

Article



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DISINFORMATION IN COMMUNICATION: The National Network to Combat Disinformation*Desinformação na comunicação: a Rede Nacional de Combate à Desinformação**Desinformación en la Comunicación: La Red Nacional de Combate a la Desinformación*

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ABSTRACT:

In the Brazilian elections of 2018, 2020 and 2022, disinformation reached new heights, standing out as a central element in the public and academic debate. In light of these electoral processes, the National Network to Combat Disinformation (RNCD) produces and disseminates knowledge about the disinformation market in the country and around the world. To this end, the article analyzes the network's performance and lists studies covered in the context of disinformation and elections. The research adopts an exploratory and bibliographical approach based on a state of the art, including scientific articles, theses, dissertations and periodical publications, presented in the Research and Publications section on the organization's website. It is concluded that there is still a lack of bibliographical production on the topic of disinformation, especially when associated with elections in the RNCD database.

Keywords: disinformation, elections, The National Network to Combat Disinformation

RESUMO

Nas eleições brasileiras de 2018, 2020 e 2022, a desinformação atingiu novos patamares, destacando-se como um elemento central no debate público e acadêmico. Diante desses processos eleitorais, a Rede Nacional de Combate à Desinformação (RNCD) produz e dissemina conhecimento sobre o mercado desinformacional no país e no mundo. Para tanto, o artigo analisa a atuação da rede e elenca estudos abordados no âmbito da desinformação e eleições. A pesquisa adota uma abordagem exploratória e bibliográfica a partir de um estado da arte, incluindo artigos científicos, teses, dissertações e publicações periódicas, apresentados na seção de Pesquisas e Publicações no site da organização. É concluído que ainda existe uma carência de produção bibliográfica sobre o tema da desinformação, sobretudo quando associada às eleições no banco de dados da RNCD.

Palavras-chave: desinformação, eleições, Rede Nacional de Combate à Desinformação

RESUMEN

En las elecciones brasileñas de 2018, 2020 y 2022, la desinformación alcanzó nuevos niveles, destacándose como un elemento central en el debate público y académico. Ante estos procesos electorales, la Red Nacional de Lucha contra la Desinformación (RNCD) produce y difunde conocimientos para contener los impactos nocivos del mercado de la desinformación. Para ello, el artículo analiza el desempeño de la red y enumera estudios cubiertos en el contexto de la desinformación y las elecciones. La investigación adopta un enfoque exploratorio

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y bibliográfico basado en un estado del arte, incluyendo artículos científicos, tesis, disertaciones y publicaciones periódicas, presentados en la sección Investigaciones y Publicaciones del sitio web de la organización. Se concluye que aún existe una falta de producción bibliográfica sobre el tema de la desinformación, especialmente cuando se asocia a elecciones en la base de datos del RNCD.

Palabras clave: desinformación, elecciones, La Red Nacional de Combate a la Desinformación

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Introduction

The spread of false information has become a growing threat to the integrity of democratic processes, especially during elections. In Brazil, the 2018, 2020, and 2022 elections saw a significant increase in disinformation and conspiracy theories, widely disseminated on digital social networks, affecting public trust in institutions such as the Superior Electoral Court (TSE). In response, the National Network for Combating Disinformation (RNCD) has been producing and disseminating knowledge about disinformation in electoral processes in Brazil and abroad, as well as in other thematic areas.

Created in 2019 as part of a postdoctoral research project led by coordinator Ana Regina Rêgo, the RNCD connects various projects and organizations dedicated to combating disinformation. The network integrates collectives, university initiatives, agencies, communication networks, social projects, observatories, fact-checking platforms, and scientific institutions, among others.

This article analyzes the role of the RNCD as a research source database on disinformation and fact-checking in Brazil. Specifically, it examines (1) academic works related to disinformation and elections in the "Research and Publications" section of the RNCD website and (2) the institutions and states of origin of the authors who contributed to this collection. The methodology employs the state of the art (Ferreira, 2002) and literature review (Gil, 2002) to deepen the understanding of disinformation research in Brazil and highlight the importance of the RNCD as a reference source. Currently, the network's database gathers over 1,433 scientific papers produced by members, projects, and research groups.

The results reveal a significant gap in the bibliographic production on disinformation, particularly in the electoral context, within the RNCD database. The complexity of this phenomenon makes its study, mapping, and systematization challenging. Furthermore, the spread of fake news on social networks not only misleads people but also has the potential to incite harmful actions, both physical and virtual, by those who believe in them.

The study recognizes the RNCD as a key actor in the fight against disinformation but emphasizes the need to expand collaborative and multidisciplinary research efforts. By exploring the dynamics of disinformation, the research aims to contribute to the construction of a more reliable and resilient information environment, which is essential for ensuring the integrity of democratic processes.

Methodological procedures in the RNCD database

This exploratory research conducts a state-of-the-art analysis, as proposed by Ferreira (2002), aiming to map knowledge on disinformation and elections within the RNCD database. This approach involves critically analyzing the most recent and relevant studies while also considering significant previous contributions. The objective is to identify gaps, emerging trends, and ongoing debates, contextualizing the topic and proposing new directions for investigation.

The investigation begins with an analysis of the RNCD database, using key concepts such as disinformation and elections. Various sources are examined, including academic articles, theses, dissertations, and undergraduate final projects (TCCs). This review helps to identify unexplored areas, consolidate trends, and position the research within the broader context of combating disinformation.

Based on previously published material, consisting of scientific articles and academic publications (Gil, 2002), the study focuses on the works listed in the Research and Publications section of the RNCD website. Categories such as journalistic articles, book chapters, dossiers, interviews, guides, books, educational materials, podcasts, abstracts, and reports are not considered. Additionally, the research maps the institutions and states of origin of the authors who contributed to studies associated with RNCD.

The data collection was conducted over a period of three months, allowing for the acquisition of relevant information for analysis. This approach contributes to a better understanding of reflections on electoral processes in Brazil, highlighting the relationship between disinformation and democracy.

Disinformation in the brazilian context

During the 2022 elections in Brazil, WhatsApp, Telegram, and X/Twitter were the main platforms for disseminating disinformative narratives, according to a study by NetLab at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. The research revealed that X/Twitter experienced the highest growth in the circulation of such narratives (57%), followed by WhatsApp (36%) and Telegram (23%). Furthermore, the study found that the repetition of disinformation across platforms increases users' resistance to fact-checking and correction.

According to the Digital News Report, trust in news in Brazil dropped from 48% in 2022 to 43% in 2023, a decline that intensified after the highly polarized 2018 election. The report also showed that 64% of Brazilians prefer to receive news through social media, particularly Instagram (35%) and TikTok (12%), while messaging apps such as WhatsApp (41%) and Telegram (9%) are widely used for sharing information.

In this context, Alencar (2020) and Martins & Teixeira (2020) highlight that journalistic credibility and objectivity are increasingly being questioned by politicians and authorities. Similarly, Freelon and Wells (2020) note that, before 2017, disinformation was rarely studied in academic research. However, the 2016 U.S. elections significantly increased interest in the topic across multiple disciplines, including communication, political science, and information science. The authors also link the expansion of digital disinformation to the decline in public trust in the press and other institutions in recent years.

Disinformation has been widely studied before, during, and after electoral processes. A survey based on Bonin's (2011) methodology found that a Google Scholar search for the term "disinformation" yielded 79,900 results, with 6,110 specifically focused on the 2022 election. Meanwhile, on the Capes Journals Portal, 1,221 results were identified for "disinformation," but only 23 were directly related to the 2022 elections. The Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (BDTD) returned 509 results for the term in general.

A historical analysis shows the increasing use of the term "disinformation" in Brazilian academic production, particularly after the 2018 elections. In Capes Journals, there were 25 results related to 2018 and 19 to 2020, while Google Scholar registered 12,800 results for 2018 and 10,900 for 2022. Oliveira, Araújo, and Barbosa (2022) reviewed studies on disinformation between 2018 and 2021 from databases such as Redalyc, SciELO, and SPELL, emphasizing that Brazil began to discuss the issue from a new perspective after the 2018 elections.

These findings highlight the growing impact of disinformation on Brazilian elections, reinforcing its importance as an academic research topic and underscoring the urgent need for effective strategies to combat it.

Table 1 - Research on disinformation (2018 to 2021)

Research on Disinformation (2018–2021)Oliveira, Araújo & Barbosa (2022)		
database	Fake news	Disinformation
REDALYC	1.147	247
SCIELO	29	24
SPELL	01	0

Source: Figure created by the authors (2025)

By April 2024, the authors had identified 1,448 articles on disinformation, including 1,147 related to the term "fake news" in Redalyc, 247 specifically on disinformation, 29 in SciELO using the descriptor "fake news," and 24 on disinformation. In SPELL, only one article was found using the term "fake news," and none using "disinformation." After filtering, the total number of recovered articles was 53. Oliveira, Araújo, and Barbosa (2022) argue that the discussion on disinformation is relatively recent, emphasizing that even within the 2018 to 2021 timeframe, only a few prior studies directly addressed the topic.

Maia and Maia (2020) conducted a state-of-the-art review on fake news research in Brazil using the Catalog of Theses and Dissertations from the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (Capes). Analyzing academic works defended between 2014 and 2019 in the field of Communication, they found only eight dissertations mentioning the term "fake news". These dissertations examined false information in humorous programs, political scenarios, and health-related contexts.

Although the term "fake news" is widely used, researcher Claire Wardle (2019) recommends adopting "disinformation" to describe the contemporary phenomenon more accurately. According to Wardle, the term "fake news" is problematic and imprecise because not all content on digital social networks is entirely false. Often, it consists of true information presented out of context, such as rumors, memes, manipulated videos, and old images shared in a misleading manner.

This article presents and analyzes the research database of the National Network for Combating Disinformation (RNCD), which compiles over 1,433 scientific works produced by members, projects, and research groups recognized by the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq). The RNCD database serves as a crucial resource for understanding disinformation in Brazil, offering a comprehensive perspective on the phenomenon.

RNCD: a network combating disinformation and ignorance

The 2018, 2020, and 2022 elections in Brazil highlighted the growth of an anti-communist ideology and the proliferation of "fake information factories", which posed a serious threat to Brazilian democracy (Rêgo & Marialva, 2020). During these elections, digital social networks became strategic tools for the far-right, facilitating the creation, sharing, and circulation of trolling content, memes, rumors, and alternative truths.

Thousands of groups and channels on digital social networks reinforce partisan positions, creating and strengthening echo chambers, where bots and algorithms are used to spread informational noise and hyper-partisan political ideals (Soares, Recuero & Zago, 2021). These actors and political groups contribute to the deliberate construction of ignorance, fostering attacks on public institutions. Rêgo and Marialva (2020) emphasize that anti-democratic forces, disregarding norms and laws, act driven by their beliefs and power ambitions, harming the nation while prioritizing their personal interests.

Segurado (2021) also discusses how social ignorance is deliberately generated for political and economic purposes, helping certain groups preserve their power. This involves spreading false information, creating doubt about verified facts, and promoting relativism regarding the truth. Countering this process requires strengthening critical education and ensuring access to reliable sources of information.

Disinformation, particularly as a tool of social control, has been widely used as a political strategy, especially during the Bolsonaro administration. The former president, acting as the primary disseminator of this approach, employed fake news, conspiracy theories, and hate speech to achieve his objectives. Furthermore, the broader Bolsonaro movement, represented by figures such as Sérgio Moro and Olavo de Carvalho, also adopted these tactics to shape public opinion. Bolsonaroism, as part of a global far-right resurgence, has played a significant role in the erosion of democratic principles, attacking press freedom and human rights, while maintaining a solid support base despite criticisms, corruption allegations, and authoritarian tendencies (Silva, 2023; Boito Jr., 2019; Reis, 2020).

In this context, the role of the National Network for Combating Disinformation (RNCD) becomes crucial. The RNCD aims to identify, combat, and prevent the spread of false information, not only by exposing misleading narratives but also by promoting transparency, accuracy, and reliability in scientific discourse. The network operates on multiple fronts, from identifying biased research to disseminating scientifically accurate information through appropriate channels. By fostering collaboration between researchers, academic institutions, and policymakers, the RNCD strengthens the fight against disinformation, with a focus on building a trustworthy informational environment.

RNCD: a database for researchers

Starting from a state of the art approach (Ferreira, 2002) and using the keywords disinformation and elections, this article lists the academic productions displayed on the RNCD website. The first step was to access the Research and Publications section and then select a category. The first category analyzed was articles, which totaled 653 entries as of 11:08 PM on February 17, 2025. When searching only for the term disinformation, 154 results were found. However, when searching for both terms (disinformation and elections), only 5 results were retrieved, as shown in Table 2:

Table 2 - articles analyzing the disinformation landscape in elections

Title	Member	State or Institution
Fact-Checking on Twitter: Misinformation in the 2022 Brazilian Elections	Animus Journal	Graduate Program in Communication at the Federal University of Santa Maria (UFSM), in Rio Grande do Sul.
Media, Misinformation, and Democracy: How the Media Influence Presidential Elections in Brazil.	Observatório Journal	The journal is part of the OPAJE Core at the Federal University of Tocantins (UFT), in Tocantins.
The Argumentation Strategies and Forms of Misinformation in Jair Bolsonaro's Messages on Twitter During the Second Round of the 2018 Presidential Elections.	MIDIARS	The group is currently based at the Center for Letters and Communication at the Federal University of Pelotas (physical headquarters) and at the Graduate Program at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (PPGCOM/UFRGS).

An Analysis of Misinformation Production in the 2018 Elections Based on the CPI of Fake News.	National Association of Graduate Studies and Research in Social Sciences.	A private non-profit entity, it brings together more than a hundred graduate and research centers in anthropology, political science, international relations, and sociology from all over Brazil.
The Symbolic Consumption of Misinformation Anchored in Journalistic Credibility: An Analysis of Discourse Legitimation Elements in the 2022 Elections.	Mídia e Cotidiano journal	The journal is part of the Graduate Program in Media and Everyday Life at the Federal Fluminense University (UFF).

Source: Created by the authors (2025)

The first article highlighted in Table 1 was produced by researchers Leonardo Pereira Tavares, Gustavo de Souza Silva, and Diego Lopes de Oliveira and published in the Dossier "Communication and Science: Narratives, Misinformation, and Fact-Checking" in the *Animus Journal* in 2022. The study analyzed the dissemination of misinformation related to Brazil's 2022 presidential election through a fact-checking portal and on the X/Twitter social network. Thus, the authors categorized posts collected in May 2022 based on fact-checking criteria, using the R programming language for five weeks to classify information based on four verification criteria.

The second article was published by researcher Fabíola Mendonça de Vasconcelos in the *Observatório Journal* in 2020. The study analyzed Brazilian media coverage of presidential elections from the redemocratization period, starting with the 1989 election and ending with the 2018 election. The theoretical framework was based on reflections on misinformation, manipulation, fake news, and democracy. The research showed that historically, the media has tried to influence election outcomes by resorting to strategies of manipulation and distortion of facts.

The third article was written by researcher Felipe Bonow Soares and published in the *Medição Journal* in 2020. The work presented the main argumentative strategies used by Jair Bolsonaro on his X/Twitter account and identified how his messages may have contributed to misinformation campaigns. In this sense, the article was based on a theoretical framework in the public sphere, misinformation, and social media. The main results identified by the author were the use of anti-model argumentation associated with the left as the central argument in Bolsonaro's messages, as well as his engagement in misinformation campaigns, with the media as the main target.

The fourth paper, produced by researchers Tathiana Senne Chicarino and Desirée Luíse Lopes Conceição and published in the proceedings of the National Meeting of the National Association of Graduate Studies and Research in Social Sciences (ANPOCS) in 2020, analyzes the work of the Parliamentary Mixed Inquiry Commission (CPMI), which was opened to investigate the circulation of fake news during the 2018 elections.

The fifth article, written by researchers Elisa Bachega Casadei and Liliane de Lucena Ito and published in the *Media and Everyday Life Journal* in 2024, analyzes the discursive strategies related to the attribute of credibility in pieces of misinformation that circulated during the 2022 Brazilian elections. The study focused on misinformation pieces that made claims about fraud in electronic voting machines, disseminated both on Twitter (formerly X) and Telegram (circulating across various digital environments and networks), as well as by entities (supposedly) involved in journalism, such as *Jovem Pan*, during the first and second rounds of the presidential election. Six distinct discursive strategies were identified, some of which are also used in journalism, to lend credibility to false and fabricated content.

It is clear that the four articles provide different perspectives on the intersection of communication, misinformation, and democracy, offering valuable insights into the political and media dynamics in contemporary Brazil. Together, these studies highlight the complexity of misinformation in the Brazilian political landscape, emphasizing the importance of multidisciplinary and systematic approaches to understanding and combating this phenomenon. Deepening this understanding is crucial for the preservation of democratic integrity and the construction of a more informed and resistant public sphere.

The methodologies used in the analysis of misinformation across the four articles, both qualitative and quantitative, provide valuable tools for understanding the complexity of this phenomenon. However, they also reveal limitations and open space for critical reflections on gaps and trends in this field of study.

In the qualitative realm, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), applied by Casadei and Ito (2024), emerges as a powerful methodology to identify the discursive strategies used in the dissemination of misinformation. This approach allows for an exploration of how misleading content appropriates elements that confer credibility, manipulating narratives to deceive the public and reinforce distorted perceptions of truth. This technique is particularly effective in revealing the linguistic and symbolic subtleties that transform false information into persuasive messages, especially in contexts like the 2022 elections.

In complement, the discourse analysis used by Chicarino and Conceição (2020) offers a deeper look into the construction of meaning in specific discursive contexts, such as testimonies analyzed in the CPI of Fake News. This approach highlights not only the content of narratives but also the socio-historical and ideological elements that shape discourse. It thus allows for an understanding of how meanings are produced and contested in political arenas, exposing power struggles and polarization mechanisms that characterize the spread of misinformation.

In the quantitative dimension, the use of big data and R programming, explored by Tavares, Silva, and Oliveira (2022), represents a significant methodological evolution in tracking and categorizing misinformation. By analyzing large volumes of data on platforms like Twitter (now X), this approach identifies dissemination patterns and classifies content based on fact-checking criteria. The use of word clouds and digital metrics complements this analysis, enabling the mapping of recurring mentions and assessing the impact of disinformation narratives, highlighting terms or themes that gain relevance during election periods.

Despite these contributions, some important gaps remain. The integration of qualitative and quantitative approaches is one of the main challenges faced by researchers. While qualitative analyses provide interpretive depth, quantitative ones offer breadth and scalability. Combining these perspectives could lead to a more holistic understanding of misinformation, capturing both discursive details and large-scale dissemination patterns. Furthermore, understanding the dynamics of misinformation circulation on emerging platforms like Telegram remains limited. These networks, often less regulated, present unique challenges, such as user anonymity and rapid dissemination in private groups, making it difficult to trace false information.

On the other hand, some promising trends are beginning to take shape. The increasing use of computational tools for tracking and categorizing misinformation points to advances in identifying misleading content. Artificial intelligence-based technologies, for example, are being developed to analyze large volumes of data in real time, detecting patterns that may indicate coordinated misinformation activities. Additionally, investigations into the appropriation of journalistic credibility by misinformation-spreading outlets reveal an expanding field, with the potential to deconstruct the strategies that use journalistic language and aesthetics to legitimize false information.

The research then lists dissertations that address the terms misinformation and elections for interpretation. The study found 16 dissertations registered on the RNCd website, produced by members and researchers of the organization. When searching for the term misinformation only, 9 dissertations were found. After screening by the keywords misinformation and elections, the study found four works: "Misinformation in the 2018 Elections: Unpacking the Fake News that Favored Jair Bolsonaro." Produced by researcher Rebeca Letieri and presented to the Graduate Program in Media and Everyday Life at the Federal Fluminense University. The work analyzes the use of fake news during the campaign of the elected president, Jair Bolsonaro, by investigating the construction and framing of these media pieces. The study examined the framing of 104 pieces of news, characterized as false by fact-checking agencies, that were harmful to the runner-up in the polls and ballots, Fernando Haddad from the Workers' Party (PT).

The study of the influence of fake news on the 2018 Brazilian presidential elections presents a rich opportunity to understand the challenges of political communication in a digital environment deeply transformed by social networks and the spread of false information. This context reveals both the limits of traditional journalism and the rise of new communicative dynamics that transform social and political relations. The thesis highlights that social networks like WhatsApp were central to Jair Bolsonaro's victorious campaign, emphasizing the need to investigate the structure and intentionality behind the use of these tools. In this regard, Isabela Kalil, mapping Bolsonaro's supporters' profiles, provided a detailed analysis of the target audiences, cross-referencing recurring themes in fake news with specific narrative strategies.

The methodological choice of framing analysis allows for an exploration of how the organizational principles of social events are shaped to direct public perception. This approach is complemented by an interdisciplinary analysis that integrates concepts from Communication, Political Science, and Sociology. However, despite its theoretical robustness, the research admits the difficulty of quantitatively measuring the direct impact of fake news on election outcomes, noting that the influence of these pieces is a complex process, involving symbolic and emotional aspects that transcend rationality.

On the other hand, reflections on the role of WhatsApp, especially in Brazil, show how platforms initially designed for personal interaction have become arenas for narrative disputes. The 2019 ban on mass message broadcasting by the Superior Electoral Court (TSE) was an important step, but still insufficient to curb the strategic use of these tools in future election campaigns. The lack of effective regulation over social media and the limitations of investigations, even after robust complaints, make it clear that there is a significant gap in addressing this issue.

Crucially, the thesis highlights the relationship between authoritarian populism and misinformation,

reflecting on how political leaders use crisis narratives to justify extreme measures and mobilize support. Modern authoritarianism thrives on the crisis of journalism and informational fragmentation, creating an environment in which truth becomes relative and malleable. This dynamic is reinforced by the "narrative war," a postmodern concept widely explored in Brazilian political discourse, especially by the right.

In this scenario, critical analysis of the methodology used highlights both advances and challenges. The combined use of qualitative and quantitative approaches is commendable for its ability to capture nuances and patterns, but the research points to the need for greater integration with data science methods to map dissemination patterns and analyze complex misinformation networks.

In a subsequent stage, the cataloging of final theses (TCCs) was conducted, revealing only one record focusing on the theme of misinformation and elections: "Misinformation in the 2022 Brazilian Presidential Elections: The Fact-Checking Criteria of News Published on Twitter During the Pre-Campaign Period" by Leonardo Pereira Tavares. Regarding the theses, when screening with the keywords misinformation and elections, no relevant results were found.

What inference can be drawn from the results regarding the integrity and scope of the RNCD database?

The analysis of the RNCD database reveals a significant lack of specific research investigating the intersection between the terms disinformation and elections. The dedicated search combining both terms produced only seven records, highlighting a substantial disparity compared to the more extensive number of 154 records obtained when searching exclusively for the keyword disinformation across different formats, such as articles, undergraduate theses (TCCs), dissertations, and doctoral theses.

These findings indicate that, within the RNCD context, the scope of studies directly addressing the influence of disinformation on electoral processes is limited. It is essential to emphasize that this study analyzed research only in the formats of articles, undergraduate theses, dissertations, and doctoral theses. Additionally, databases like RNCD often rely on contributions from the academic community to enrich their records.

Identifying the scarcity of specific research on the intersection of disinformation and elections suggests that the academic community could contribute to these repositories by submitting and including studies addressing this topic. Encouraging and facilitating the submission of research on disinformation in elections to the RNCD database could be an effective strategy to bridge this gap.

Collaboration between researchers, academic institutions, and the database itself is crucial to creating a robust resource that comprehensively reflects current academic research in this evolving field. Moreover, the active participation of the academic community in contributing to the RNCD database will not only enrich the existing knowledge base but also foster a collaborative environment for sharing and disseminating relevant research.

The possibility of directly submitting research to the database presents a valuable opportunity for scholars to share their findings and contribute to the ongoing development of knowledge in the area of disinformation and elections. This collaborative process strengthens the utility and comprehensiveness of the database, making it a more complete and representative resource of the diverse perspectives and approaches within the academic community.

Beyond the essential role of the academic community in contributing to the RNCD database, raising awareness about the importance of this collaboration is crucial. Academic institutions, research organizations, and individual scholars should be encouraged to share not only their most recent studies but also earlier research that may not yet have been incorporated into the database. This collective effort will not only address the identified gaps in research on disinformation and elections but also foster a dynamic and accessible knowledge ecosystem.

Continuing this process of contribution and updating is essential to maintaining the vitality of the RNCD database. By emphasizing the importance of active collaboration, we can build an increasingly robust and representative resource, providing a comprehensive reflection of the ever-evolving research on disinformation and its impact on elections.

Final considerations

Based on the results achieved in this article, which highlighted a significant lack of bibliographic production on the topic of disinformation, especially when associated with elections, it is essential to recognize the complexity of this phenomenon. This complexity makes its approach, mapping, study, and systematization more difficult. With the accelerated spread of fake news, particularly on digital social networks, disinformation emerges as a dangerous social phenomenon, not only due to the dissemination of false information but, above all, because of its potential to incite harmful actions, whether in the physical or virtual sphere, by those who believe in it.

Although fact-checking agencies play a relevant role in combating this issue, the development of other policies, especially public ones, aimed at media literacy and the revision of existing legislation, is essential. The concern is not just about the quantity of fake news being spread but also about the belief in it and the resulting discrediting of journalism. As Martins and Teixeira (2023) point out, if disinformation were widely disseminated but lacked credibility, its impact and consequences for democracy would be significantly reduced.

However, it cannot be ignored that "the dissemination of false information disguised as news affects the public's perception of journalistic credibility" (Santos & Maurer, 2020, p. 2). Thus, disinformation both contributes to and benefits from this discrediting. The journalistic institution loses strength by delegating to fact-checking agencies the verification of information that has already been published, often becoming dependent on sources regardless of their reliability. This mechanism has increasingly been used over the years for political purposes that run counter to democratic principles, especially by extremist groups.

In this context, political disputes between the left and the right have taken on an extreme dimension, turning into life-or-death issues. The impacts of disinformation have proven to be far more catastrophic than many had anticipated. James Clyburn, an African-American politician from South Carolina (USA), highlights a fundamental aspect for understanding the scope of this problem: "Our candidates spend time trying to show people how smart they are instead of trying to connect with them." This reflection underscores the need for more effective and accessible communication, one that resonates with voters' realities and helps them distinguish between truthful and misleading information.

Finally, we believe that the state of the art presented in this article is merely a modest contribution to fostering a deeper reflection on the issue of disinformation. This phenomenon is far from being a punctual problem or one that can be solved through simplistic or isolated initiatives. Only through integrated strategies involving public policies, appropriate legislation, media education, and the strengthening of professional journalism can we effectively tackle the challenges posed by disinformation and its impacts on democracy.

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