviour patterns during their dealings in the real society.

Therefore, social media has become one of the most influential means in the media through which individuals exchange information and knowledge. For this reason, it has taken over the largest part in the daily life of individuals, and has become increasingly popular with the

numbers of subscribers in all their categories and levels. It is so because it facilitates their personal interaction and allows them to display their features in a digital space that supports their social ties with people with the same interests and enhances their coexistence in the light of a digital culture. These sites have contributed to allowing people to express themselves and their ideas, especially with those who share similar interests and share their inclinations as the proximity approaches. It eliminated geographical borders, intermarried cultures with its unlimited interactive advantage, and its effects in all political, economic, and social spheres. The role of social media networks in the modern age has increased greatly and its multiple types have become a clear and tangible role and influence in the lives of individuals through developing their awareness levels and increasing their information and aspirations, whether this effect is negative or positive. This means that we expect from it a tangible role in the field of community awareness. Despite its many positives, social networking sites are not without risks. There are disadvantages that affect society in general, and the family and its members, in particular, brought about by great social, political and economic changes and value judgments.

***As for the Positive and Negative Effects of Social Networking Sites:*** the positives are that it is a prominent communication tool, in the delivery of information content to individuals, providing follow-up of internal and external events, and communication with society, dealing directly with decision makers in the state. Whereas the negative effects are resulting from the use of social networks via the Internet, which is wasting time, lack of confidentiality of personal information, encouraging grammatical errors and linguistic errors (Sinha , Yadav , and Kanodia 2016), and reducing productivity because workers constantly check social media sites at work or study, and the development of the spirit of selfishness or unsociability, staying under the influence of the ideas of others, rumours, and harmful and useful information together, the lack of credibility and reliability, and a misunderstanding of the idea of an opponent.

### **The Results and Recommendations of the Study**

The necessity of dealing quickly with any rumour, and working to stop its spread effectively through:

- a. Holding scientific conferences and seminars through the various media on the dangers of spreading rumours through social networks.
- b- Imposing censorship on social media to prevent its use in spreading and circulating rumours.
- c- Giving importance to the truthful media precedent in its information because of its importance in facing rumours.



- d- Hosting scientists and specialists to alert social media users of the religious, social and economic risks of spreading rumours.
- e- Educating individuals on the communication sites and encouraging those exposed to rumours to inform the relevant security services.
- f - Using technical means to monitor and trace the sources of rumour mongers and seize them.
- g- Raising awareness through communication sites about the importance of security and its importance to citizens, and encouraging their responsibility to uncover subversive countermeasures that disturb the security of society.
- h- Developing security awareness on the communication sites and including warnings of rumour dangers.
- i- Responsible authorities revive social and informational awareness and instil values against spreading rumours on communication sites.
- j- Developing the skill of social and information awareness of people through awareness-raising programs to confront and identify rumours.
- k - Using communication through religious institutions to combat the spread of destructive rumours.
- l- Decision-makers must block some websites and media that contribute to the rapid spread of rumours and announce them through communication sites.



## REFERENCES

- Abu Aqoub I(2003): Rumours in the Information Age, Rumours Symposium in the Information Age, Al-Arabiya Naif Academy for Security Sciences, Riyadh, 1st edition, p. 78.
- Tantawi M(2001): False rumours and how Islam fought them, Dar Al-Shorouk, Cairo, p. 8 .
- Abdullah M.(1997) : Psychological warfare and rumours, Dar Gharib for Printing and Publication , Cairo, p. 165.
- Reber A,(1985), Dictionary of psychology, London, Penguin Books, p 654.
- Owen A.(2009), Rumour Psychology; Implications for record keeping by organizations , Retrieved FebJQt2012frQmAmbiir.net/rnmors.pdf, p23. .
- Al-Rawas A., Al-Habes A., Al-Shaqsi O.(2015), The use of Omani children in Muscat Governorate for social media and their impact on socialization, Egyptian Journal of Media Research, Faculty of Arts, (Cairo University No. (50), p. 322.
- Badr A.(1982) : Mass Communication, Publications Agency, Kuwait, p. 55.
- Charles R.(1999) Write: Mass communication , A Sociological Perspective , New Yourk : Random House , P.11. (1999).
- Berelson B.& A Steingeer G(2004): Human Behavior , An Inventory Of Scientific Finding , New York , Brace And Word , INC , P 527 .
- Madkour I(1975): Dictionary of Social Sciences, The Egyptian General Book Authority, Cairo, p. 8. .
- Ja`d,A.(2002) : Sociology of Information, A Sociological Future Vision, Dar Al-Shorouk for Publishing and Distribution, Jordan, p. 49. .
- El-Hady M.(2001): Communications Technology and Information Networks with Glossary of Explanation of Terms, Egyptian Academic Library, Cairo, p. 130.
- Rhingold H.(2000): The Virtual Community, Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier, The mitpress, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England, p. 323 .



Hatimi H.(2015), , Public Relations and Social Networks, Osama House for Publishing and Distribution, Amman - Jordan, p. 74.

Hijab.M. (2007). Rumours and Methods of Confronting them, Dar Al-Fateh for Publishing and Distribution, Cairo, p. 147.

Al-Harbi H.: ( 2013), p. 95.

Al-Khasht M.( 1995), pp. 71-73.

Al-Khasht M( 1995,) pp. 71-73.

Habbas bin Raja Al-Harbi: ibid, 2013, pp. 87-90.

Abdullah, (1997). psychological warfare and rumours, Dar Gharib, Cairo, p. 65.

Amer.F. (2015). “The media from reference to Facebook and its impact on society”, New Book Publishing and Distribution, Cairo, pp. 200-201.

Sinha A , Yadav R., and Kanodia R.,(2016). SOCIAL MEDIA: POSITIVE VS NEGATIVE EFFECT ON YOUNG GENERATION. International Journal of Science Technology and Management, Vol. 5, No. 1, Pp. 487 – 489.