

Abstract

The development of information technologies has been a factor causing a practically incomparable increase in the amount of information and data processed, both in private life and in other areas, compared to a few years ago. This is mainly due to the growing activity of individuals on social media and the easier access to content of interest. The role of information, both in terms of its confidentiality as well as its availability and integrity, has always been crucial. Considering the rise in disinformation, both at the national and international levels, and its impact on various aspects of social life, one must recognize the key role it plays in destabilizing society, undermining democratic processes, and threatening national security. Disinformation, which extensively utilizes modern communication tools, influences public opinion, shapes political narratives, and creates an atmosphere of distrust.

The subject of this doctoral dissertation was the susceptibility of Polish citizens to disinformation, understood as the ability of an individual or group to accept, consider true, and further disseminate false or manipulated information. The study analyzes psychological, social, and behavioral factors influencing susceptibility, taking into account the impact of the information environment, in which information overload, the speed of its dissemination, and the use of emotional and sensational content reduce the capacity for critical evaluation of information.

The cognitive aim of this study was to determine the level of susceptibility of citizens and to identify the key mechanisms shaping this phenomenon. Empirical research was conducted using a diagnostic survey method on a sample of 1,001 respondents. The results showed that approximately 68% of respondents exhibited moderate susceptibility, 25% low susceptibility, and 7% high susceptibility to disinformation. The main factors influencing susceptibility are psychological, particularly the illusory truth effect, the confirmation bias, and emotions such as fear and uncertainty. Social and behavioral factors play a supportive role but also significantly affect an individual's susceptibility.

The utilitarian aim of the dissertation was to develop a concept for monitoring citizens' susceptibility to disinformation. A model based on supervised machine learning was proposed, allowing the classification of susceptibility based on respondents' answers and capable of being implemented in real-world environments as an application or a function within existing systems.

The main research question of this study was: What determines citizens' susceptibility to disinformation? The primary research hypothesis was formulated as follows: The susceptibility of Polish citizens is conditioned by the level of media literacy and psychological aspects. The conclusions indicate the multidimensional nature of susceptibility to disinformation, the dominant role of psychological factors, and the need for systematic monitoring of susceptibility in a dynamic information environment. The developed concept constitutes an innovative diagnostic and preventive tool, contributing to the advancement of social sciences and outlining directions for further research, including psychometric metrics that allow precise assessment of citizens' susceptibility.

Keywords: disinformation, susceptibility, psychological factors, social factors, behavioral factors, information security, critical thinking, monitoring