Chapter 9

FRAMING COVID-19: HOW FACT-CHECKING CIRCULATE ON THE FACEBOOK FAR-RIGHT

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Introduction

Since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, the world has faced a surge of disinformation about the virus on social media. This issue has not only captured the attention of governments and institutions in different countries but also brought to light the debate over the responsibility of social media companies for allowing health disinformation to circulate on their platforms. Some of these companies, such as Facebook, for example, took action by partnering with fact-checking agencies and creating ways for its users to flag disinformation. Boosting fact-checking circulation and using it to debunk falsehood were common actions from platforms to try to mitigate the disinformation problem.

Fact-checking connects the investigation of the accuracy of the content to the debunking of problematic posts. The number of specialized agencies and outlets exploded during the last years, particularly because of political disinformation (Graves, 2016). Even so, the extent of its effectiveness is often discussed. Some studies have shown, for example, that fact-checking is no match for disinformation regarding the velocity of spread and scale (Vinhas & Bastos, 2022). Others showed that fact-checking content is often not able to reach beyond partisan identification and thus, circulates more

on groups that agree with it (Shao et al., 2018). Partisanship and political discourse seem to be an important part of the health disinformation phenomenon, as we will argue in this text.

Covid-19 disinformation was potentialized by its alignment with political discourse in social media platforms, particularly, by far-right groups (Rogers & Niederer, 2020). In many countries, far-right populists' governments and politicians acted to spread disinformation by negating the gravity of the pandemic and publicly distrusting vaccines. In these cases, their discourses frequently aligned conspiracy theories about the pandemic and their political agendas (many of which associated the pandemic with a leftist conspiracy). These discursive connections associated Covid-19 mitigation strategies and vaccines with populism and political ideologies, which fueled negationists' postures and vaccination hesitancy (Calvillo et al., 2021, Recuero & Soares, 2020; Soares et al. 2021).

Given this context, we present a case study of how fact-checking links were shared by groups and pages that also shared disinformation links in Brazil. Brazil currently has a far-right President, Jair Bolsonaro, who was also involved in sharing disinformation about the pandemic and the virus (Soares et al., 2021). Bolsonaro also has a strong presence on social media platforms, with thousands of supporters who were also involved with sharing disinformation about the pandemic (Ricard & Medeiros, 2020). These groups are also associated with political extremism and populism because of their views on several subjects, particularly, on the Covid-19 pandemic (Medeiros & Silva, 2021). These characteristics provide an important situation for our analysis, as the Brazilian government's negationist posture increased the political polarization in the country and framed the Covid-19 pandemic as a political issue and not a public health one (Recuero & Soares, 2020). This alignment allowed an increased circulation and legitimation of Covid-19 disinformation (Soares et al., 2021). Therefore, in contexts like this, it is key to understand how effective social media platforms' strategies used to mitigate disinformation can be. Our research questions, thus, are as follows:

RQ 1: How does fact-checking links about the Covid-19 pandemic circulate among far-right groups and pages compared to other groups that also shared disinformation on Facebook? Do they contribute to debunking disinformation?

RQ 2: Are these fact-checking links framed by posts in any way? If so, how?

We hypothesize that, due to political extremism, fact-checking that circulates on these groups is framed to support disinformation, instead of challenging it. To test this hypothesis, we gathered data from Facebook using CrowdTangle. We crawled disinformation and fact-checking links in Portuguese about Covid-19 which were shared by Facebook's public groups and pages during 2020 and further selected those made by pages/groups that shared both. This original dataset of links was provided by Poynter/IFCN. Our final dataset was composed of 860 posts with 411 unique fact-checking links.

Disinformation, Fact-Checking and Political Discourse on Social Media

Social media platforms have a key role in the spread of disinformation. Their affordances, such as the capacity to help content to spread further and farther in the social network; the easy replicability (Boyd, 2010); the possibility to find like-minded people who will be more willing to share types of content; and the availability of artificial strategies such as botnets and click farms (Bastos & Mercea, 2019) provide the perfect environment to spread all types of content, including problematic ones.

Social media platforms often rely on algorithms to select content to show their users. These algorithms, combined with users' actions to select content may help create an effect called an "echo chamber" (Cinelli et al., 2021). Echo chambers are structures of conversation on social media that mostly circulate homogeneous content. That means, people, select to share only content they agree with, which tends to be reinforced by homophily. This collective action of filtering content together with platform algorithms may

create groups where people become more exposed to similar content that confirm their ideological views rather than challenges them (Westerwick, Johnson & Knobloch-Westerwick, 2017; Workman, 2018). This phenomenon has been associated with the increase of political polarization and extremism, particularly, the far-right (Rogers & Niederer, 2020; Pariser, 2011). In these cases, extremists tend to create very clusterized groups where content is filtered to agree with the groups' political views (Barberá et al., 2015). The more politically biased content that circulates, the more extreme the group becomes.

Because of this context, social media platforms have also been appropriated as means of propaganda by political extremists from the far-right (Rogers & Niederer, 2020), which has also boosted the disinformation spread (Tucker et al. 2018). Disinformation, in these cases, is used to reinforce political ideas. Since the Covid-19 pandemic also happened amidst political discussions and polarization, political disinformation was often also connected to health disinformation (Recuero & Soares, 2020). Particularly, the far-right discourse may have fueled disinformation about the Covid-19 pandemic in different countries (Calvillo et al., 2020; Allcott et al. 2020). Far-right leaders and politicians have also used social media platforms to amplify their ideas, often through disinformation (Kallil et al., 2021; Galhardi et al. 2020) and as an information guerrilla weapon (Soares et al. 2021, Ricard & Medeiros, 2020). Social media platforms have affordances that help these discourses to spread e being legitimated more quickly and broadly. Moreover, this intersection between political disinformation and health disinformation was often marked by populists' discourses (Recuero & Soares, 2022), which is why it is important to further investigate these connections.

Scholarship on populism is vast. However, many authors see a new wave of "far-right" populism that has emerged among traditional democracies, particularly in western countries, since the 70s (Jagers and Walgrave, 2007). This new populism is often based on a "deeply conservative discourse" that constitutes its core identity, that focuses on (1) anti-globalism and nationalism, often relying on theories that claim conspiracies from the

"global elites" (Guimarães & Silva, 2021). Another important characteristic is the (2) anti-foe construction, which is built upon the otherness process, meaning, separating "us" (the good, virtuous people) and the others (the corrupted, the foes). In these cases, in-group values are superior and more virtuous than other values (outsiders) (Staszak, 2009). This relation of "us" x "others" creates a perception of being part of a group that shares the same characteristics (homogeneity/purity). Discourses that operate upon this strategy usually legitimate other processes such as exclusion, xenophobia, racism, etc (which Wodak, 2015, claims, is a "politics of fear"). Beeze (2020) points out that this process of "otherness" also creates a common enemy, where populist discourse can create a sense of urgency, crisis, and denunciation to justify the actions that are taken. Another important characteristic of populist discourses is (3) the idea that the leaders are representants of "the people" to fight against the "corrupt elites" and the "rotten" establishment (Gil de Zúñiga, Michalska & Römmele, 2020; Roudjin, 2019). Part of populist discourse, particularly in this scenario, is often also identified with authoritarianism, which means, discourses where the leader is strong and claims that his decisions are legitimated by "the people" (Mestres, 2021). These characteristics often align populist discourse with simplistic, yet powerful ideas that can increase people's hesitancy to collaborate with public health measures, particularly in situations that most people never experienced, such as the Covid-19 pandemic.

Populist strategies produce complicity with some groups while discrediting the ones who disagree. Barrera et al (2022) explain that far-right populists' leaders use "alternative facts" as counter-narrative strategies. These narratives, which often are built upon disinformation, are very persuasive. Thus, populists' governments have also been connected to the spread of disinformation about Covid-19 (Stecula & Pickup, 2021), and the far-right political views have also been connected to a higher tendency to consume disinformation content (Baptista et al., 2021). In this scenario, populism seems to be deeply connected to the spread of disinformation, which is something we intend to explore in this research.

This is also the current political context of Brazil. The Brazilian president, Jair Bolsonaro, is considered by many political scholars a far-right populist representative (Mendonça & Caetano, 2020; Watmough, 2021). Bolsonaro's discourse was also frequently aligned with populists' arguments, such as authoritarianism, otherization, nationalism, distrust of the elites, and the idea that his government represents "the people" (Mendonça & Caetano, 2020; Watmough, 2021). Like many far-right leaders, Bolsonaro and his supporters frequently used social media to legitimize disinformation about the gravity of the pandemic, the lethality of the Covid-19 virus, and the vaccines (Soares et al, 2021; Kallil et al., 2021; Galhardi et al. 2020). He was a strong supporter of the idea that the pandemic mitigation strategies could not interfere with the economy, and that the media and health experts were creating panic. He also never used masks in public and defended the usage of ivermectin and hydroxychloroquine as the cure for Covid-19 and the solution for the pandemic (Ricard & Medeiros, 2020; Alcantara & Ferreira, 2020). Brazil, is thus, one of the cases where social media users played an important part in spreading and legitimizing disinformation about the Covid-19 pandemic through a polarized political context and, especially, through populism.

Finally, we need to examine fact-checking's potential to mitigate disinformation in such scenarios. Fact-checking, as we explained, is currently posited as one of the most popular strategies to fight disinformation. Initially viewed as a tool to hold politicians to account by enforcing journalistic truth-seeking practices (Graves, 2016), fact-checking has lately extended its scope to include verifying and correcting viral disinformation on social media platforms (Graves & Mantzarlis, 2020). This led fact-checking to grow increasingly popular after the US 2016 election, reaching 342 in 102 different countries according to Duke's Reporter's Lab (Stencel & Luther, 2021). As the Covid-19 pandemic frenzied, more and more initiatives have not only been devoted efforts to verify potential false statements on political claims but also verifying health claims that can potentially cause harm to large populations. Thus, fact-checking has established a key role in combating

Covid-19 disinformation in many countries by integrating journalistic procedures, truth-seeking ideals, international institutions, and their worldwide collaborative network.

Social media platforms have relied strongly on fact-checking as the main approach to challenge this type of content. Facebook, for example, has a specific program to support third-party fact-checking in its platform[1]. The purported intent is to boost the circulation of reliable and verified content while diminishing the relevance of posts classified as misleading or false by the fact-checkers. These programs are not devoid of dissent, as distinct technical, institutional, and epistemological issues take place over narratives around "facts" (Vinhas & Bastos, 2022). Furthermore, Cotter et. al (2022) argue that, by implementing these programs, social media platforms consolidate the idea that what is true should be ultimately determined by their users, downsizing the role of journalists, experts, and authoritative actors in promoting reliable information. Either way, authors have claimed that fact-checking programs are legitimate ways for platforms to enforce content moderation measures, which could overall help mitigate disinformation (Gillespie, 2020).

Despite showing some promising results globally (Porter & Wood, 2022), studies have demonstrated that fact-checking often may not be as effective, particularly among politically radicalized groups (Barrera et al., 2020). In addition, findings by Carey et al. (2022) show that fact-checking's positive effects against misconceptions are often undermined by contexts in which corrections are ephemeral in comparison to the constant flow of falsehoods. Authors like Shin & Thompson (2017) claim that fact-checking circulates with a political bias, which means, circulates more within groups that already agree with their content. This may implicate that politically radicalized groups may filter or frame fact-checking to align with their ideologies, similarly to what Shao et al. (2018) argue.

1. https://www.facebook.com/journalismproject/programs/third-party-fact-checking

Methods

For this work, our main objective is to discuss how fact-checking links circulated among groups that also shared disinformation, with a focus on far-right groups. We want to investigate how fact-checking links circulate among these groups to see if they can challenge health disinformation, especially on extremized political groups, such as the far-right. This is particularly important since they became the main strategy used by social media platforms to reduce the circulation of problematic content, as we argued in the previous section. We chose far-right groups to understand if this content can reach politically extremist groups if it can break through echo chambers, as other studies have suggested they can't.

For this study, we chose to focus on two main points: (1) how fact-checking links circulate among groups that also shared disinformation on Facebook, particularly, the far-right political groups; and (2) if and how these links are framed by posts. We hypothesize that fact-checking that circulates in these polarized groups may be framed to increase disinformation, compared to other groups.

To collect data for this discussion, we relied on a dataset provided by Poynter/IFCN that comprises links to both disinformations about Covid-19 and the correspondent fact-checking from associated groups all over the world during 2020. We used CrowdTangle to collect posts that contained fact-checking and disinformation links in Portuguese from public groups/pages on Facebook. With these posts, we selected the ones from the groups/pages that shared both (disinformation and fact-checking). Through these steps, we were able to collect 860 posts that contained fact-checking links and that were posted in groups/pages that also shared disinformation. Based on this sample, we examined the fact-checking posts (N=860) and unique fact-checking links (N=411, some links were shared several times) that circulated on these groups/pages. These posts were shared by 420 pages/groups in this dataset. From these 860 posts, 270 had an explanatory text framing the link.

To analyze the data, we worked with a three-step mixed-methods combination. First, to classify posts from the far-right and discuss disinformation framing, we used Content Analysis (Krippendorff, 2013). Three independent coders visited every single post and classified (1) how the fact-checking link was framed (if it was framed as disinformation) and (2) if the group/page was aligned with far-right views. The far-right political classification was based on names that included politicians, political parties, political ideologies, and/or references to the far-right and conservative ideologies present in Brazil, as we explained in the previous section. Most of them, in this dataset, were connected to president Jair Bolsonaro or his supporters. To discuss if the fact-checking was framed as disinformation, coders observed how the link was posted (text, other links, etc.). In these cases, coders observed the association of fact-checking to leftist conspiracies and anti-globalism, far-right populist discursive characteristics, or the framing of the fact-checking as misleading content by the text in the post that contained the link. These posts were read and examined by all coders.

Cohen's Kappa (Cohen, 1960) was 0.71 for framing (95.5% interpair agreement) and 0.86 for political alignment (93.7% interpair agreement). As the entire dataset (860 posts) was coded by three independent coders, the final classification was reached based on the agreement between at least two coders.

For the next step, we used qualitative analysis. We used discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2003) to understand if and how they articulated this far-right populism to legitimate health disinformation. For this, we looked for the characteristics of populists' discourses as explained in the previous section (anti-foe/otherness construction, nationalism or globalism, and the arguments against fact-checkers as corrupt elites). This part of the analysis was done over with 74 posts that included text to frame fact-checking as disinformation.

Further on, on the third step, we used Social Network Analysis (Wasserman & Faust, 1994) to create a bipartite graph (nodes were pages/groups and fact-checking links) to understand connections between these pages and the links they shared. In this step, we wanted to observe patterns of sharing links between far-right pages/groups versus others. We used indegree to find out the most shared links by far-right pages and outdegree to find out which pages were the most active in sharing fact-checking links. Also, we examined clusters of far-right pages around fact-checking links. These links were further collected, and we analyzed their titles, as they are the main thing that circulates on Facebook posts. We wanted to understand the patterns of sharing fact-checking within these groups. Because we found some different patterns among far-right groups (compared to other groups that also shared disinformation), we decided to investigate further. So, we also examined the five most shared links among these far-right pages (which were shared by at least five different pages/groups) to understand their discourse and how it possibly was aligned to the groups' ideology and populist characteristics. This analysis was also qualitatively and was done through discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2003).

Results and Discussion

The results of our analysis are presented in this section. We organized our findings into main ones, as we will explain.

1. Fact-checking does circulate among far-right political groups, however, it is often framed as disinformation

To understand if and how posts were framed, we compared fact-checking links shared in other pages in the same dataset to the ones shared in far-right ones. We are trying to compare, here, pages/groups that share disinformation and fact-checking to far-right groups. Table 1 summarizes these results based on coders' classification.

	Number of Posts	Posts framed as disinformation	Unique links
Far-right pages/groups	295 (34.3%)	74 (25.1%)	32
Other pages/groups	565 (65.6%)	10 (1.8%)	379
Total	860	84 (9.8%)	411

Table 1: Data from pages/grous and links.

For this dataset, we observed that the majority of fact-checking posts on all pages weren't framed as false. The large majority circulated either with confirmation framing on their posts (such as, "Check this" or "Rumors") or without comments. Our results show that 776 of the examined posts (90.2%) fact-checking was not framed as disinformation by the post. Another 84 posts (9.8%), thus, were framed as disinformation by the pages/groups that shared them. These posts were largely published on far-right pages/groups.

Most posts within far-right groups/pages did not frame fact-checking as disinformation nor included a text to deny fact-checking content. Nevertheless, compared to other groups/pages, far-right accounts were almost 14 times more likely to frame fact-checking as disinformation. In the next section, we discuss some of the main strategies used by those actors to frame fact-checking content. While we had other politically themed pages (N=225, 53.6% of the dataset), fact-checking framed as disinformation was much more common among the far-right than other pages/groups of the political spectrum. This framing was done either by a comment subverting the information or by circulating fact-checking aligned with the views of the group, often through comments.

2. Implicit framing: Far-right pages and groups also tend to cluster around fact-checking links that agree with their ideological views without the need to frame them explicitly

Many posts within far-right groups/pages did not contain any text along with the fact-checking links. Nevertheless, given the general contexts of Covid-related disinformation in Brazil, some of the fact-checking content

might have been used to "prove their points" (that the virus was not dangerous, for example) without any explicit framing. Based on this perception, we decided to investigate further. To better understand the circulation of fact-checking links among far-right groups, we examined the structure links posted on far-right groups through social network analysis. We focused on two types of nodes: pages/groups and links. Far-right pages were colored red (other pages were colored blue) and links were colored gray.

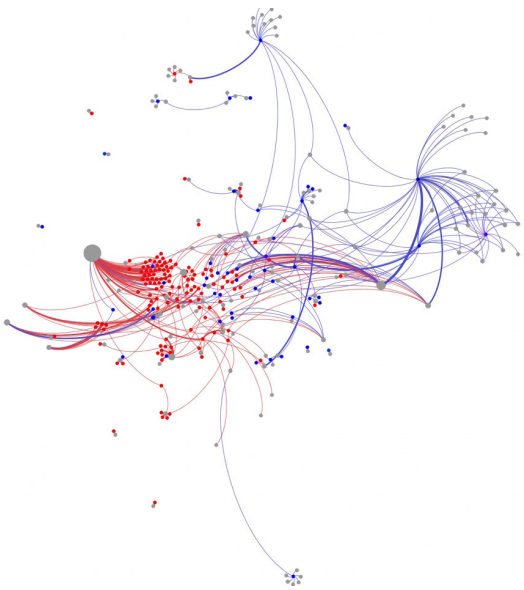

Figure 1: Red nodes are far-right groups/pages, blue nodes are others and gray nodes are links. Size of node is given by the number of times it shared the links.

Figure 1 shows this network of pages/groups and links. Node size is defined by outdegree (the higher the outdegree, the bigger is the node). Outdegree is connected to the number of times each page shares each link. We see, in this picture, two patterns: (1) Big blue nodes that share several different fact-checking links and (2) a small cluster of red nodes that share the same fact-checking links. We can observe that red nodes cluster together, which means that these far-right nodes tend to share the same fact-checking links, clustering around fewer links than other that were shared by other pages.

We also see that most pages (from the blue nodes) share several different fact-checking links (and thus, these nodes are bigger).

This structure suggests that while fact-checking circulates in far-right groups, it appears that certain links circulate more, and others are ignored. So why is this happening? The following image highlights the most shared links by using the indegree to adjust the size of nodes (Figure 2). The indegree is the number of connections each node receives. It is expected that more influential nodes would receive higher visibility from the network. Different from the blue cluster, the gray nodes from the red cluster are much bigger, thus more shared by several far-right nodes. This structure also suggests that far-right pages and groups have preferences to post certain fact-checking posts (several pages post the same link), whereas in the rest of the network, the structure is the opposite: few pages post several different links.

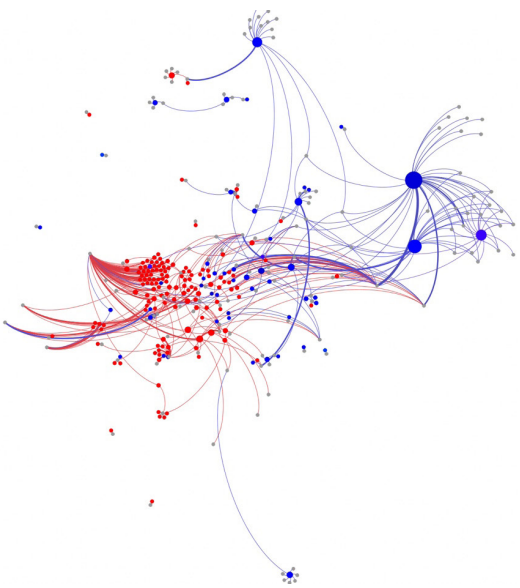

Figure 2: Gray nodes are links, blue nodes and red nodes (far-right) are pages/groups. Size of node is given by the number of times it was shared.

To investigate what was happening, we decided to focus on these far-right most-shared links, which have several nodes clustered around them. We further examined the five most popular fact-checking links that had at least five shares by these groups. The table below (Table 2) shows the headline of the most shared fact-checking within far-right groups.

	Story	Link	Indegree
1	"Picture that shows a large number of coffins is falsely attributed to Covid-19 deaths - it is in fact from Italy in 2013"	http://piaui.folha.uol.com.br/lupa/2020/03/18/coronavirus-caixoes-italia	63
2	"Empty coffin picture and video are old and have no connection to Amazon's Covid-19 funeral"	http://piaui.folha.uol.com.br/lupa/2020/04/29/verificamos-foto-caixao-vazio-enterros-covid-19-amazonas	26
3	"It is false that the Brazilian media silenced after Lula said 'I'm happy that nature created this Covid-19 monster'"	https://piaui.folha.uol.com.br/lupa/2020/05/20/verificamos-imprensa-se-calou-lula-ainda-bem-monstro-coronavirus/	15
4	"It is false that elderly people who disrespect Covid-19 isolation will have their retirement suspended"	http://piaui.folha.uol.com.br/lupa/2020/03/20/verificamos-idosos-desrespeitarem-isolamento-covid-19-aposentadoria-suspensa	11
5	"The video of Dr. Drauzio Varella minimizing Covid-19 isolation is old"	https://piaui.folha.uol.com.br/lupa/2020/03/22/drauzio-salles-coronavirus/	7

Table 2: Most shared stories in thefar-right network and number of times.

It is interesting to notice that, taken out of context, these fact-checking stories help dismiss the gravity of the pandemic. Story 1 implies that false images are used to create panic about the Covid-19 pandemic. While this story was shared mostly without a frame, in a few groups we found a confirming framing, such as "See how evil people are. They are spreading terrorism. The picture is from 2013 and has been shared as from 2020." Another text was "Leftist fake!". In this case, even though the story is shared as a real fact-checking link, it contributes to the discourse of the far-right that argues that the pandemic wasn't that serious, as Bolsonaro has frequently argued (Soares et al., 2021).

Story 2 is about a mistake when someone was buried, and it is used to fight the criticism of politicians on the state of Amazonas as the deaths sharply increased and happened. In this case, very few links used textual framing, also, with confirming framing. Examples such as "This is a circus and will only end when the people that share this kind of content are punished! This didn't happen in Amazon!". Another one is "Picture is from 2017 in Sao Paolo, not Amazon.". These texts are also not questioning the veracity of the fact-checking, but they imply that pictures like these are used to negatively frame how the Amazon state government (which is from a party that openly supported Bolsonaro, PSC – Social Christian Party) was in chaos, dealing with the sharp increase of deaths.

Story 3 attacks a leftist leader (Lula) with a misleading title, as it appears to fact-check only the first part of the sentence – the media silenced. In this case, most of these links circulated also without framing. The ones that circulate with framing often used criticism of Lula. Lula is an important leftist leader, who is also an ex-president of Brazil. This is also another link that, while confirming the fact-checking as truthful, underlined the fact that the left was "happy" about the pandemic.

Story 4 is used to dismiss "terrorist" media about the lockdown measures (people won't be punished for breaking the lockdown). Also, while this content is true, it reinforces the idea that people could break the lockdown. Story 5 is used to put in a bad light a doctor that protested for more Covid-19 mitigation measures and often criticized the federal government about the lack of action during the pandemic.

These stories were shared on pages and groups that have interpretative far-right contexts, mostly guided by Bolsonaro and his supporters (Soares et al, 2021; Kallil et al., 2021; Galhardi et al. 2020). In these cases, these titles also provoke more distrust in political elites and specialists, as well as the left and the media, which are also ways for far-right populists' discourses to reinforce themselves (Roudjin, 2019). Thus, it is also very likely that these links weren't framed because they already contributed to confirm, and not

challenge, the far-right populist discourse present in these groups. As we explained, these discourses play on characteristics of populism and the legitimation by the far-right ideology.

This data suggests that not only far-right groups shared the same fact-checking links as they also shared links whose titles would agree with their political views. We describe this movement as "implicit framing". It suggests that fact-checking links are selected based on how their stories agree or not with the discourse of the group which brings the interpretative context for the discussion. In these cases, the fact-checking wasn't debunked, which means, fact-checking is biased towards the context where it is shared, similarly to what Vinhas & Bastos (2021) argue.

3. Both implicit and explicit frames use populist discourse strategies

As we explained, far-right groups would largely use populists' discursive strategies, particularly, otherness. Most fact-checking posts published by these pages would be shared with explicit framing that would oppose fact-checkers and the page audience (74 posts). Some examples are: "We need to unmask this bunch of liars!" or "Face 'good' says this is a lie. Do you believe?". In both these phrases, there is an opposition between "us" (the good people) and them (the bad people), the virtuous and the bad ones (Staszak, 2009; Guimarães & Silva, 2021). The disbelief in the traditional media and platforms is also connected to this framing, as elites that should be questioned. Nationalism was found in three of these posts ("This is a national scandal! We can't allow this in our country"). In these cases, the fact-checking would be connected to leftists' conspiracies and attempts to destabilize the economy of the country and the "good, virtuous" government of Jair Bolsonaro.

One example from these populist strategies was framing fact-checking agencies as outlets supported by the left. One case was the phrase "Look at the sickle lie! The true which 'honest journalists' of Brazil are denying!" which framed a fact-checking link that claimed some disinformation shared

by the far-right was false. In this case, the post highlights the supposed existence of a political alignment behind the fact-checking agencies here called "sickle", a reference to the agency's supposed alignment with communism. Another framing strategy was to associate fact-checking with media manipulation. One example was the post "Do not trust everything that the Lupa agency[2]claims to be a lie or truth because it makes mistakes and ends up manipulating opinions. Research the truth yourself." In these cases, we observe the ideas of conspiracies from corrupt elites as ways to discredit fact-checking.

When we analyzed the clusters of fact-checking links shared by the far-right pages. We found that these links had characteristics of populist discourses as well, as the links shared agreed with the ideological views of these groups/pages. These movements, of implicit and explicit framing, suggest, thus, that fact-checking that circulates on far-right groups tend to be framed as disinformation. Although these are not problematic contents per se, they are a way to increase the general discourse built by far-right disinformation on health. The usage of populist strategies also helps by creating distrust of elites and general health information, even the ones shared by fact-checking agencies.

These posts would share and legitimize the idea that the pandemic wasn't serious, and people were being manipulated by corrupt leaders and elites to take action that would harm themselves (for example, using masks could provoke suffocation). These strategies would frame fact-checking as something misleading, used to manipulate a product from these corrupt elites (Gil de Zúñiga, Michalska & Römmele, 2020; Roudjin, 2019).

These processes can be associated with echo chambers (Cinelli et al., 2021). Because of the polarized political context, these pages and groups can be filtering certain types of fact-checking links, strengthen their political narrative about the pandemic. There are also some "anti-foe" or "othering" alignments in the interpretation of these titles. Many of these fact-checking

2. Lupa is a fact-checking agency well known in Brazil. https://piaui.folha.uol.com.br/lupa/

content could be read as criticism to the left and institutions and elites such as traditional media and scientists/leftist. In this case, the context for the far-right is usually to align with Bolsonaros' views about the pandemic, which could explain these clusters of pages sharing fact-checking stories that corroborate with their views. Fact-checking is, thus, also subjected to polarized effects from group actions (Vinhas & Bastos, 2021) and our data suggest that, on politically radicalized Facebook groups and pages, it may not be effective (Barrera et al., 2020).

This data supports findings from other research that show that the far-right political affiliation may be strongly connected to receiving and sharing health disinformation during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Conclusion and implications

Our results suggest that far-right groups are much more likely to resist fact-checking and align these contents according to their ideology than other groups/pages. We found that, while fact-checking does circulate on politically radicalized groups for the far-right, they are often implicitly or explicitly framed as disinformation.

Populist arguments also play an important part in this framing. Comments that discredit the press and especially fact-checking agencies, alleging a supposed "leftist conspiracy", or "otherness process" have a strategic effect to maintain the relevance and circulation of disinformation and reduce the effects of fact-checking. Thus, discrediting fact-checking is an important way to reassure the populist discourses that are frequent in these groups. Results also suggest that in other not so extremist political groups, fact-checking may have better effects as it circulates without framings that distort their content.

These results suggest that platforms need to go further than boosting fact-checking to challenge disinformation. Different strategies are needed to deconstruct the different frames used to share fact-checking in politically

extremized groups. This study has several limitations such as the size of the sample and the language. However, we believe that it shows a contribution to the studies of the disinformation ecosystem, discursive strategies, and far-right disinformation.

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