



MANIPULATION METHODS FOR INFLUENCING THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES

Abduqahhorov Lochinbek Tursunali o'g'li

Independent Researcher, Namangan State University.

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Abstract. It is of strategic importance to develop effective measures to combat information manipulation, strengthen fact-checking systems in the mass media and on internet platforms, and increase the media and information literacy of citizens. International experience shows that transparency in the information space, the reliability of sources, and adherence to ethics ensure stability and mutual trust within society.

Keywords: Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Psychology, Emotional, Twitter, Information, "frame," illusion of mass support.

Emotional manipulation is the process of influencing the emotions of an individual or group to steer their thoughts and behavior in a desired direction. This influence is achieved not through direct facts or rational arguments, but through emotional stimuli. In psychology, it is noted that the amygdala (the part of the brain responsible for processing emotions) plays a major role in decision-making and can sometimes override the centers of rational thought.

One of the primary methods frequently used in emotional manipulation is the amplification of fear. For example, political speeches or information campaigns often use hyperbolic scenarios such as, "if we do not follow this path, we are doomed to destruction." The effectiveness of this method lies in the fact that fear activates people's desire for security, guiding them toward the path suggested by the manipulator.

A second widely used method is appealing to national pride and honor. In this case, the manipulator arouses the audience's emotions with phrases like "we are a great nation" or "we must fulfill our historic mission." As a result, the individual or group feels they are striving for a higher purpose, even if the actual goal is different.

Emotional manipulation is especially widespread in the mass media. Journalistic materials evoke strong emotions in the audience through dramatic headlines, excessive detail in tragic stories, and the use of music and visual effects. Notably, presenting an event on television with accompanying visual effects can change public perception of that event by 60-70%.

In today's digital environment, emotional manipulation has been further amplified by algorithms. On platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, content that elicits a strong emotional reaction (including anger, fear, and surprise) is distributed more widely by algorithms. This allows manipulators to influence people's emotions quickly and on a massive scale.

The negative consequences of emotional manipulation are that it diminishes people's critical thinking skills and leads to irrational decision-making. Therefore, developing media literacy and information analysis skills is a key factor in protecting society from such influences.

In the digital environment, priming and framing are used in tandem, where people's focus is pre-directed through specific hashtags, trends, and visual images on social media. On

platforms like Twitter and Facebook, the sudden appearance of numerous posts on a particular political or social topic, followed by opinions expressed within a specific "frame," makes it possible to predict the audience's reaction.

Priming and framing methods are widely used in journalism, advertising, and political campaigns. Therefore, in societies with a high level of media literacy, people can critically evaluate "how information is presented" and "from which perspective it is presented."

The influence of imitation and collective activity is a cognitive phenomenon reflecting the tendency of individuals to adapt their decisions and actions to the behavior of the majority. In psychology and sociology, this phenomenon is known as the Bandwagon effect, and it is primarily manifested in political processes, marketing, and social media.

This mechanism of influence consists in the fact that a person perceives behavior that is supported or implemented by the majority as correct and acceptable. The constant provision of information about the high ratings of a particular candidate during the electoral process encourages people to vote for that candidate. Information manipulation plays an important role in this process, as the "illusion of public support" created by numbers and statistics has a strong influence on personal decision-making.

In the digital environment, this effect is even more pronounced. The popularity of a particular topic is demonstrated through the number of "likes," "likes," and comments under posts on social media, as well as trending hashtags. Psychologists state that an individual's cognitive system tends to accept the majority's choice as safe and correct, leading to relying on group opinion rather than personal opinion.

In addition, the impact of collective action is manifested through public events, political rallies, and even digital petitions. If a petition on an online platform receives hundreds of thousands of signatures in a short period of time, other users are also inclined to support it. Researchers also call this process "social proof" because people believe that the actions of the majority are correct.

Historically, creating the image of an enemy was often widely used during times of war, political competition, or internal political crises. For example, during the two world wars of the 20th century, propaganda tools actively served to mobilize the population and strengthen internal solidarity by depicting the citizens of hostile states as evil, unreliable, and dangerous¹.

In the modern digital environment, the process of creating an enemy image has become much faster and more effective. Through disinformation, edited photo and video materials, and distorted facts spread through social networks, a negative image of a certain person or group can spread widely in a short time. As Russian researchers noted, manipulative information disseminated through digital bots on social networks played an important role in portraying certain political parties or leaders as "enemies"².

The social impact of this method is that it strengthens the atmosphere of hatred and distrust in society, deepens political polarization, and eliminates opportunities for constructive dialogue. Therefore, media and digital platform operators must contribute to preventing the creation of an enemy image by identifying information manipulation, providing verified information, and ensuring source transparency.

¹ Ellul J. Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes. – New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965.

² Грачёв Г. В. Информационные войны в эпоху цифровых технологий // Вестник Московского университета. Серия 12: Политические науки, № 3 (2019): - С. 45-59.

In today's digital age, the filtering process often takes the form of "algorithmic manipulation." Recommendation systems used in social networks and internet platforms sort content based on user interests and previous activity. As a result, people are trapped in "information bubbles" and their ability to see other perspectives is limited. According to A. Kholikov, this process intensifies social polarization in society, as people live only with information that corresponds to their own views³.

The social consequences of information isolation are serious: the culture of accepting different opinions in the public weakens, social solidarity disappears, and the tendency toward manipulation increases. Therefore, increasing media literacy, developing the ability to critically evaluate information sources, and supporting the acquisition of information from various perspectives are of great importance. Research has found that clickbait headlines trigger dopamine release in the human brain, which enhances their direct emotional response. As a result, the audience tends to consume the information more quickly than to analyze its original quality. Research by Z. Chen and S. Berger notes that clickbait headlines evoke a sense of "easy and fast" access to information in users, while simultaneously reducing their ability to think critically⁴.

The trend of manipulative headlines is also actively observed in the online media environment of Uzbekistan and Russia. According to Uzbek researchers, emotional and sensational headlines in local online media are often used to achieve political or economic goals, especially in social media propaganda and PR campaigns. A. Khidoyatov's analysis shows that headlines in Telegram and YouTube channels are excessively hyperbolized to direct the audience to a specific opinion⁵.

The social impact of clickbait and manipulative headlines is twofold: on the one hand, they increase the efficiency of information dissemination and become a source of traffic for media platforms; on the other hand, they expand the possibilities of manipulation by distorting the truth in the public and reducing the level of reliability of information. Therefore, it is recommended to improve media literacy at the international and local levels, as well as to develop skills in assessing the correspondence between titles and content.

Research indicates that manipulative headlines are a threat not only from the perspective of journalistic ethics but also from the perspective of information security. This situation can contribute to the polarization of the information environment, the intensification of contradictions between various social groups, and an increase in the rate of spread of fake news⁶.

From a philosophical perspective, the issue of information manipulation is closely linked to issues of human freedom, the concept of truth, and moral responsibility. In philosophy, truth is defined as the correct reflection of objective reality within human consciousness, while manipulation alters the essence of that truth by intentionally distorting it or altering the way it is presented. One of the representatives of social philosophy, Yu. Habermas put forward the

³ Xoliqov A. Axborot filtrlash texnologiyalari va ularning ijtimoiy ongga ta'siri // O'zbekiston Milliy universiteti axborotnomasi, № 4 (2022): - B. 120-128.

⁴ Chen Z., & Berger, S. "The Impact of Clickbait Headlines on Online News Consumption". Journal of Digital Media Studies, vol. 5, no. 2, 2019, pp. 45-59.

⁵ Хидоятлов А. Ўзбекистон онлайн медиасида манипулятив сарлавҳалар ва ахборотнинг қайта форматланиши // O'zbekiston axborot va kommunikatsiya texnologiyalari jurnali, №4, 2022. – B. 33-39.

⁶ Васильева И. А. "Манипулятивные заголовки в интернет-СМИ: лингвистический и психологический аспекты". Вестник Московского университета. Серия 10: Журналистика, №3, 2021. – С. 78-91.

principle of "communicative rationality" in the field of information, according to which public discussions should be open and fair, and manipulation disrupts this process⁷.

From an ethical perspective, manipulation is considered an encroachment on a person's right to make free decisions. In modern ethical analysis, it is emphasized that information manipulation negatively impacts not only the moral state of an individual but also that of society as a whole. Some studies have noted that long-term use of social networks among young people can reduce their political activity. In a number of Central Asian countries, studies analyzing the impact of social media on political activity among youth have included audience reactions. Russian researcher O. Smirnova studied the potential of manipulation in the information environment to disrupt the system of social trust and increase polarization⁸.

From a philosophical perspective, manipulation undermines human freedom and attitude toward truth, while from an ethical perspective, it restricts an individual's right to make independent decisions. This situation is particularly evident in the information disseminated through digital platforms, social networks, and the media.

Furthermore, during the analysis, it was established that manipulation activities affect not only the individual but the entire social structure. Its main risks are the formation of an atmosphere of distrust among the population, the strengthening of social divisions, and the escalation of contradictions.

Therefore, it is of strategic importance to develop effective measures to combat information manipulation, strengthen fact-checking systems in the media and internet platforms, and increase the media and information literacy of citizens. International experience shows that transparency in the information space, the reliability of sources, and adherence to ethics ensure stability and mutual trust in society.

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⁷ Habermas J. The Theory of Communicative Action. – Boston: Beacon Press, 1984.

⁸ Смирнова О. “Манипуляция в информационном пространстве: социально-этические аспекты”. Мир психологии, №1, 2020. – С. 115-124.