

‘UniCHECKING’: FACT-CHECKING PROJECT DURING THE 2022 BRAZILIAN GENERAL ELECTIONS

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INTRODUCTION

Fake news, which dominated the world stage in the US presidential elections in 2016, has become an increasingly present and uncomfortable reality not only in Brazil, but throughout the world. With the popularization of the internet and social networks, the sharing of fabricated, false or inaccurate news has grown exponentially. The 'fakes news' shared on the internet are part of a problematic panorama of disinformation and, according to Sodr  (2019, p.99), “they are of the nature of rumor, to be received less for their factual content and more for their fabulation narrative, in the way of a deliberate perverse fait-divers”³. Filho (2019), on the other hand, draws attention to the offensive use of computers, known as “robots”, which copiously reproduce, in a viral and immeasurable way, the same fake news in countless posts with the aim of oppressing divergent opinions, especially during electoral periods. It is from this context that news verification agencies emerge with a commitment to protecting the public and the democratic institutions. The work of checking, ascertaining, comparing and confrontation are essential to guarantee a plural and egalitarian society with access to quality and impartial information. In view of this scenario, the 'UniChecking' project emerged from the partnership between the Evangelical University of Goi s - UniEVANG LICA and the Order of Attorneys of Brazil - Goi s Section (OAB - GO) through its Special Commission Against Disinformation and Electoral Corruption. It consists of verifying the veracity (fact checking) of the news broadcast and shared during the 2022 Brazilian General Elections, and it was carried out by students of the Journalism, Social Communication – Advertising and Marketing, Graphic Design, Law

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³ Originally: “s o da natureza do boato, a ser recebido menos por seu conte do factual e mais por sua fabula o narrativa, ao modo que um fait-divers perverso deliberado”, translated freely by the authors for the purpose of this paper.

and International Relations undergraduate programs, under the supervision of professors Kellen Ceretta and Luiz Eduardo Kruger Dias.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The project began in July 2022 and lasted until the end of the general elections, in October 2022. Its main objectives were: develop a fact-checking network related to the 2022 electoral process; ensure access to accurate, unbiased and factual information; contribute to guaranteeing the fairness of the elections; and combat false, misleading or inaccurate news.

To carry out the activities, the students were organized into thematic axis related to their area of training. The investigation and detailing of the potentially false content were performed based on reports submitted directly to a hotline provided by the OAB-GO and which was created solely for the project. After the analysis, the checked news was presented containing one of the following seals: 1) True; 2) False; 3) No Data; and 4) Inaccurate. In addition to the seal, they were also accompanied by an explanatory text on the choice of that seal. Soon after, the checks were posted on the official website of the OAB-GO. All sources used to check the materials received were also made available to the public.

RESULTS

An average of ten allegations (including videos and audios shared on *WhatsApp* and posts on *Instagram*) were reported on the hotline and checked by the team. The themes varied between candidatures at the state level, mainly for the position of deputy; and the national level, especially the presidential debate on the 28th of August. The following figure shows as an example one of the news posted on the official website of the OAB-GO.

Figure 1 - Piece of news checked by the UniChecking Project



ELEIÇÕES DE FATO: É FALSO CONTEÚDO DE VÍDEO QUE ASSOCIA DEPUTADO TALLES BARRETO A OPERAÇÃO TARJA PRETA

A verificação conduzida pelo movimento "Eleições de Fato!" da Ordem dos Advogados do Brasil – Seção Goiás (OAB-GO) concluiu que o vídeo associando o deputado Talles Barreto (União Brasil) a fraudes investigadas na Operação da Polícia Civil "Tarja Preta" contém notícia falsa.

O material audiovisual com texto narrado, uso de imagens e sons, que circula em redes sociais e aplicativos de conversas, afirma que Talles Barreto é o presidente da CPI da Saúde e acobertou um desvio de R\$ 9 milhões na gestão do governador Ronaldo Caiado.

Mas, a Comissão Especial de Combate à Desinformação e Corrupção Eleitoral da Seccional Goiana constatou que, apesar de ser citado, por alguns dos investigados da operação Tarja Preta, em 2013, o Deputado Talles Barreto não foi denunciado, investigado ou condenado.

A análise técnica do vídeo, realizada pelo grupo de trabalho da Faculdade de Jornalismo e Comunicação da Universidade Evangélica de Goiás (UniEVANGÉLICA) identificou ainda que em setembro de 2021, uma outra operação da Polícia Civil foi realizada para investigar o desvio de R\$ 6 milhões em recursos para o combate à pandemia da Covid-19 em hospitais de Goiás.

Segundo as autoridades policiais, uma organização social fazia contratos com empresas de fachada para o fornecimento de insumos e parte do dinheiro repassado pelas secretarias de saúde ficava com pessoas ligadas à organização.

Todavia, segundo a apuração, em nenhum momento o governador de Goiás, Ronaldo Caiado, ou seu governo, foi citado ou investigado. E, inclusive, segundo o delegado Francisco Lipari, coordenador da operação, os hospitais de Goiás, quando a operação foi deflagrada, não estavam mais sendo administrados pela organização social investigada, em virtude da revogação dos respectivos contratos de gestão.

Logo, as questões, presentes no vídeo, são falsas.

O resultado desta apuração será direcionado ao Ministério Público Eleitoral para as medidas cabíveis. **(Despacho)**



Source: OAB-GO official website

CONCLUSION

We consider the experience successful for three reasons: 1) providing undergraduate students with the opportunity to actively participate in the verification of news, contributing to a fairer and more democratic electoral process; 2) presenting students with relevant practical experience, of public interest and in line with international best practices; and 3) articulating programs of different areas in a transversal and innovative interdisciplinary practice.

Considering UniEVANGÉLICA's mission, which includes the "...formation of citizens committed to the truth..."⁴ and its principles of "Truth, community..."⁵; as well as the current scenario of spreading false, inaccurate and/or misleading information in the various communication channels, we understand that this project played a relevant

⁴ Originally: "...formação de cidadãos comprometidos com a verdade...", translated freely by the authors for the purpose of this paper.

⁵ Originally: "Verdade, comunidade...", translated freely by the authors for the purpose of this paper.

role in line with what the university defends as a confessional Christian institution of excellence.

With this project, UniEVANGÉLICA has been and remains at the forefront of verifying fake news (fact-checking) at regional and national levels, contributing to access to quality, accurate and impartial information, so necessary in today's world. It is suggested that the project be maintained and expanded, including the use of the data collected in the project as a subsidy for research on media communication in Goiás and Brazil.

KEY-WORDS: Fact-checking; Fake News; 2022 Elections.

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