



media action nepal

# Misleading News in Media

A Study of Newspapers and Online News Portals of Nepal



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*This publication centers around preventing disinformation and misinformation and promoting credible journalism. Excerpts can be used by accurately identifying and mentioning the actual source. The views and analysis expressed here are of Media Action Nepal and the authors or researchers; the US Department of State may not agree upon it.*

This study "Misleading News in Media: A Study of Newspapers and Online News Portals of Nepal" is published by the Media Action Nepal with support from the U.S. Department of State. It studies and analyses national daily newspapers and online news portals vis-a-vis the code of conduct of media and the standard for preventing disinformation and misinformation.

In Nepal, complaints abound about news stories covered by media. Disinformation and misinformation, unsubstantiated allegations, distortion of facts, ideological bias and abuse of press power, personal vengeance and use of unreliable sources are some of serious ones. Following the COVID-19 outbreak, news of the pandemic dominated media coverage. A variety of news stories of the coronavirus surrounding its development, transmission, effects etc are published by media. However, some of the information they disseminate are found to be misleading.

In light of this, this study looks at the extent and kind of misleading information and news stories disseminated by Nepal's mainstream daily newspapers and online news portals in the first three months of the lockdown, announced on 24 March 2020 to control COVID-19.

Overall, the objective of this study is to make Nepali media credible and encourage journalists to produce and disseminate truthful and factual information. It is believed that the prevention of disinformation and misinformation and the promotion of credible

journalism will help strengthen democracy by protecting civil liberties. Only by adhering to the professional standard of journalism and implementing the journalists' code of conduct can civic trust in the media increase.

This study could not have been carried out without the support from different organizations and individuals, including national media outlets, authors and collaborators. We thank everyone who has contributed to this research. We are grateful to the U.S. Embassy in Nepal for providing us with an opportunity to research this subject.

We are confident that journalists as well as media scholars, teachers and students, who want to know more about how disinformation and misinformation can be prevented and also about credible journalism, can broaden their understanding with the help of this book.

**Laxman Datt Pant**

Chairperson

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## **Abbreviations and Acronyms**

<b>BP</b>	Bisheshwar Prasad
<b>COVID-19</b>	Coronavirus Disease of 2019
<b>CPN</b>	Communist Party of Nepal
<b>KP</b>	Khadga Prasad
<b>MCC</b>	Millennium Challenge Corporation
<b>MP</b>	Member of Parliament
<b>RDT</b>	Rapid Diagnostic Test
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>U. S.</b>	United States

Nepali journalists and media have faced with many complaints and criticism. Misleading information and misinformation, unsubstantiated allegations, distortion of facts, ideological bias and abuse of press power, personal revenge, etc are some of the serious complaints. Addressing those concerns that aim at promoting credible journalism is a must. To do so, media should stay away from disseminating misinformation. However, there has not been enough monitoring, review and analysis of the media content in Nepal.

The study "Misleading News in Media: A Study of Newspapers and Online News Portals of Nepal" is aimed at making journalists more credible and encouraging journalists to produce and disseminate truthful and factual information as well as promoting positive media content. The study was conducted to facilitate a wide-ranging debate on the misinformation and fake news by national media of Nepal and to discourage the practice of disseminating misinformation.

The news stories published by national daily newspapers and online news portals in the first three months of the lockdown have been studied and analyzed. The study only covers news stories, not other contents such as opinions, photos and advertisements. It includes a total of 49,051 news items, including 23,291 (47.48%) published in 10 daily



newspapers and 25,760 (52.32%) published in 10 online news portals. Of them 907 (3.90%) news stories published in daily newspapers were false and misleading information.

The news stories have been compared against eight different indicators of preventing false and misleading information. Based on the indicators set for this study purpose, it was found that a total of 1,817 news items contained misinformation, which accounts for 3.70% of false and misleading information. Similarly, the online news portals published 910 such stories (3.53%). Out of the total false and misleading information, 50.09% and 49.91% were published by online news portals and daily newspapers respectively.

National daily newspapers and online news portals should invest in capacity building of their journalists and start holding in-house dialogues and interactions on theoretical and practical aspects of preventing misinformation and disinformation. Also, the media should regularly review and evaluate the content meant for public consumption. Plans should be in place if misinformation and misleading information are found published. Media houses or journalists should not disseminate misinformation and disinformation.

## Background

- Some news stories disseminated by the media about the pandemic were highly speculative and had the potential to mislead readers.
- A spike in Coronavirus infections across Nepal resulted in a nationwide lockdown from 24 March 2020. Amid a context (COVID-19) that was hitherto unknown to the world, some media outlets put out misleading and inaccurate news.
- In a country like Nepal where media literacy is low, readers are more likely to suffer from misleading information that declines the credibility of journalism and weakens media's role as a watchdog.
- The purpose of this study<sup>1</sup> is to find out the extent of misleading information published by national media of Nepal and to come up with key recommendations.

### Statement of the problem

- Nepali journalists and media have faced with many complaints and criticism. Misleading information and misinformation, unsubstantiated allegations, distortion of facts, ideological bias and abuse of press power, personal revenge, etc are some of the serious complaints.
- Addressing those concerns that aim at promoting credible journalism is a must. To do so, media should stay away from disseminating misinformation. However, there has not been enough monitoring, review and analysis of the media content in Nepal.
- This study is also aimed at making journalists more credible and encouraging journalists to produce and disseminate truthful and factual information as well as promoting positive media content.
- The study was conducted to facilitate a wide-ranging debate on the misinformation and fake news by national media of Nepal and to discourage the practice of disseminating misinformation.

<sup>1</sup>This book is a shortened version of the research and is mainly available in the form of infographics. The full version (e-copy) is in Nepali and available at the 'Report' section of Media Action Nepal's website-[www.mediaactionnepal.org](http://www.mediaactionnepal.org).

## Objectives of the study

- To analyze the trend and nature of misleading information practice by national daily newspapers and news portals published from Kathmandu.
- To provide recommendations to the media and journalists on how false and misleading information can be prevented and how reliable news or content can be produced.

## Methods of the study

- This research is based on a study and an analysis of news stories published in national daily newspapers and online news portals.
- Both qualitative and quantitative research methods have been used in this study.
- The news stories published by these media outlets in the first three months of the lockdown have been studied and analyzed.
- A total of 49,051 news stories, including 23,291 by daily newspapers, and 25,760 by online news portals, have been studied during this period.
- The news stories have been compared against eight different indicators of preventing false and misleading information.

## Key questions covered by the study

- How much and what kind of misinformation and misleading news are produced and disseminated by national media of Nepal?
- Why national media are publishing misinformation and misleading news? Main reasons behind this?
- The extent that the basic principles of journalism, the journalistic code of conduct and the standard of credible journalism have been practiced?
- Recommendations to make the media credible in line with the indicators of preventing false and misleading information and to produce and disseminate truthful and factual information through positive media content?

## Standards for the prevention of misleading information

- The standard for the prevention of false and misleading information or misinformation are basically guided by the journalistic code of conduct and the professional principles of journalism.
- These are some of the standards and basis used for analyzing the content of newspapers and online news portals:

## 1. Source

- Unsources news is unbelievable. Unbelievable sources like 'analysts or commentators say' shouldn't be used.
- News sources should be disclosed as much as possible. Revealing news sources means bringing the audiences closer to the source of information.
- Using undisclosed sources or anonymous source raises the question over credibility of the news.
- The world-renowned news agency Reuters (2008) has suggested that news sources should be identified by a name and location.
- According to The Guardian's editorial code, if a newspaper or media outlet has a significant portion of agency content, the agency must be given the due credit (Elliott, 2012).
- According to Saxena (2014), the clear and explicit mention of a news agency gives credit to the source, and the source's credit line protects the newspapers or media from being exposed in case its truthfulness is questioned.
- If the news agency's name is clearly mentioned in a news that has been inadvertently disseminated, readers can identify the source.
- Sub-section 1 under Section 8 of Journalist Code of Conduct, 2016 (First Amendment 2019) says that the source should be revealed to maintain credibility.

### a) Use of anonymous source

Not clearly revealing the sources in news stories or content is considered to be the use of anonymous sources, which is motivated by an intention of confusing readers, viewers or listeners.

### b) Source not mentioned

Content that does not cite its sources is called 'source not mentioned'. Barring special cases, news sources should be disclosed.

### c) Fictitious sources

A news source that is fabricated, unreliable or created in a fraudulent manner with an aim of serving self-interest is seen as a fictitious source.

### d) Protection of confidential sources

The Journalist Code of Conduct, 2016 (First Amendment, 2019) issued by the Press Council Nepal states in its Section 8, Sub-section (1) under 'Duties of Journalists and Media', Sources should be mentioned for the credibility of news. If the disclosure of sources can be seriously damaging, the name or identity of the sources should be kept confidential and protected.

## 2. Misinformation:

- According to IGI Global, an American academic publication house, false and deceitful information is misinformation. However, the sender of information does not intend to harm others.
- In some cases, misinformation may flow even if the intention is not wrong. Misinformation disseminated by the media can mislead a large number of people. This may result in financial, physical and psychological damages.

## 3. Misleading headlines

- The media tends to sell headlines. They like to expand their reach and influence through headlines. Such headlines are designed to capture readers' attention or to go viral. Such titles have nothing to do with news texts. These kinds of headlines are meant to increase the readership by deceiving the audiences.

## 4. Disinformation

- According to UNESCO (2018), misinformation is the deliberate dissemination of information with the aim of harming people, social groups or organizations.
- According to First Draft News (2017), disinformation can be classified as follows:
  - a) False context:** A genuine content (picture or video) is used with false contextual information.
  - b) False connection:** When headlines, visuals or captions don't support the content.
  - c) Fabricated content:** The content is totally false, designed to deceive and do harm to others.
  - d) Misleading content:** Misleading information to provoke an individual or divert an issue.
  - e) Satire or parody:** No intention to cause harm, but has potential to fool people.
  - f) Imposter content:** When genuine sources are impersonated with false, made-up sources.
  - g) Manipulated content:** When genuine information or imagery is manipulated to deceive such as a 'doctored' photo (or graphics).

## 5. Social diversity

- The media should play a role in ending social discrimination and exclusion and in building a socio-political system where everyone can live with dignity and self-respect (Biswokarma, 2016)
- Section 5 (1) of the Journalist Code of Conduct, 2016 reads, 'Journalists and mass media should not produce, publish, broadcast and distribute materials that discriminate or create hatred to anyone on grounds of racial, gender, religious, regional, linguistic, political beliefs, tribal or physical and mental state.'

## 6. Obscenity

- Section 5 (3) Journalist Code of Conduct, 2016 stipulates that journalists and mass media should not produce, publish, broadcast and distribute materials that incite violence, terrorism and crime or suicide and are vulgar, contrary to public health, decency and morality; and that create fear.

## 7. Defamatory content

- a) Character assassination:** Materials that are intended to harm a person's dignity, reputation or credibility come under this category. Offensive and baseless news or articles, cartoons, memes created with the aim of fooling someone etc can damage a person's dignity.
- b) Libel:** It is a written defamation damaging a person's reputation. In general, a false content that appears in the media falls under this category.
- c) Slander:** It is a verbal abuse against someone. This includes derogatory remarks made in the public against someone.

## 8. Content against privacy

- The Section 5 (4) (1) of Journalist Code of Conduct, 2016 states, 'Journalists and mass media should not produce, publish, broadcast and distribute materials, including any details, photos or signs, that make the victims or survivors of disasters and their relatives suffer further pain or any materials that adversely affect public sensitivity.'

# Misleading news

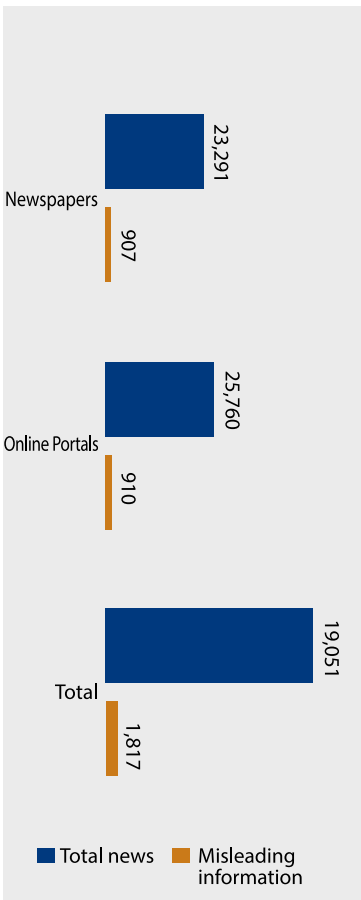
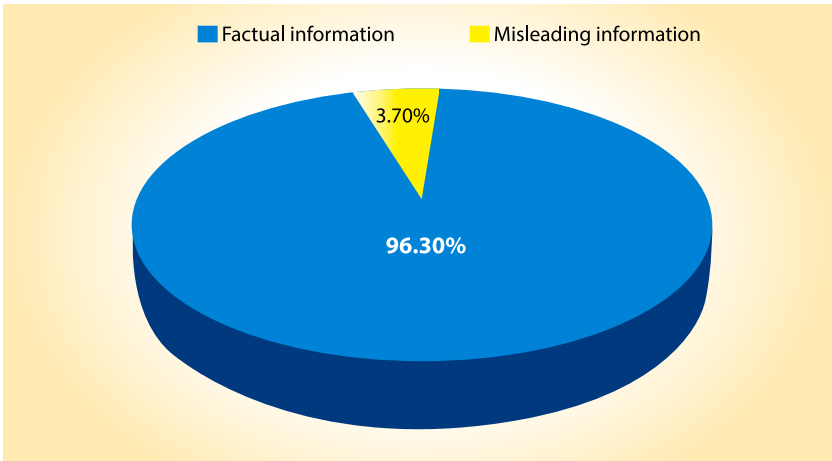
## in newspapers and online portals

### Misleading information in Nepali media

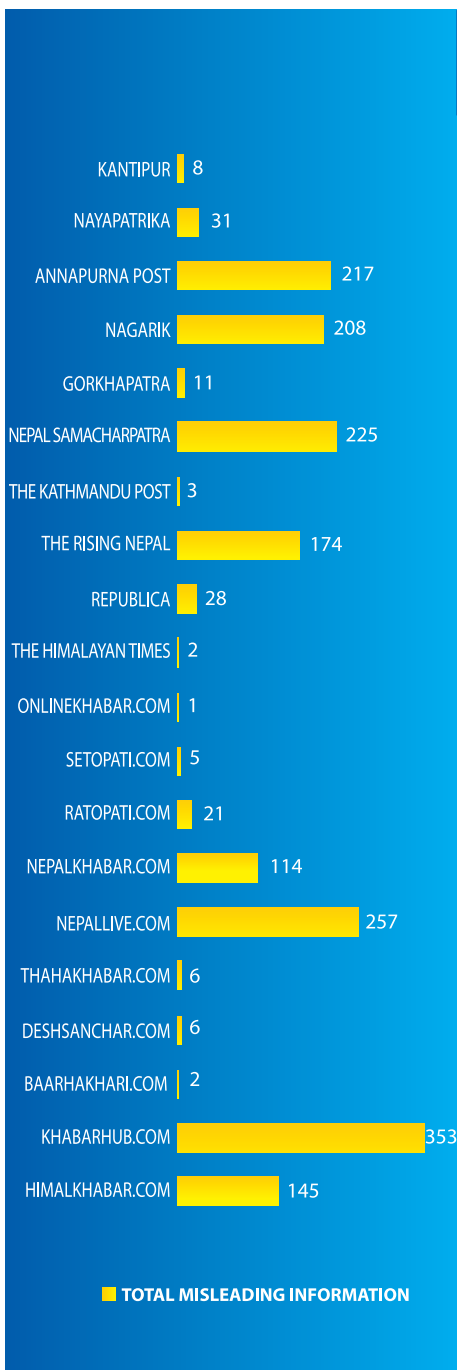
- This study includes widely circulated and read national dailies and online news portals.
- This includes news stories published within the first three months (24 March to 21 June 2020) of the lockdown.
- The study only covers news stories, not other contents such as opinions, photos and advertisements.
- A total of 49,051 news items of daily newspapers and online news portals were analyzed for this study.
- Based on the indicators set for this study purpose, it was found that a total of 1,817 news items contained false and misleading information, which accounts for 3.70% of the total amount of news studied.

**Table 1: Total number of new stories studied and misleading information**

S.N.	Number of new stories	Total
1.	The total number of new stories studied	49,051
2.	The total number of misleading information	1,817



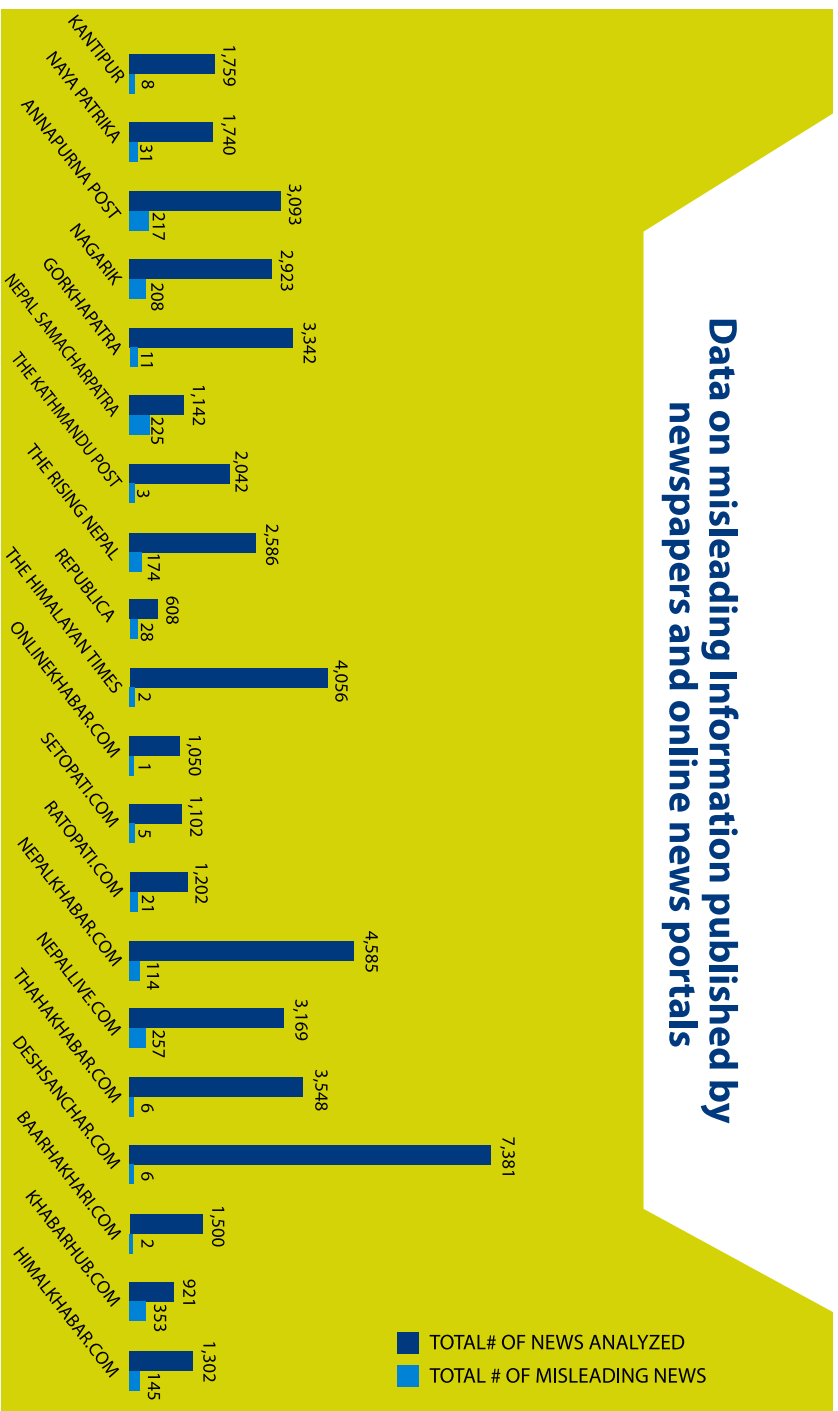
- The study included a total of 49,051 news items, including 23,291 (47.48%) published in 10 daily newspapers and 25,760 (52.32%) published in 10 online news portals, of which 907 (3.90%) news stories published in daily newspapers contained false and misleading information.
- Similarly, the online news portals published 910 such stories (3.53%). Out of the total amount of false and misleading information, 50.09% and 49.91% were published by online news portals and daily newspapers respectively.
- The study reveals that some dailies and online news portals have rarely published false misleading information.
- Of the total 1,817 news published by online portals, Onlinekhabar has published only one (0.06%) news.
- Likewise, The Himalayan Times (daily) and Baarhakhari (online) each has published only two (0.11%) false news.
- Of the total news studied, Nepal Samacharpatra (daily) and Khabarhub online published 14.14% and 19.43% false and misleading news respectively.
- A comparative study reveals that the most inaccurate news stories were published by Khabarhub, while the least was by Onlinekhabar.



- The number of misleading news vary from one media to other. However, most of the news in this category has been published in Khabarhub.
- It is found that Khabarhub published 36.33% of such content.
- Khabarhub has not disclosed agencies or sources while publishing foreign news. This puts the authenticity of the information used by Khabarhub in question.
- It was found that 25.69% of the news published by Nepal Samacharpatra daily was misleading and incorrect.
- The study found that the percentage of misleading news published were Himalkhabar 11.14%, Nepal Live 8.12%, Nagarik 7.12%, Annapurna Post 7.02%, The Rising Nepal 6.73%, Republica 4.61%, Nepalkhabar 2.49%, Naya Patrika 1.78%, Ratopati 1.75%, Kantipur 0.45%, Setopati 0.45%, Gorkhapatra 0.33%, Thaha Khabar 0.17%, The Kathmandu Post 0.15%, Baarhakhari 0.13%, Onlinekhabar 0.10%, Deshsanchar 0.08%, and The Himalayan Times 0.05%.



## Data on misleading Information published by newspapers and online news portals



## Nature of misleading information

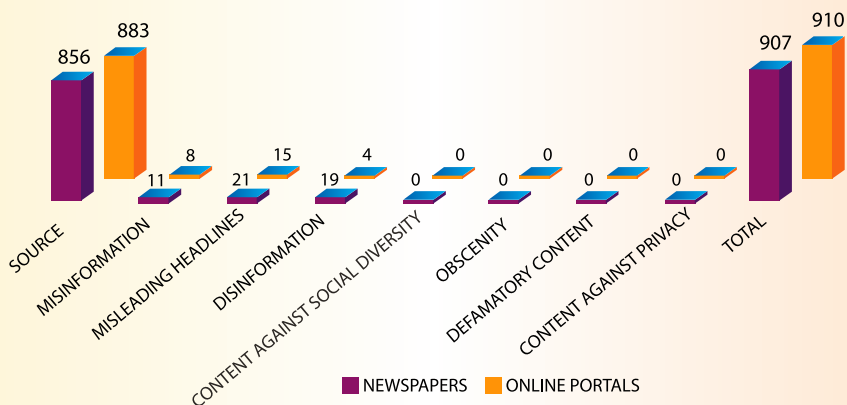
- Eight different indicators have been set for this study purpose.
- In particular, sources, disinformation, misleading headlines, misinformation, obscenity, abusive or defamatory content and content against privacy and social diversity have been set as indicators. In order to make the study more clear, various sub-indicators have also been set.

**Table 2: Status of misleading information**

S.N.	Types of misleading information	Number of news stories	Percent
1	Misleading news source	1,739	95.71
2	Misleading headlines	36	1.98
3	Disinformation	23	1.27
4	Misinformation	19	0.05
5	Content against social diversity	0	0.00
6	Obscenity	0	0.00
7	Defamatory news	0	0.00
8	Content against privacy	0	0.00
Total		1,817	100

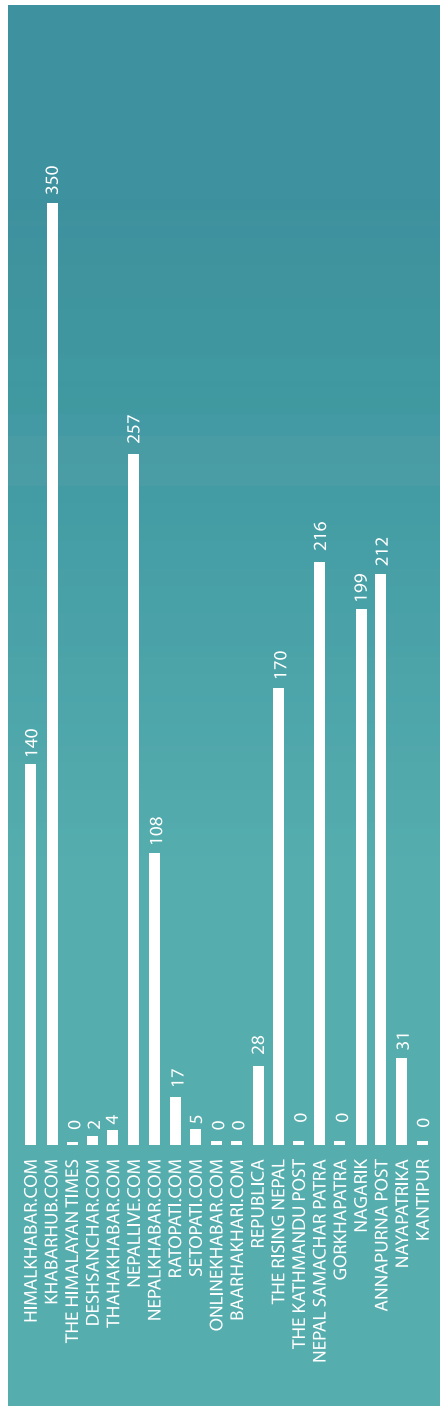
- As mentioned in the table above, the media included in the study have published four out of eight categories of misleading information.
- As some Nepali media did not reveal the source of information correctly, the content or news published by them can be categorised as misleading information.
- Out of a total of 1,817 misleading information, 1,739 (95.71%) are related to the sources. This category comes first in terms of disseminating misleading information.
- This indicator includes the news items that misuse the sources, don't disclose the sources, and don't cite the sources while publishing news obtained from other agencies.
- A total of 36 news items (1.98%) contained misleading headlines, 23 (1.27%) disinformation and 19 (1.05%) misinformation.
- In addition, no misleading information or news that disturb social diversity was found.
- News related to obscenity, abusive and defamatory content, and violation of privacy were not found.
- The nature of information and news published in daily newspapers and online news portals, shows misleading information in both types of media.
- Most of the misleading information in the newspapers are related to news sources and the same proportion was found in online news portals.
- The tendency of publishing news with misleading headlines is in the second place.
- Both types of media have similarities in the tendency of spreading disinformation and misinformation, while news against social diversity, obscenity, insults, and the right to privacy have not been published in both types of media.
- Of the total news (1,817) containing misleading information, there is a similarity between daily newspapers and online news portals in publishing such information.

### COMPARISON BETWEEN NEWSPAPERS AND ONLINE PORTALS



## Misleading information related to sources

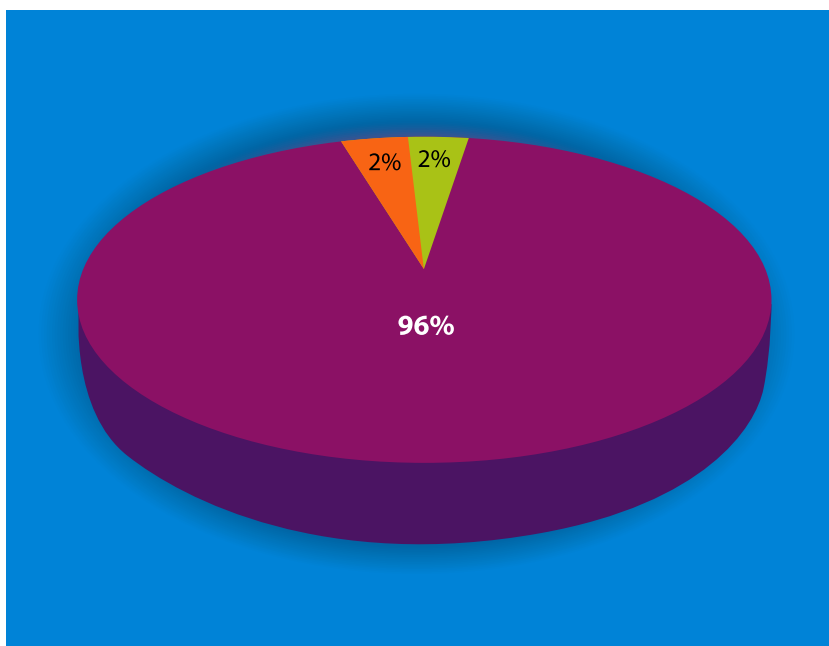
- The high amount of the misleading information is related to news sources.
- International news stories have been published without appropriate sources. Such news may or may not be false, but their credibility is in question when the source is not revealed.
- The six media outlets included in the study— four dailies (The Himalayan Times, The Kathmandu Post, Gorkhapatra and Kantipur) and two online news portals (Onlinekhabar and Baarhakhari)— have not published even a single misleading news related to the source.
- Among the remaining media, four (Deshsanchar, Thaha Khabar, Setopati and Ratopati) have published less than one percent, two (Naya Patrika and Republica) published less than two percent, and three (Nepalkhabar, Himalkhabar and The Rising Nepal) published less than 10% of misleading news related to sources.
- Similarly, five other media (Nagarik, Annapurna Post, Nepal Newspaper, Nepal Live and Khabarhub) have published more than 10% of the misleading news related to sources.
- Khabarhub has topped the list, which has published 20% of such news.
- The study shows that most of the misleading news are related to the sources.
- Out of the total 1,739 news containing misleading information related to the sources, 1,662 (95.57%) have not credited the source of information.
- While publishing international news, no source (agency) has been credited.
- In most of the news, only the term 'agency' is mentioned as the source, but it is not clear which agency it is. In some news, even the term 'agency' is also not mentioned.
- It was found that 12 out of 20 media outlets (national daily newspapers and online news portals) did not mention the source of the news.
- Three media outlets have published news citing unknown sources, and one has published news citing fictitious sources.



**Table 3: Misleading information related to various sources**

S.N.	Types of sources	Number	Percent
1	Source not mentioned	1,662	95.57
2	Fictitious source	42	2.42
3	Anonymous source	35	2.01
Total		1,739	100

### Misleading information with indicators



■ Anonymous source     
 ■ Source not mentioned     
 ■ Fictitious source

# Misinformation

- A total of 19 news items of this category (misinformation) were published in the dailies and online news portals.
- Eight media outlets have not published news related to misinformation, while 12 media outlets have published at least one such news item, and up to three news items (maximum).

Some news stories seem baseless.

For example: Let's take a look at the headline of a news posted on Khabarhub on April 19, 2020. It reads 'High morale helping Nepalis fight against Coronavirus'. This news without scientific basis seems more emotional than factual.

Some news items were misleading because of carelessness in writing headlines. Baarhakhari online posted news under the headline 'Deuba's challenge to the government to pass the MCC in the budget session' on May 17, 2020. Going only through the headline of the news, it seems that the leader of the Opposition, Sher Bahadur Deuba, is not willing to pass the MCC in the Budget Session of the Parliament. But the reality is not that. Both the government and Deuba (Nepali Congress) seem to be willing to pass the MCC as soon as possible. The headline could be written like this to make the point clear: 'Deuba insists on passing MCC in the budget session'.

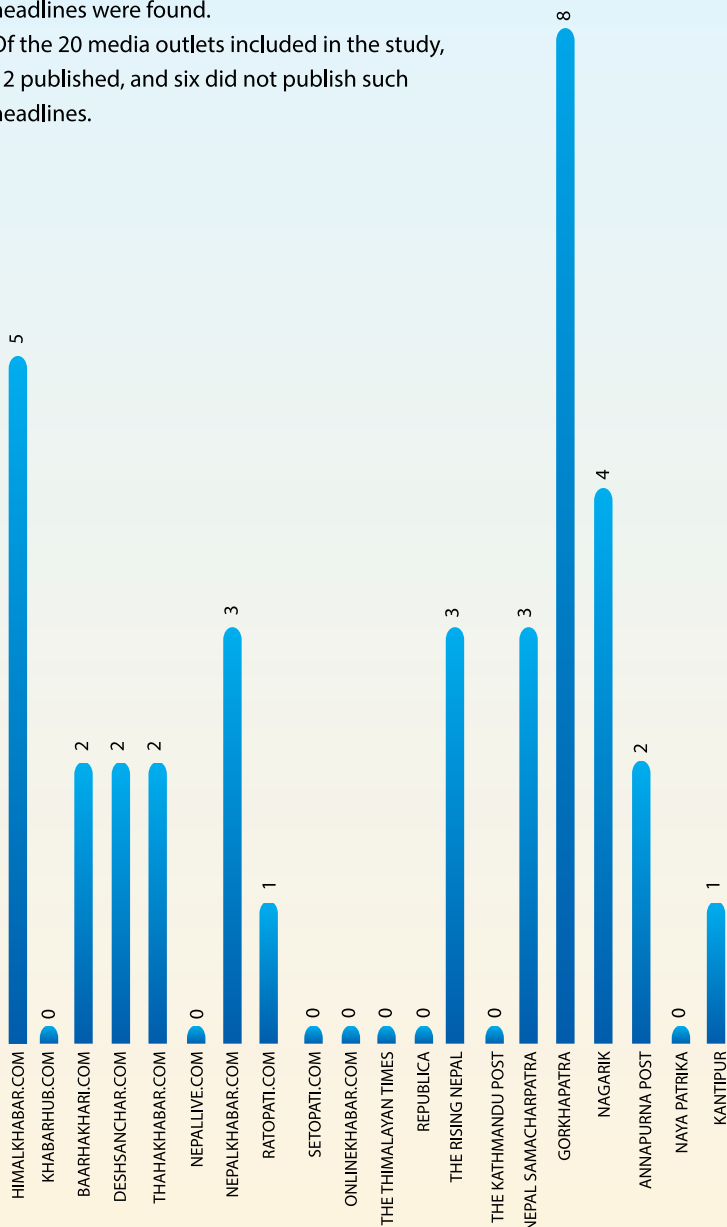
Gorkhapatra daily published on 2 April 2020 under the headline 'Nepalis safe abroad'. At a time when the COVID-19 pandemic was spreading around the world, it is difficult to say that Nepalis living abroad are safe. In the meantime, there were news that Nepalis living abroad were dying due to coronavirus. In such a complex situation, the headline could have been written like this to maintain the credibility of the news: 'Nepalis are claimed to be safe abroad'.

In a similar fashion, Nagarik daily published news titled 'Severe symptoms seen in infected people coming from abroad'. However, the news did not include any basis to confirm the fact that the symptoms seen in those persons who came from abroad. Such news also gives misinformation to the readers.



# News with misleading headlines

- During the course of the study, 36 misleading headlines were found.
- Of the 20 media outlets included in the study, 12 published, and six did not publish such headlines.



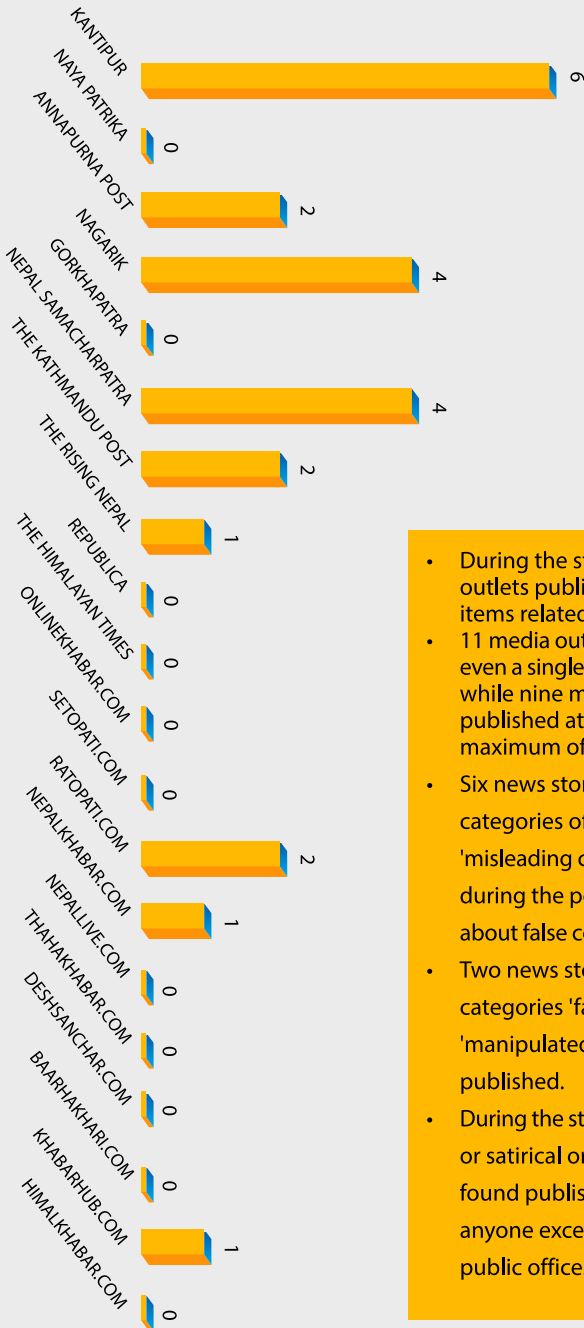


**Himalkhabar** published news with a headline, 'No complaint registered in the Public Prosecutor's Office against two MPs and the former Inspector General facing abduction charges' on 28 April 2020. The lead of the news reads: "Whether the abduction complaint filed by the leaders of Janata Samajbadi Party against MP and former minister Mahesh Basnet, MP Kisan Shrestha and former Inspector General of Police Sarvendra Khanal will be registered by the Kathmandu Public Prosecutor's Office will be known only tomorrow." The lead contrasts with the headline.

**Ratopati** published news under the headline 'No lockdown after 5 o'clock' on April 15, 2020. The photo used in the news shows a crowd of people in the market. This suggests that the lockdown had been lifted after 5 o'clock. Another risk is that general readers will understand that there is no lockdown after 5 o'clock at all. When trying to make the headline attractive, general readers can misunderstand the message of the news.

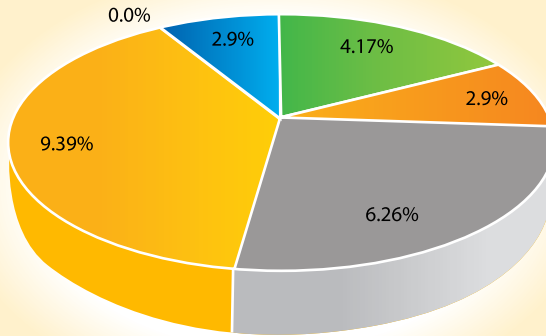
**Annapurna Post** published news titled 'Extreme negligence of BP while treating the infected' on May 31, 2020. The headline of the news did not portray BP as a hospital. This may confuse those readers who do not understand that BP is a hospital. Such news headlines mislead the readers.

# Disinformation



- During the study period, 20 media outlets published a total of 23 news items related to disinformation.
- 11 media outlets have not published even a single piece of disinformation, while nine media outlets have published at least one and a maximum of six such news items.
- Six news stories each in the categories of 'fabricated' and 'misleading content' were published during the period. Four news stories about false contexts were published.
- Two news stories each under the categories 'false connection' and 'manipulated content' were published.
- During the study period, no imposter or satirical or parody content was found published in order to harm anyone except those who hold the public office.

## Types of disinformation



■ False context   
 ■ False connection   
 ■ Fabricated content   
 ■ Misleading content  
■ Satire or parody   
 ■ Imposter content   
 ■ Manipulated content

Let's see a news item from **Onlinekhabar**:

In the news titled 'Dispute in CPN after MCC in the budget, pressure to roll it back', it is reported that Pushpa Kamal Dahal met Prime Minister KP Oli and objected to the mention of MCC in the government's budget speech. However, Pushpa Kamal Dahal's direct statement on this is nowhere to be found in the news. This naturally casts doubt on the credibility of the news.

- Newspapers are ahead of online news portals in publishing disinformation.
- Of the total news related to disinformation, 19 are from newspapers and four from online news portals.

For example, **Kantipur** daily published news titled 'Life returning to normal in India' on May 26, 2020. However, COVID-19 infections were on the rise in India. The news story should have mentioned how public life in India is returning to normal. The information disseminated appears to be misleading.

**Annapurna Post** published news titled 'RDT took life' on June 6, 2020. The news mentioned that the patient died due to RDT. However, there is no proper connection between the headline and the texts. The mismatch between headline and texts spreads disinformation. The study found that the national media have been disseminating such disinformation to a lesser extent. But it is important to note that even a small number of such news can be detrimental to people.



## Content against social diversity

The media outlets included in this study did not publish inaccurate and misleading information against social diversity during the research period.

## Obscenity

During the study period, such news or materials were not published.



## Defamatory content

The study found no news related to character assassination or defamation of any person or group with wrong intentions.

## Content against privacy

The study found no misinformation or fabricated content ignoring the sensitivity of privacy.



**Table 4: Status of misleading information in Nepali media on the basis of indicators set for the study**

Standards	Daily newspapers	Total	Online news portals	Total	Total misleading content (both)
<b>1. Source</b>					
a) Use of anonymous source	30		5		
b) Source not mentioned	826	856	836	883	1,739
c) Fictitious source	0		42		
d) Protection of confidential source	0		0		
<b>2. Misinformation</b>	11	11	8	8	19
<b>3. Misleading headlines</b>	21	21	15	15	36
<b>4. Disinformation</b>					
a) False context	3		1		
b) False connection	1		1		
c) Fabricated content	5		1		
d) Misleading content	9	19	0	4	23
e) Satire or parody	0		0		
f) Imposter content	0		0		
g) Manipulated content	1		1		
<b>5. Content against social diversity</b>					
a) Hate speech	0	0	0	0	0
b) Blasphemy	0	0	0	0	0
c) Religious intolerance	0	0	0	0	0
d) Gender-based discrimination	0	0	0	0	0
e) Racial discrimination	0	0	0	0	0
f) Contents that discriminate persons with disability	0	0	0	0	0
g) Content that disturbs communal harmony	0	0	0	0	0
h) Offensive content	0	0	0	0	0
<b>6. Obscenity</b>					
a) Uncomfortable content	0	0	0	0	0
<b>7. Defamation</b>					
a) Character assassination	0	0	0	0	0
b) Libel	0	0	0	0	0
c) Slander	0	0	0	0	0
<b>8. Content against privacy</b>	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>		907		910	1,817

## Conclusion and recommendations

- Nepali media have the tendency of disseminating misleading information.
- The study finds that out of 49,051 news stories published in the first three months of the COVID-19 lockdown, 1,817 (3.70%) of news contain misleading information.
- About 4% of the news published by Nepali media contain some kind of misleading information.
- As much as 95.71% of misleading information is related to the inappropriate use of news sources.
- Of the total published news, 1,662 didn't reveal news sources, in particular sources of the international news.
- The practice of using fictitious and anonymous sources exists in the national media. Such news items are published due to lack of knowledge and professionalism even if there was no intention to disseminate misleading information.
- Appealing and saleable, but misleading headlines, that donot match the relevant news texts also lead to spreading misleading information. Such headlines aim at making news go viral, and reaching a wider audience and are widely shared on social media.
- The study shows around two percent of the news stories are published with misleading headlines. The media should not publish news with misleading headlines and misinformation that can mislead readers, and cause negative consequences.
- Nepal's national media are cautious of disseminating misleading information by and large.

### Based on findings of the study, the recommendations to the national media of Nepal are:

- **Invest** in capacity building of journalists and hold in-house dialogues and interactions on understanding theoretical and practical aspects of preventing misleading information.
- **Respect** to and **implement** the Journalistic Code of Conduct in preventing misleading news. For this, media houses should adhere to the Journalistic Code of Conduct to promote credible journalism.

- **Reveal** news sources. Hiding the news sources promotes misinformation.
- **Stop** anonymous sources. At the same time, confidential news sources should be protected. Fictitious news sources can disseminate misinformation and disinformation. Reporters as well as editors should be aware of possible impacts of such news.
- **Avoid** misleading headlines that confuse readers or disseminate misinformation. It is found that misleading and clickbait headlines are generally put out in the rush to provide news as quick as possible.
- **Verify** if news sources are supplying misleading information for their own vested interests. Sometimes such misinformed news can be published to fulfill the interests of a journalist or an editorial group.
- **Discourage** fabricated content, misleading content or manipulating information.
- **Understand** the wide-ranging impacts of disinformation can lead to insults or defamation, violation of right to privacy.
- **Review** and **evaluate** the news content before putting them out in the public. Plans should be in place if misinformation and misleading information are found published.

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## Appendix: 1

### Daily newspapers and online news portals included in the study

#### Details of the newspapers included in the study

S.N.	Name of newspapers	Type	Province/District
1	The Kathmandu Post	English daily	Bagmati/Kathmandu
2	Republica	English daily	Bagmati/Kathmandu
3	The Himalayan Times	English daily	Bagmati/Kathmandu
4	The Rising Nepal	English daily	Bagmati/Kathmandu
5	Naya Patrika	Nepali daily	Bagmati/Kathmandu
6	Gorkhapatra	Nepali daily	Bagmati/Kathmandu
7	Kantipur	Nepali daily	Bagmati/Kathmandu
8	Annapurna Post	Nepali daily	Bagmati/Kathmandu
9	Nepal Samacharpatra	Nepali daily	Bagmati/Kathmandu
10	Nagarik	Nepali daily	Bagmati/Kathmandu

#### Details of the online news portals included in the study

S.N.	Name of online news portal	Province/District	Domain name
1	Thahakhabar	Bagmati/Kathmandu	thahakhabar.com
2	Deshsanchar	Bagmati/Lalitpur	deshsanchar.com
3	Baarhakhari	Bagmati/Kathmandu	baarhakhari.com
4	Ratopati	Bagmati/Lalitpur	ratopati.com
5	Nepalkhabar	Bagmati/Kathmandu	nepalkhabar.com
6	Himalkhabar	Bagmati/Lalitpur	himalkhabar.com
7	Onlinekhabar	Bagmati/Kathmandu	onlinekhabar.com
8	Setopati	Bagmati/Lalitpur	setopati.com
9	Nepal Live	Bagmati/Kathmandu	nepallive.com
10	Khabarhub	Bagmati/Kathmandu	khabarhub.com

**Media Action Nepal** is working to promote freedom of expression and media development. Our core working areas include media and journalism, human rights, media research, right to information, communication and policy advocacy. We are committed to making media independent and accountable. Our goals : inclusive, independent and responsible media, and professional journalism, protection of human rights, strengthening of democracy.


Media Action Nepal has been advocating for an effective implementation of international mechanisms for freedom of expression, the United Nations Action Plan on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, and the standards of gender sensitivity both in media content and the editorial leadership.

Since its inception in 2015, the organization has been contributing to independent and responsible press through research, dialogue, advocacy, publication, and documentation, capacity building of journalists in collaboration with national and international organizations.


Within the five years of its establishment, the organization has its presence in all the provinces of Nepal and focal persons in the remaining districts. So far, nearly one thousand journalists have had their competencies built through its programs and activities. It has its active and skilled hands working in more than 21 districts and networks across Nepal.



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