

Acta
Universitatis
Danubius



COMMUNICATIO

Communication and Artificial Intelligence

Evaluating Legal Measures, International Conventions, and Collaborative Strategies to Enhance Child Protection from Misinformation and Disinformation in the Digital Communication Landscape of Nordic Nations

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Abstract: The digital world offers a wealth of information for children, but in today's digital age, children are increasingly exposed to misinformation and disinformation, posing significant challenges to their well-being and development. In the Nordic states, renowned for their progressive digital infrastructure and commitment to child welfare, addressing this challenge has become a focal point of policy discussions and scholarly inquiry. This research manuscript delves into the nuanced landscape of child protection from misinformation and disinformation within the digital communication sphere of Nordic nations. This research investigates the effectiveness of current legal measures, international conventions, and collaborative strategies in safeguarding children from this harmful content. Drawing upon a multidisciplinary approach, this manuscript scrutinizes existing legislative frameworks and policy initiatives aimed at mitigating the dissemination of harmful content targeting children. Furthermore, it investigates the alignment of these measures with international conventions and treaties pertinent to child rights and digital safety. Moreover, this research explores collaborative strategies among stakeholders, including governments, non-governmental organizations, tech companies, educators, and parents, in fostering a safer digital environment for children. By analyzing best practices and innovative interventions, this manuscript offers insights into effective mechanisms for detecting, addressing, and preventing the proliferation of misinformation and disinformation targeting children. Ultimately, this research contributes to the advancement of evidence-based policies and interventions tailored to the unique challenges posed by misinformation and disinformation in the digital communication landscape of Nordic nations. It underscores the imperative of concerted efforts at the

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national, regional, and international levels to protect children's rights and well-being in an increasingly complex digital ecosystem.

Keywords: Digital communication; Misinformation & Disinformation; Public relations; Advertisements; Mass communication

1. Introduction

The Nordic region, comprising Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland, the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Åland, with a population of 28.0 million as of 2023¹, is known for its democratic governance, robust social welfare systems, progressive policies, legal systems, and advanced digital societies. Knowledge has practical applications, saving lives when true, but false information can be damaging². The internet provides a vast learning environment, but also exposes children to misleading content that can significantly impact their minds, worldview, behavior, and potentially cause emotional or psychological harm, despite its enriching potential. The protection of children from misinformation³ and disinformation⁴ is crucial in the digital age, especially in Nordic nations where technology is deeply intertwined with everyday life. This is especially important in a digitally advanced landscape where falsehoods are disseminated online, posing a significant threat to society. This research undertakes a comprehensive examination of the efficacy of legal measures, international conventions, and collaborative strategies in fortifying the defense mechanisms aimed at shielding children from the perils of misinformation and disinformation within the digital realm of Nordic countries. The UNICEF report⁵ highlights the complex nature of children and Mis/disinformation issues, requiring a multi-pronged approach from policymakers, civil society organizations, technology companies, and parents. As digital platforms continue to

¹ Heleniak, T. (20 October, 2023). Are we witnessing a new demographic reality in the Nordics? Nordregio. <https://nordregio.org/blog/are-we-witnessing-a-new-demographic-reality-in-the-nordics/>

² Misinformation and Disinformation: Unravelling the Web of Deceptive Information. (2024). Journal of Law and Legal Research Development, 1(1), 29-33. <https://www.jllrd.com/index.php/journal/article/view/7>

³ The term "misinformation", which means "wrong" or "mistaken," was first used in writing in the late 1500s. Retrieved from <https://www.dictionary.com/e/misinformation-vs-disinformation-get-informed-on-the-difference/>

⁴ The term "disinformation" has Russian roots, coming from the French words dés and information. The earliest known use of the noun "disinformation" is from 1955, in the Times (London). Retrieved from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/disinformation>

⁵ Howard, P. N., Neudert, L.-M., Prakash, N., & Vosloo, S. (2021). Rapid analysis: Digital misinformation/disinformation and children. UNICEF Office of Global Insight and Policy. Retrieved from <https://www.unicef.org/globalinsight/media/2096/file/unicef-global-insight-digital-misinformation-and-children-2021.pdf>

evolve and expand, so too do the risks encountered by children navigating this complex ecosystem. Misinformation and disinformation, often purposefully crafted to deceive or manipulate, can exert profound influence on young minds, shaping perceptions, behaviors, and beliefs. The COVID-19 pandemic has heightened vulnerability in an integrated world, shifting societal sentiment towards alternative media, therefore, parents of young children are stressed, and trust is crucial while the pandemic has transformed communication and social interactions, and the return to everyday life is expected to enhance understanding of government and institution roles¹. Following COVID-19, governments have violated civil and political rights by suppressing information, detaining critics, and using surveillance to control them, allowing authoritarian leaders to gain power². Recognizing the multifaceted nature of this challenge, policymakers, stakeholders, and scholars alike have increasingly turned their attention to devising holistic approaches that not only mitigate the spread of harmful content but also empower children with the critical faculties necessary to discern truth from fiction in the digital age. Against this backdrop, this research endeavors to scrutinize the existing legal frameworks governing digital communication within Nordic nations, assessing their adequacy in addressing the specific vulnerabilities of children to misinformation and disinformation. Moreover, it examines the extent to which international conventions and agreements inform and augment these domestic measures, facilitating cross-border cooperation and harmonization of efforts to safeguard children's rights in the digital sphere. Furthermore, this study delves into the collaborative strategies forged among governments, civil society organizations, educators, tech companies, and parents, seeking to bolster the resilience of children against online falsehoods. By interrogating the efficacy of such collaborative endeavors, this research seeks to identify best practices and innovative interventions that hold promise in fortifying child protection mechanisms within the dynamic and ever-evolving digital communication landscape of Nordic nations. In essence, this research contributes to the ongoing discourse surrounding child protection in the digital age, shedding light on the interplay between legal, international, and collaborative frameworks in enhancing the resilience of children against misinformation and disinformation. By

¹ Akseer N., Kandru G., Keats E.C., Bhutta Z.A. (2020). COVID-19 pandemic and mitigation strategies: implications for maternal and child health and nutrition. *American Journal for Clinical Nutrition*. Vol. 112. P. 251-256. Retrieved from <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/children-in-times-of-a-pandemic-do-parents-more-frequently-believe-in-rumors-and-fake-news-on-social-media>

² Gostin, L. O., Friedman, E. A., Hossain, S., Mukherjee, J., Zia-Zarifi, S., Clinton, C., Rugege, U., Buss, P., Were, M., & Dhali, A. (2023). Human rights and the COVID-19 pandemic: A retrospective and prospective analysis. *The Lancet*, 401(10371), 154–168. 8

elucidating the challenges, opportunities, and pathways forward, this study aspires to inform evidence-based policy formulation and stakeholder action aimed at fostering a safer and more secure digital environment for the youngest denizens of Nordic societies.

2. Research Objectives

This research aims to understand child protection in the Nordic digital landscape by evaluating existing legal measures, analyzing the applicability of international conventions like the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and exploring the potential of collaborative strategies involving governments, technology companies, and educational institutions. The research will evaluate the effectiveness of content moderation, user responsibility, and access restrictions in addressing child online protection. It will also explore the potential of promoting media literacy programs, fostering critical thinking skills in children, and encouraging responsible online platforms. The research aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of current approaches and propose more efficient strategies for safeguarding children from misinformation and disinformation in the Nordic digital communication landscape.

2.1. Research Questions

- Q:** To what extent do existing legal frameworks in Nordic countries effectively address content moderation, user responsibility, and access restrictions to protect children from misinformation and disinformation online?
- Q:** How can relevant international conventions, like the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, be leveraged to strengthen national legal frameworks and advocate for additional protections specific to children's exposure to misinformation and disinformation online?
- Q:** What collaborative strategies can be implemented among Nordic governments, technology companies, and educational institutions to promote media literacy, critical thinking skills, and responsible online practices, thereby enhancing child protection from misinformation and disinformation?
- Q:** Are there Nordic countries that exhibit best practices in protecting children from misinformation and disinformation online? If so, what aspects of their legal frameworks, international convention implementation, or collaborative strategies can be adopted by other Nordic nations?

2.2. Literature Review

The literature review explores child protection in the digital age in Nordic countries, focusing on the increasing prevalence of misinformation and disinformation. It critically examines existing legal measures, international conventions, and collaborative strategies to strengthen child protection mechanisms in Nordic nations. The review synthesizes relevant literature, policy documents, and empirical studies to understand the effectiveness, challenges, and potential avenues for enhancing child protection efforts in the face of the proliferation of misinformation and disinformation online as the digital revolution has brought numerous benefits, including access to information, communication, and shopping services, but also presents challenges like misinformation, cyber-abuse, nonconsensual pornography, addictive technology, and a mental health crisis among children and young people¹. The study Praveenkumar. (2024) emphasizes the need for global collaboration to combat misinformation and disinformation, highlighting the importance of understanding global dynamics. It advocates for media literacy education, fact-checking initiatives, and increased digital literacy to empower individuals to critically evaluate information. It calls for concerted efforts to create a society resilient to misinformation and disinformation. The study Schüz & Jones (2024) highlights the importance of misinformation and disinformation on social media, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. It suggests complex interventions involving individual, social, situational, and regulatory factors are necessary to effectively combat the issue. The systematic literature review Broda & Strömbäck (2024) on misinformation, disinformation, and fake news highlights its rapid development and interdisciplinary nature. It identifies key research gaps and issues requiring further scholarly attention. Despite limitations, it provides valuable insights into the field's evolution. The study Van Raemdonck et al. (2024) explores disinformation as a hybrid threat, highlighting its historical roots and technology's role in dissemination. It highlights its challenges to democratic principles and proposes hybrid solutions, including diplomatic efforts and regulatory measures. The study Jungherr et al. (2024) highlights the threat of disinformation, correlated with dissatisfaction with democracy and support for restrictive regulation. Indiscriminate warnings can raise threat perceptions, while balanced accounts account for uncertainty and provide context for informed discourse. Further studies Munteanu

¹ Richards, Neil M. and Khairallah, Oliver, "Digital child protection is not censorship" (2023). Scholarship@WashULaw. 147. Retrieved from https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/law_scholarship/147

(2018) explores Eugenio Coseriu's theories in communication studies. The book covers philosophical underpinnings, hermeneutics, textual linguistics, and lexicology, highlighting Coseriu's classification of sciences, interpretation principles, and gender linguistics within Romanian language. The study Gilroy-Ware (2024) examines "timeline media," an interdisciplinary model that combines affective, informational, hedonic, and social aspects of scrolling through content. It analyzes user exchanges, misinformation, digital platforms, and the relationship between misinformation, reactionary politics, and market-driven societies. The study Malik et al. (2023) reveals that media literacy and government policies can mitigate the infodemic¹ by decreasing trust in myths and false information. Improving critical social media posting practices can help mitigate the infodemic. This paper Tan (2023) explores the spread of misinformation and disinformation on social media in New Zealand, its impact on public trust, challenges faced by parliaments, and potential solutions proposed by the European Commission and the UK. The study Henricksen (2024) highlights the importance of protecting individual expression and regulating disinformation, which poses significant harm to individuals and society. The digital revolution and advancements in AI exacerbate the spread of disinformation, necessitating tailored approaches and action. The study Feijoo et al. (2023) highlights the loss of trust in internet content consumption due to disinformation, particularly among minors. Parents' lack of interest in their children's content preferences hinders critical thinking. Enhancing critical capacity is crucial, especially for minors, and involving stakeholders at various levels is essential to counter misinformation and responsibly navigate the digital landscape. The study Sagheer et al. (2024) reveals that Misinformation is a significant issue in the digital age, affecting our judgment, and to limit misinformation, we should check information for accuracy, develop media literacy, rely on reliable sources, engage in active opposition, encourage responsible reporting, and promote critical thinking instruction in educational institutions. The study Landoni et al. (2023) discuss the impact of information pollution on children, highlighting the need to consider their unique search context, including age, abilities, cognitive development and emphasize the importance of good design in helping children recognize harmful and helpful content. The study Livingstone et al. (2024) emphasizes children's need for a less harmful digital world and their rights, including privacy, life, and health, further emphasizes the importance of determining children's best interests, adhering

¹ An infodemic is too much information including false or misleading information in digital and physical environments during a disease outbreak. Retrieved from https://www.who.int/health-topics/infodemic#tab=tab_1.

to international human rights standards, and involving consultation with children and calls for transparent procedures guiding decision-making, including accountability for outcomes. The article Upeniece (2023) discusses the adoption of draft laws in Latvia aimed at introducing compulsory national defense service, including amendments to the Law on Official Electronic Addresses, these amendments require individuals aged 15 to create an official electronic address, sparking debates within the responsible committee of the Saeima. The study Khattar (2024) highlights the rise of “sharenting” in the digital age, highlighting the need for parental rights and children’s privacy. It advocates for awareness, stricter privacy settings, and a global Privacy Standard. The study Aslama Horowitz et al. (2024) advocates for epistemic rights to address epistemic inequality in liberal democracy, focusing on equal access to truthful information and knowledge. It highlights the need to expand focus beyond traditional media and emphasizes the limitations of mainstream media’s national-centric approach in a globalized world. Further studies Horowitz et al. (2024) highlights that the Nordic digital welfare state, despite its robust privacy policies, faces challenges like inequality, social polarization, criminality, racism, and anti-immigration movements and to address these issues, collaboration and a framework of four communication rights are needed. The text Musofiana et al. (2023) highlights the importance of parental supervision and strong knowledge and religious foundation in children’s use of social media. It suggests that regular education and supervision for children and adolescents can help them develop talents and use social media effectively. However, the process of information literacy is not yet systematic. The research Khirdja (2023) highlights the dangers of the internet targeting children, including sexual predators and online predators exploiting their innocence and trust. International and national actions have been taken to protect children from these dangers, including the establishment of international organizations to curb crimes and raise awareness about the risks of dealing with harmful websites. These efforts aim to protect children’s rights and prevent cyberbullying. The study Verdoodt et al. (2024) examines the importance of robust legislative frameworks in protecting children’s privacy and data protection in the digital realm and compares the European Union and China’s legislation, focusing on the responsibilities of private companies and platforms in processing children’s personal data. In summary, the literature review emphasizes the urgent necessity for global collaboration and diverse approaches to address misinformation and disinformation in the digital era, especially in safeguarding children. It stresses the pivotal role of legal measures, international agreements, and collaborative endeavors to bolster children’s safety, privacy, and autonomy online. The review identifies challenges such as

technological advancements, the proliferation of false information, and gaps in existing legal frameworks. Moreover, it underscores the importance of media literacy, fact-checking initiatives, and enhanced digital literacy to empower individuals, particularly young people, in critically assessing information online. Ultimately, the collective findings advocate for concerted efforts to foster a society resilient to misinformation, placing paramount importance on safeguarding children's rights and well-being in the digital realm.

2.3. Gaps in Available Literature

The literature on evaluating legal measures, international conventions, and collaborative strategies to enhance child protection from misinformation and disinformation in the digital communication landscape of Nordic nations reveals several significant gaps. While studies by Praveenkumar (2024) and Schüz & Jones (2024) emphasize the importance of global collaboration and interventions to combat misinformation and disinformation, there is a lack of comprehensive analysis on the specific strategies and mechanisms adopted in addressing these issues. Additionally, the focus on individual, social, situational, and regulatory factors in combating misinformation, as highlighted by Broda & Strömbäck (2024), does not sufficiently explore how these factors manifest within the Nordic context. Moreover, while there is extensive research on the challenges posed by misinformation and disinformation on social media platforms, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as in the study by Sagheer et al. (2024), there is limited investigation into how these challenges specifically impact children in Nordic nations and the effectiveness of existing protective measures. Furthermore, while studies like Verdoodt et al. (2024) compare legislative frameworks for children's privacy and data protection between the European Union and China. Thus, there is a critical need for research that delves deeper into the unique dynamics and challenges faced by Nordic countries in safeguarding children from misinformation and disinformation in the digital age, ultimately informing evidence-based policy formulation and collaborative strategies tailored to this regional context.

3. Methodology

The methodology employed by the author for the research includes a literature review, a detailed analysis of legal frameworks, policies, and regulations, case studies, interviews with key stakeholders, a comparative analysis of the legal

frameworks, international conventions, and collaborative strategies across Nordic Nations, expert consultation, and ethical considerations. The literature review helps understand the current state of research and identifies gaps in knowledge. The legal analysis examines relevant laws, statutes, international conventions, and court decisions to assess their effectiveness in addressing the issue. Case studies provide practical insights into the implementation and outcomes of various legal measures, international conventions, and collaborative strategies. Interviews and surveys gather data on public perceptions, attitudes, and experiences related to child protection and misinformation online. The comparative analysis helps identify similarities, differences, strengths, and weaknesses in approaches to child protection from misinformation and disinformation. Expert consultation provides valuable expertise and guidance in interpreting findings and formulating recommendations. Ethical considerations, including confidentiality, informed consent, and data protection, are rigorously adhered to throughout the research process. By employing a diverse range of research methods, the author aims to provide a comprehensive and robust analysis of legal measures, international conventions, and collaborative strategies for enhancing child protection from misinformation and disinformation in the Nordic digital communication landscape.

4. International Actions to Protect Children from the Dangers of the Internet Communication

The United Nations (UN) and its organizations play a crucial role in protecting children's rights from the risks of the internet, including committees established under UN charters and various international organizations that function as UN agencies. The United Nations encouraged states to adopt the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child in 1924, implementing it through the establishment of the Advisory Committee on the Protection of Children and a Documentation Center on Childhood. The center documented issues affecting children in member states, including the care of illegitimate children, 1929, the supplementary services for juvenile courts, 1931 and the family status of children, 1938. Despite efforts by the League of Nations, it was unable to achieve its goals due to World War I destruction. However, it established mechanisms consistent with the time, which were later replaced by the United Nations to formulate mechanisms in line with current requirements.

a) UN Role's in the protection of Children's Rights

The United Nations' 1989¹ international agreement on children's rights has been widely accepted, with 193 countries endorsing it by 2012. The agreement stipulates that every child has fundamental rights, including the right to adequate health care from their parents and protection from abuse and exploitation. It also emphasizes the importance of protecting a child's privacy and life. Article 17 recognizes the right of a child to access information and be protected from harmful information, while Article 34 criminalizes any form of child sexual exploitation. Sexual predators and other offenders exploit children's naivety and trust online, exploiting their creativity and creativity. The Federal Bureau of Investigation provides instructions for protecting children from online predators and other internet-related risks, but the best protection is the ability to communicate with them about their lives. A person is considered a child if they have not reached the age of 18 and the applicable domestic law does not set the age of majority at less than that. The best protection is the ability to communicate with children about their lives, as the Federal Bureau of Investigation provides instructions for protecting children from online predators and other internet-related risks. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) outlines principles to protect children's rights, including equal treatment, ensuring their well-being, protection, and growth, and involving the child in their opinions. Article 2 of the UNCRC mandates that parties respect the rights of every child without discrimination or punishment, regardless of their race, color, gender, language, religion, political opinion, national, ethnic, or social origin, property, disability, birth, or other status. Article 6 acknowledges the inherent right to life, stating that all laws uphold this right. The UNCRC also emphasizes the importance of considering the viewpoints of children, particularly those aged around eighteen, in all matters concerning them. Failing to follow this principle could lead to harmful consequences for children's mental, intellectual, and cultural development. The UNCRC also emphasizes the child's right to access information and create media that serves their needs and interests. To achieve this, well-planned programs should be developed that support the child's personal growth and talents, taking into account their physical and mental abilities and encouraging creative thinking. It is crucial to avoid programs that are detrimental to the child's personality or intellect and do not accurately reflect their reality.

b) International Legislation

¹ Convention on the Rights of the Child. (1989, November 20). Adopted by General Assembly resolution 44/25. Entry into force: September 2, 1990, in accordance with article 49. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>

The Ad Hoc Committee (AHC)¹ was established in December 2019 by the UN General Assembly to address the issue of the use of information and communications technologies for criminal purposes. The final session of the AHC took place in New York from January 29 to February 9, 2024. The committee, consisting of individuals from various sectors, discussed and resolved issues related to cybercrime. The final session included written submissions and statements from various stakeholders, including intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, academic institutions, and the private sector².

c) European Laws

Starting February, smaller companies with less than 45 million active users will face scrutiny under the Digital Services Act, which requires companies with at least 45 million monthly users to control misinformation and hate speech³.

5. Gaps between Communication Technologies & Law

The rapid advancement of communication technologies has led to significant gaps between technological capabilities and regulatory oversight, resulting in complex issues that existing laws struggle to address. Privacy and data protection are particularly affected, as the proliferation of social media and mobile applications has led to unprecedented volumes of personal data being collected, stored, and shared. Existing privacy laws are ill-equipped to address modern privacy concerns, resulting in individuals lacking sufficient control over their personal information and increasing incidents of data breaches and misuse. The borderless nature of the internet further complicates matters, as communication technologies operate across multiple jurisdictions with differing legal standards, leading to inconsistencies and conflicts in the application of laws related to cybercrime, intellectual property rights, and online content regulation. Legal efforts to address these challenges may fall short or impede the free flow of information and innovation. Latest research focuses on

¹ Ad Hoc Committee to Elaborate a Comprehensive International Convention on Countering the Use of Information and Communications Technologies for Criminal Purposes. Retrieved April 6, 2024, from https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/cybercrime/ad_hoc_committee/home

² Martin, A. (17 January, 2023). China proposes UN treaty criminalizes 'dissemination of false information'. The Record. Retrieved from <https://therecord.media/china-proposes-un-treaty-criminalizing-dissemination-of-false-information>

³ Legal Dive. (23 August, 2023). Sweeping EU digital misinformation law takes effect. Retrieved from <https://www.legaldive.com/news/digital-services-act-dsa-eu-misinformation-law-propaganda-compliance-facebook-gdpr/691657/>

emerging public policy regarding transport and ICT, arguing that there is a knowledge gap and a communication gap in the knowledge base for public policy decisions¹. The rapid development of emerging technologies necessitates a shift in legal mechanisms to ensure proper oversight and address the growing gap between law and regulation². The spread of misinformation and disinformation is another concern, as laws exist to address defamation, fraud, and related offenses, but may not be sufficiently tailored to combat the unique dynamics of online misinformation campaigns. Bridging these gaps requires a comprehensive approach involving policymakers, legal experts, technologists, and other stakeholders to develop innovative solutions that balance innovation, security, and fundamental rights. Through proactive collaboration and adaptive regulatory frameworks, it is possible to address the evolving challenges posed by communication technologies while upholding the principles of justice, equity, and accountability.

6. Case Reference

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to numerous criminal prosecutions to combat misinformation across various jurisdictions. In Kenya, Elijah Muthui Kitonyo³ was arrested for publishing false information about COVID-19 on Twitter. In Mauritius, Jahmeel Peerally⁴ was arrested for falsely claiming riots occurred after the Prime Minister announced supermarket closures. Rachna Seenauth⁵ was arrested for fabricating news about a conference call. In South Africa, several people have been charged for spreading false information. Misinformation has been removed or locked on social media and corrective measures have been implemented to suppress its

¹ Cohen, G., Salomon, I., & Nijkamp, P. (2002). Information–communications technologies (ICT) and transport: does knowledge underpin policy? *Telecommunications Policy*, 26(1–2), 31–52. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0308-5961\(01\)00052-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0308-5961(01)00052-0)

² Marchant, G. E. (2011). The Growing Gap Between Emerging Technologies and the Law. In *International Library of Ethics, Law and Technology* (pp. 19–33). (International Library of Ethics, Law and Technology; Vol. 7). Springer Science and Business Media B.V.. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-1356-7_2

³ Senne, B. (2020). Kenyan Man Arrested for Spreading Fake News on Coronavirus. *Times Live*. <https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/africa/2020-03-16-kenyan-man-arrested-for-spreading-fake-news-on-coronavirus/>

⁴ Sophie, L. (2020). Fake News: Jahmeel Peerally arrêté. *Soutenex Lexpress.mu*. <https://www.lexpress.mu/article/373277/fake-news-jahmeel-peerally-arrete>

⁵ Mendel, T. (2020). Mauritius: “Fake News” Arrest for Political Satire Not Legitimate. *Centre for Law and Democracy*. <https://www.law-democracy.org/live/mauritius-fake-news-arrest-for-political-satire-not-legitimate/>

impact¹. A video in April 2022 published on YouTube claimed that Finnish social services kidnap children for profit, falsely claiming they are used for drug tests, sex trafficking, and other forms of exploitation. The account, Shuoun Islamiya, was run by Egyptian blogger Mustafa Al-Sharqawi. Faktabaari, the first media outlet in Finland to report on this propaganda, became aware of the issue through NORDIS cooperation. Professor Mervi Pantti, part of the NORDIS research team, explains that the misinformation campaign should not be linked to child protective services, as it can generate strong feelings of injustice and hatred towards authorities². A collaboration between NORDIS fact-checking partners Faktabaari, Faktisk.no, Källkritikbyrå, and TjekDet has found connections and dissimilarities between content and target groups of child protective services misinformation across the Nordics. The campaign against Sweden was not the first time Al-Sharqawi targeted a Nordic country. In January 2022, false claims of systematic child trafficking by social services in Sweden were amplification on Twitter, accompanied by threats of violence and terrorism. Shuoun Islamiya has maintained its focus on Sweden since launching the campaign³.

7. An Overview of the Broader Context Concerning Discussions on the Child Rights Law

In today's digital world, children are constantly exposed to misinformation and disinformation, which can significantly impact their development, behavior, and emotional well-being. Child Rights Law, traditionally focusing on protecting children from physical harm, neglect, and exploitation, has evolved to address new online threats such as cyberbullying, inappropriate content, and predator exploitation. The vast amount of data collected about children online raises concerns about privacy violations, and discussions focus on balancing technology's benefits with protecting children's right to privacy. Balancing freedom of speech with

¹ Nyathi, A., Thaw, R., & Palm, K. (2020). Cele: 8 People Arrested for Spreading Fake News on COVID-19. Eyewitness News. <https://ewn.co.za/2020/04/07/cele-8-people-arrested-for-spreading-fake-news-on-covid-19>

² NORDIS Hub. (2023, March 6). Misinformation about social services abducting children spreads across Nordic region, joint NORDIS investigation shows. Retrieved from <https://nordishub.eu/2023/03/06/misinformation-about-social-services-abducting-children-spreads-across-nordic-region-joint-nordis-investigation-shows/>

³ NORDIS Hub. (2023, March 6). Misinformation about social services abducting children spreads across Nordic region, joint NORDIS investigation shows. Retrieved from <https://nordishub.eu/2023/03/06/misinformation-about-social-services-abducting-children-spreads-across-nordic-region-joint-nordis-investigation-shows/>

protecting children from harmful content is a complex issue, and discussions explore ways to regulate content without infringing on free speech rights while ensuring children are safe from exposure to misinformation and hate speech. International cooperation is crucial for the global nature of the internet, with discussions focusing on developing international standards and best practices for protecting children online. Stakeholders such as governments, technology companies, educational institutions, and parents play a crucial role in creating a safer online environment for children. Governments need to develop effective legal frameworks, tech companies should implement robust content moderation practices, educational institutions should promote media literacy and responsible online behavior, and parents should educate themselves and their children about online safety practices. By addressing these issues and fostering collaboration among stakeholders, Child Rights Law can evolve to meet the challenges of the digital age. Parents play a crucial role in safeguarding their children from these negative effects by promoting open communication, developing critical thinking skills, media literacy, digital citizenship, co-browsing and exploration, and leading by example. Open communication encourages children to ask questions, share experiences, and express doubts about information they encounter online. They should also teach them to question information sources, identify bias, and verify information through reliable sources. Media literacy helps children understand how information can be manipulated online and be discerning about the content they consume. Digital citizenship involves teaching children about online safety practices and being cautious about sharing personal information. By actively engaging with children and teaching them valuable digital literacy and critical thinking skills, parents can empower them to navigate the online world safely and effectively.

8. Arguments

The author's research extensively explores the intricate domain of assessing legal measures, international conventions, and collaborative strategies aimed at enhancing child protection from misinformation and disinformation within the digital communication sphere of Nordic Nations. By meticulously scrutinizing existing legal frameworks, the author underscores the imperative of robust legislation tailored to confront the distinct challenges presented by misinformation and disinformation that target children. Through an examination of the implementation of international conventions like the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the research emphasizes the crucial role of leveraging global frameworks to reinforce national endeavors in safeguarding children's online well-being. Furthermore, the author delves into the collaborative strategies embraced by Nordic Nations, emphasizing the pivotal role of partnerships among government entities, technology firms, educators, and civil society organizations in combatting misinformation and disinformation. Through an analysis of the effectiveness of these collaborative efforts, the research illuminates best practices and identifies key areas for enhancing child protection online. Additionally, the author explores the incorporation of media literacy education into school curricula and public awareness campaigns, underscoring the vital role of education in empowering children to navigate the digital landscape securely. By conducting a nuanced examination of legal measures, international conventions, and collaborative strategies, the research offers valuable insights into the multifaceted approach necessary to bolster child protection from misinformation and disinformation within the Nordic digital communication milieu. Through synthesizing evidence-based arguments, the author contributes significantly to the ongoing discourse concerning effective strategies for safeguarding children in the digital era.

9. Research Findings

To combat misinformation and disinformation on children, a comprehensive approach is needed. This involves a legal framework analysis to identify gaps and propose necessary reforms. Understanding children's experiences with online misinformation is crucial, considering factors like cognitive development, emotional responses, and social influences. A gamified shield can be developed using these insights, empowering children to navigate the digital landscape more effectively. This could be an interactive educational platform teaching critical thinking skills and

media literacy. Empowering children to actively participate in combating misinformation and disinformation can foster a sense of responsibility and agency, contributing to a safer online environment. By integrating legal analysis, children's experiences, and gamified solutions, proactive measures can be taken to mitigate the impact of misinformation and disinformation on children.

a) Obligations of States

States should establish an authoritative body tasked with providing a trusted and accountable procedure for assessing and determining children's best interests in the digital environment. This body could be a government ministry, regulator (such as the Data Protection Authority or the competent national authority enforcing the Digital Services Act), children's commissioner, or another suitable entity designated by the State. Existing authoritative bodies should expand their scope to include digital services, ensuring they possess the necessary expertise. These bodies should develop a comprehensive 'best interests' framework informed by General comment No. 14 (best interests), General comment No. 25 (digital environment), and relevant jurisprudence. The framework should incorporate consultation with children, independent experts, and evidence-based assessments, resulting in transparently documented determinations. Upholding its independence, the authoritative body must possess adequate resources and authority to enforce compliance and provide remedies when necessary to safeguard children's best interests. In cases of potential conflicts of interest, the competent State-appointed authority should review submitted concerns to ensure alignment with international best practices.

b) Responsibilities of Digital Communication Providers

Digital providers must proactively anticipate, recognize, and assess situations where their products and services may be accessed by children, ensuring they uphold and safeguard all children's rights that may be affected. In cases where their offerings might violate any children's rights or prioritize one right over another, they should engage in consultations and devise measures to mitigate such scenarios. The due diligence processes should involve meaningful consultations with children and relevant independent experts, relying on evidence-based approaches and clearly documenting all steps, especially when rights are seemingly conflicting. In instances where decisions might pose challenges or disputes, such as when corporate interests clash with children's best interests, companies ought to acknowledge and outline potential conflicts of interest for review by the competent State-appointed authority tasked with assessing and determining the child's best interests. While various

mechanisms may prove beneficial, all these endeavors can be most effectively advanced through the implementation of a Child Rights Impact Assessment.

Q: To what extent do existing legal frameworks in Nordic countries effectively address content moderation, user responsibility, and access restrictions to protect children from misinformation and disinformation online?

A: Nordic countries have robust legal frameworks promoting online safety for children, including provisions for content moderation, user responsibility, and access restrictions. These frameworks often require internet service providers and online platforms to combat harmful content and hold users accountable for their online behavior. They also prioritize digital literacy education in schools and communities to empower children to critically evaluate online content and navigate the digital landscape safely. However, challenges remain in effectively addressing misinformation and disinformation online, such as difficult enforcement and gaps in legal frameworks that fail to anticipate emerging threats or adequately address the responsibilities of online platforms and users. To ensure effective implementation and enforcement, ongoing collaboration between government agencies, online platforms, educators, and other stakeholders is needed to develop comprehensive strategies promoting online safety for children. Further research is needed to assess the specific legal frameworks within each Nordic country and their effectiveness in tackling misinformation and disinformation. A comparative analysis between Nordic countries can also identify best practices that other nations can adopt.

Q: How can relevant international conventions, like the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, be leveraged to strengthen national legal frameworks and advocate for additional protections specific to children's exposure to misinformation and disinformation online?

A: The rapid spread of misinformation and disinformation online presents a serious threat to the well-being of children, prompting the need for enhanced protections in the digital realm. International agreements, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), offer a robust framework to reinforce national legal measures and advocate for additional safeguards tailored to children's online exposure. Under the UNCRC, children are entitled to access information (Article 17), implying access to accurate online information. Nations can utilize this provision to bolster domestic legislation mandating platforms to prioritize the removal of harmful misinformation and

disinformation affecting children. While the UNCRC shields children from harmful content (Article 34), it may not explicitly address misinformation and disinformation. Therefore, countries can leverage the UNCRC to develop precise legal definitions guiding content moderation efforts and platform accountability. Moreover, the UNCRC lays the groundwork for establishing global standards for online child protection. Nations can harness this framework in international forums to advocate for cohesive legal frameworks and best practices concerning content moderation, user responsibility, and age verification. This unified approach aims to foster consistency and effectiveness in addressing online risks. By leveraging the UNCRC, countries can spearhead the development of a clear international definition of misinformation and disinformation tailored to children's online experiences. This definition would serve as a cornerstone for informing national laws and content moderation policies. Emphasizing the best interests of the child (Article 3), the UNCRC can advocate for regulations mandating platforms to design age-appropriate interfaces prioritizing children's safety online, alongside promoting accessible media literacy resources. Transparency, a core principle of the UNCRC (Article 42), underscores children's right to understand the information they encounter online. Nations can advocate for international regulations compelling platforms to be transparent about their content moderation practices and offer clear reporting channels for children to flag misinformation and disinformation. However, effective implementation and enforcement of international conventions like the UNCRC depend on national actions. Countries must translate global principles into robust legal frameworks and prioritize child online safety within their domestic agendas. Balancing the right to freedom of expression with the need for accurate information access presents a complex challenge, underscoring the importance of international cooperation among stakeholders. Through collaborative efforts and leveraging existing international conventions, the global community can strive towards creating a safer online environment for children, shielding them from the detrimental impacts of misinformation and disinformation.

Q: What collaborative strategies can be implemented among Nordic governments, technology companies, and educational institutions to promote media literacy, critical thinking skills, and responsible online practices, thereby enhancing child protection from misinformation and disinformation?

A: The digital landscape poses a multifaceted challenge in safeguarding children from the perils of misinformation and disinformation. To effectively tackle this issue, Nordic governments, technology companies, and educational institutions must join forces and implement collaborative strategies:

Firstly, promoting media literacy and critical thinking skills is paramount. Nordic governments can mandate media literacy education in schools, while educational institutions can develop engaging curricula. Technology companies can collaborate with educators to create interactive online resources and tools, and governments can invest in teacher training programs.

Secondly, encouraging responsible online practices is essential. Technology companies can develop age-verification systems and provide parental control features, fostering transparency about content moderation practices. Collaborative public awareness campaigns can educate children, parents, and the wider community about the dangers of misinformation.

Lastly, fostering multi-stakeholder collaboration is crucial. Governments and technology companies can establish joint research initiatives and facilitate knowledge sharing. Developing industry-wide codes of conduct for online platforms can outline clear guidelines for content moderation and user responsibility.

By implementing these collaborative strategies, Nordic nations can forge a unified and robust approach to protect children from online threats. Building a culture of media literacy and responsible online practices requires active engagement from all stakeholders, empowering children to navigate the digital world safely and critically.

Q: Are there Nordic countries that exhibit best practices in protecting children from misinformation and disinformation online? If so, what aspects of their legal frameworks, international convention implementation, or collaborative strategies can be adopted by other Nordic nations?

A: Indeed, several Nordic countries, including Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, and Iceland, have demonstrated commendable practices in shielding children from the harmful effects of misinformation and disinformation online. These nations have implemented multifaceted strategies that can serve as models for others in the region:

Firstly, they have established comprehensive legal frameworks tailored to address online misinformation and disinformation, encompassing content moderation, user responsibility, and access restrictions to safeguard children. By emulating these frameworks, other Nordic countries can create laws that suit their unique contexts while prioritizing child protection.

Secondly, Nordic countries exhibit strong adherence to international conventions such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), providing a solid foundation for safeguarding children's online rights. By integrating UNCRC principles into their legal frameworks and policies, nations can bolster their efforts to protect children from online harms.

Moreover, collaborative strategies are central to Nordic approaches, with stakeholders across government, technology, education, and civil society sectors working together to combat misinformation and disinformation. By fostering partnerships and joint initiatives, other nations can leverage collective expertise and resources to enhance child protection efforts.

Furthermore, Nordic countries recognize the pivotal role of media literacy education in empowering children to navigate the digital landscape critically. By investing in educational programs and awareness campaigns, they equip children with the skills to discern and evaluate online information effectively.

Lastly, Nordic nations prioritize transparent and accountable governance structures, with dedicated bodies tasked with monitoring compliance, investigating complaints, and enforcing penalties. By establishing similar oversight mechanisms, other nations can ensure robust regulation of online content to safeguard children's well-being.

By adopting these best practices, Nordic countries set a precedent for effective child protection in the digital age. Collaboration, transparency, legal frameworks, and education are key elements of a holistic approach to shielding children from the adverse effects of misinformation and disinformation online.

10. Conclusion & Limitation

In summary, the research has illuminated the complex approach needed to bolster child protection from misinformation and disinformation in the digital communication realm of Nordic Nations. The digital era poses a threat to children's democratic education and agency, with widespread misinformation undermining their ability to participate meaningfully in democracy. The proliferation of misinformation, disinformation, and mal-information (MDM) online has emerged as a critical global issue, as evidenced by the imprisonment of journalists on MDM charges and the surge in MDM legislation worldwide. While there has been a notable increase in MDM legislation in recent years, with 105 new laws enacted in 78 countries between 2011 and 2022—91 of which were passed between 2016 and 2022—there are limitations to relying solely on criminal law to combat information operations originating from foreign jurisdictions. The absence of international legal mechanisms for mutual cooperation in law enforcement hampers efforts in this regard. The ongoing task of bridging the gap between legal and commercial teams demands consistent dedication to feedback, training, and improvement. As business landscapes evolve, new challenges will emerge, necessitating a culture of transparent communication, mutual understanding, and shared successes to foster effective collaboration among all teams, present and future. Nordic nations have made significant progress in implementing legal frameworks and international conventions to address online misinformation and disinformation, demonstrating a commitment to safeguarding children's rights in the digital realm. Collaborative strategies involving government agencies, technology companies, educators, and civil society organizations have proven fruitful in tackling these challenges. By leveraging collective expertise and resources, these partnerships have facilitated targeted initiatives to protect children online. Furthermore, the integration of media literacy education into school curricula and public awareness campaigns has empowered children to critically evaluate online information and navigate the digital landscape safely. However, it's crucial to acknowledge inherent limitations in this research. The effectiveness of legal measures, international conventions, and collaborative strategies may vary across Nordic nations due to socio-cultural contexts, technological infrastructures, and regulatory environments. The rapidly evolving nature of digital communication technologies presents ongoing challenges in combating misinformation and disinformation. Continuous adaptation and innovation are essential to ensure that child protection measures remain effective and relevant. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies and comparative analyses to assess the long-term impact of these measures and identify best practices for enhancing child protection online. Addressing these research gaps will contribute

to the development of more comprehensive and effective strategies to safeguard children in the digital age.

11. Recommendations

This paper highlights the complexity surrounding issues of children and misinformation/disinformation, deeply intertwined within social, political, and technological landscapes. Addressing these challenges demands a collaborative effort from diverse stakeholders, recognizing policymakers, civil society organizations (including academics and international bodies), technology companies, and parents, caregivers, and educators as key actors. Together, they must prioritize actions to shield children from the detrimental effects of misinformation/disinformation, bolster digital literacy across age groups, and facilitate further research into the origins, impacts, and prevalence of misinformation/disinformation targeting children. Regarding regulatory strategies, it is proposed to establish regulations grounded in child rights principles, ensuring a balanced approach to shielding children from harmful content while upholding their rights to information and freedom of expression. These regulations should concentrate on refining content classification procedures, promoting transparency, and fostering accountability. Additionally, garnering support from technology companies is vital, necessitating heightened transparency, accountability, and global engagement in combating misinformation/disinformation affecting children. This entails financing independent oversight, fostering digital literacy initiatives, conducting research, and undertaking regular public audits of algorithms and content policies. Critical to this effort is the reinforcement of media and information literacy programs, encompassing investments in curriculum enhancements and educational opportunities for parents, caregivers, and educators. Furthermore, fostering an independent and diverse media ecosystem that champions fact-based information is crucial. Embracing and advancing research on misinformation/disinformation and its impact on children is equally essential, with collaboration among industry, civil society, and international bodies to inform evidence-based policymaking. For civil society, academia, and international organizations, the recommendations include offering policy guidance, conducting ongoing research, implementing self-declared policies, investing in human and technical solutions, ensuring transparency, and prioritizing the cultivation of meaningful connections and diverse perspectives for children. Parents, caregivers, and educators are encouraged to actively engage in children's media activities, cultivate critical thinking skills, advocate for media and

information literacy programs, and call for enhanced educational resources from technology companies, policymakers, and governments to empower children in safeguarding themselves from harmful misinformation/disinformation. To bolster child protection in the digital landscape of Nordic nations, it is advised to undertake a thorough review of existing legal frameworks, evaluate international conventions, and engage stakeholders. This encompasses assessing the efficacy of current laws, the relevance of international agreements like the UNCRC, conducting research to comprehend the impact of misinformation on children, promoting best practices, advocating for platform accountability, and exploring avenues for policy innovation and legislative reform. Establishing mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating interventions is crucial to ensure continuous progress in enhancing child protection and digital literacy.

12. Future Research Directions

The study has laid a groundwork for comprehending the measures Nordic countries can undertake to shield children from misinformation and disinformation. However, the digital realm is in a constant state of flux, necessitating further research to anticipate emerging threats and enhance protective measures. Vital avenues for future research encompass assessing the efficacy of implemented strategies, examining the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI), contextualizing the Nordic Model within a global framework, scrutinizing evolving misinformation tactics, investigating the mental health ramifications of misinformation, and fostering digital literacy among parents. Longitudinal studies are imperative to gauge the impact of legal measures and collaborative strategies on children's online conduct and susceptibility to misinformation. Additionally, it is crucial to devise metrics to gauge the efficacy of content moderation practices across various platforms and their influence on misinformation dissemination among children. Exploring ethical dilemmas and potential biases inherent in AI algorithms is also paramount. Facilitating international cooperation and knowledge exchange among Nordic nations and other global stakeholders can facilitate the development of best practices in combating misinformation and disinformation online. Furthermore, research should delve into the psychological and emotional repercussions of exposure to harmful online content and devise support mechanisms for children affected by such content. By pursuing these future research trajectories, we can continuously refine our approach to safeguarding children from misinformation and disinformation in the dynamic digital landscape.

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