Educating the Public to Combat Online Defamation, Doxing, and Impersonation

Ashu M. G. Solo
Maverick Trailblazers Inc., USA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Online defamation, doxing, and impersonation are three of the major problems of the internet age. As technology advances, these become greater problems. These problems can cause serious damage to victims. This research chapter makes recommendations on how to educate the public to deal with online defamation, doxing, and impersonation. It concludes by proposing a field called "misinformation identification engineering" to develop algorithms and software to find, flag, or remove misinformation and disinformation on websites and in other documents.

INTRODUCTION

This research chapter focuses on combating online defamation, doxing, and impersonation (Collins, 2011; Cox, 2014; Koch, 2016; Reznik, 2013). Defamation against an individual involves the communication of false statements that harm the individual's reputation. Doxing of an individual involves the publication of an individual's private information such as his home address or family members. People can be impersonated for many purposes such as to harm their reputations, to gain personal information on them, to cause them to lose business, to cause them to lose friends, to write exams for them, to vote for them, to spread false information about them, etc.

In the old days, it was hard to spread false information or private information about people. It had to be done by telling people face to face, handing out flyers, putting up posters, etc. Only the mainstream media had the means to reach a lot of people. The mainstream media is generally more careful in what it says, although it has crossed the line into defamation many times too, but usually not nearly as bad as people can commit defamation on the world wide web. Now false information or private information about people can just be posted on the web using a fake name for the world to see (Banerjee & Chua, 2019; Chiluwa, 2019; Hage et al., 2020; Pal & Banerjee, 2019; Reynard, 2019; Solo, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c). Defamation, doxing, and impersonation on the web are three of the major new problems of the information age.

Social networks like Facebook and Twitter are frequently used to spread defamatory information. New software can be used to detect cyberbullying on social networks (Balakrishnan, Khan, Fernandez, & Arabnia, 2019). Fake news, which is used to spread disinformation or defamatory information, is a growing problem (Adikpo, 2019; Assay, 2019; Bradshaw & Howard, 2019; Çomlekci, 2020; Dale, 2019; Grazulis & Rogers, 2019; Guadagno & Guttieri, 2019; Mach, 2019; Ottonicar, 2020; Rezayi et al., 2018; Stengel, 2019; Watts, 2018). Fake news and defamation on the web are frequently used to attack politicians, an unethical type of network politics (Solo & Bishop, 2011, 2014, 2016, 2017). *Deepfakes* are videos featuring humans manipulated by computational intelligence. Deepfakes can be used to impersonate individuals while conveying disinformation or defamatory information (Parkin, 2019). The use of deepfakes to impersonate politicians while conveying misinformation is an unethical form of political engineering or computational politics (Solo, 2011, 2014, 2017, 2019d). As technology advances, more sophisticated means can be used to fool people with defamation. The laws need to be updated as recommended in this research chapter to stop the spread of defamatory information using social networks, fake news, and deepfakes too. Also, as recommended in this research chapter, people need to be better educated on how to fight online defamation, doxing, and impersonation.

Internet defamation, inter alia, severely harms people's reputations; prevents them from getting gainful employment; ruins romantic relationships; causes depression, anxiety, and distress; causes mental health problems, etc. Internet doxing, inter alia, endangers people; causes depression, anxiety, and distress; causes mental health problems; etc. Internet impersonation, inter alia, severely harms people's reputations; prevents them from getting gainful employment; ruins romantic relationships; causes depression, anxiety, and distress; causes mental health problems, etc.

Most private employers these days do web searches on prospective employees to see what turns up. If they have a bunch of people applying for one position, as

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