CULTURAL VALUES AND ONLINE MISINFORMATION

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE
GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL (GCC)
MEMBER STATES

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Foreword

Misinformation is no longer a side-effect of the digital age; it is a first-order global risk. The World Economic Forum's 2024 Global Risks Report ranks misinformation as the top short-term threat to global stability, while the 2025 Reuters Digital News Report finds 58 percent of people worldwide unsure whether they can distinguish fact from fiction online.

Left unchecked, false narratives can erode public health, destabilise governance, sap confidence in the digital economy, and weaken the social fabric that binds our societies. Effective counter-measures must be culturally grounded, reflecting shared Gulf values of trust, cohesion, and collective responsibility, and forged through collaboration that spans governments, civil society, the private sector, and citizens themselves.

In that spirit, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) partnered with the Digital Cooperation Organization (DCO) to explore the misinformation challenge in depth. This report is not a reaction to shifting headlines; rather, it demonstrates that strategies rooted in cultural insight and real-world behaviour can offer the most potent antidote to misinformation.

I commend the DCO's rigorous methodology; expert round-tables, in-depth interviews, and a global survey of more than 4,000 respondents in 20 countries, including 1,220 voices from across the GCC. The findings reveal universal patterns while surfacing uniquely Gulf nuances that will be invaluable to our shared response.

Across the region, citizens and community leaders consistently call for an information ecosystem built on integrity. Accordingly, the report outlines a clear roadmap: establishing fact-checking hubs and AI tools attuned to local dialects and cultural contexts; rolling out digital-media-literacy programmes that speak to Gulf sensibilities; and harnessing trusted traditional channels, such as majlis gatherings and public-service broadcasting, to reinforce verified information. Its central message is clear: no single, one-size-fits-all model can succeed; any effective plan must reflect the social dynamics, culture values, and traditions of the communities it aims to serve.

Combatting misinformation is a collective endeavour. Governments, educators, technology innovators, faith leaders, media organisations, and individual citizens all share responsibility for safeguarding our digital and economic futures while upholding the culture values that bind and guide our communities.

On behalf of the GCC, I thank the DCO for this landmark contribution and look forward to deepening our collaboration as we work to build a resilient, trusted information environment for all.

H.E. Jasem Mohamed AlBudaiwi

Secretary-General
Gulf Cooperation Council

Foreword

In today's interconnected digital world, misinformation poses an unprecedented threat to social stability, democratic processes, and economic prosperity. As we collectively navigate this challenge, understanding the profound impact cultural values have on the spread and acceptance of misinformation is crucial.

At the Digital Cooperation Organization (DCO), our vision is to promote inclusive digital prosperity that is resilient, trustworthy, and culturally nuanced. This comprehensive report on "Cultural Values and Online Misinformation: Recommendations for the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Member States" advances this vision by offering tailored strategies that reflect the unique cultural and societal dynamics within the GCC.

Misinformation is deeply intertwined with cultural values, trust networks, and communication traditions. In the GCC region, characterized by its rich heritage, collective identity, and high levels of trust in community and governmental authorities, culturally sensitive approaches are essential to effectively combat misinformation.

This report highlights the necessity of aligning misinformation mitigation strategies with local cultural contexts, leveraging trusted local leaders, traditional communication channels, and culturally resonant messaging.

Drawing on extensive research, stakeholder engagement, and empirical data from diverse GCC societies, the report provides practical recommendations and a robust framework that integrates cultural considerations into every stage of misinformation response—from risk assessment and policy formulation to technological integration and community empowerment.

It highlights effective community-led initiatives, culturally adapted media literacy programs, and AI-driven verification tools that respect local dialects and traditions.

The DCO advocates strongly for the importance of a collaborative, multi-stakeholder approach to address misinformation. Policymakers, tech companies, educational institutions, civil societies, and community leaders all have critical roles to play. By harnessing collective action and culturally informed strategies, we can enhance societal resilience, strengthen digital trust, and empower communities to discern and counteract misinformation effectively.

Furthermore, the findings and recommendations presented here align seamlessly with the DCO's mission to accelerate inclusive and sustainable digital transformation. As misinformation increasingly intersects with emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, robust, culturally-aware governance frameworks become imperative. Our efforts to address misinformation today will shape the digital trust landscape of tomorrow, influencing economic stability, public health, social cohesion, and overall digital inclusion.

I encourage policymakers, industry leaders, educators, and community stakeholders within the GCC and beyond to engage deeply with this report. Together, we can build a culturally resilient digital environment where truth thrives, misinformation diminishes, and digital innovation continues to drive inclusive prosperity for all.

Deemah AlYahya

Secretary-General
The Digital Cooperation Organization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cultural values significantly influence how misinformation is interpreted, shared, and corrected across societies. In the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) context, emphasizing collectivist norms, trusted authorities, and socially cohesive messaging is key to designing effective and culturally grounded counter-misinformation strategies.

A comprehensive analysis addresses the critical challenge of online misinformation, offering actionable insights for the GCC Member States. Recognizing the global impact of misinformation on public health, democratic systems, and societal well-being, this synthesis highlights the limitations of uniform approaches and advocates for **culturally attuned interventions** tailored to diverse societal contexts.

Empirical data include findings from a GCC roundtable, and a large-scale global survey conducted across 20 countries with a total of 4482 participants, including the GCC member states **Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.**

The survey collected data from 1220 participants from these GCC states. It details their perspectives on the harm of misinformation, approaches to countering it, and the influence of cultural values.

Effective countermeasures must be grounded in an understanding of local trust dynamics, communication preferences, perceptions of authority, and prevalent emotional responses.

Findings reveal significant cross-cultural variations in how misinformation is perceived and addressed in various countries of the GCC region. This necessitates a shift toward culturally sensitive frameworks that integrate these nuances into policy and implementation.

Key recommendations for the GCC states emerging from this body of work include:

- Launch Community-Led Fact-Checking Hubs Rooted in Local Culture: Combat misinformation by empowering respected community leaders, religious authorities, and cultural organizations to raise awareness, promote trusted tools, and facilitate local dialogue through fact-checking networks that reflect and reinforce local cultural values. While this approach enhances trust, it also requires safeguards against risks such as bias, lack of accountability, and co-optation by local power dynamics.

- Integrate Culturally Relevant Media Literacy into Education: Build resilience by embedding critical thinking and digital literacy using local stories, proverbs, and real-life scenarios into school and university curricula across the GCC.

- Design Public Awareness Campaigns Leveraging Traditional Communication Channels: Increase public trust by utilizing oral storytelling, majlis gatherings, and respected elders to share accurate information and debunk falsehoods in ways that resonate with cultural traditions

- Develop AI-Powered Fact-Checking Tools in Local Dialects: Advance detection by investing in AI verification platforms that support GCC dialects, recognize regional references, and are accessible to different age and literacy groups.

- Regularly Update Legal Frameworks with Cultural and Technological Awareness: Strengthen governance by ensuring laws clearly define and address misinformation including deepfakes and AI content while respecting cultural sensitivities and protecting fundamental rights.

- Establish Cross-Sector Digital Trust Councils with Cultural Advisors: Coordinate responses by creating councils that unite government, civil societies, academia, tech companies, educators, and cultural experts to ensure interventions are both effective and culturally attuned. This synthesis underscores the urgent need for policymakers to adopt a holistic and collaborative approach that recognizes and integrates the profound influence of culture in combating online misinformation. By prioritizing culturally sensitive strategies, fostering technological advancements, and strengthening global partnerships, a more resilient and trustworthy information ecosystem can be built.

OVERVIEW OF THE INSIGHTS

INTRODUCTION

The increasingly critical global challenge of online misinformation profoundly affects public health, democratic processes, social cohesion, and economic stability. Misinformation is not merely a technological problem, but a complex phenomenon deeply intertwined with human behavior and societal structures. Across the GCC region, the challenge is shaped by unique cultural values, local trust networks, and communication traditions, all of which play a decisive role in how misinformation spreads and how it can be countered.

A key challenge lies in the insufficient understanding and integration of cultural factors in current efforts to combat online misinformation. While technological solutions and broad policy recommendations are crucial, the effectiveness of countermeasures is significantly influenced by cultural values, communication preferences,

trust dynamics, and societal attitudes toward authority. An effective response should move beyond one-size-fits-all solutions and focus on strategies grounded in local realities leveraging trusted community leadership, culturally relevant technology, and sensitivity to tradition and collective identity.

The aim is to equip policymakers, practitioners, and communities with conceptual frameworks, empirical insights, guidelines, and tools needed to develop and implement culturally attuned strategies for combating online misinformation in the GCC. Solutions must blend evidence-based global knowledge with deep respect for local context, trust networks, and lived realities. Successful action relies on harnessing community engagement, technological innovation, and legal frameworks tailored to the social fabric of each GCC country.

The work summarizes and synthesizes:

Key frameworks
that explain the relationship between cultural values and misinformation in the GCC,

Empirical data
from roundtables and cross-national surveys highlighting attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors related to misinformation,

Technological consideration
for culturally adaptive tools and digital literacy initiatives,

Practical guidelines
and recommended actions for stakeholders, and

Strategic policy interventions
to build resilience and maintain public trust.

Each of the forthcoming chapters contributes a vital perspective to the overall approach:

Chapter 3 explores the latest research on cultural values and misinformation, highlighting under-researched dimensions and global knowledge gaps, with special attention to the GCC's context.

Chapter 4 delivers in-depth empirical insights from large-scale surveys and roundtable discussions, illustrating how cultural values influence public attitudes, trust, regulation, and everyday responses to misinformation.

Chapter 5 introduces the seven pillars framework, combining community-driven and technology-centered solutions, culturally adapted guidelines, and holistic actions to counter misinformation.

Chapter 6 turns research into action by offering clear recommendations for policymakers, focusing on technology adoption, legal standards, multi-stakeholder collaboration, and the sustained integration of cultural values.

The analysis presents a comprehensive approach to the GCC's efforts in addressing misinformation, emphasizing the importance of leveraging cultural strengths and traditions while integrating global best practices with regional realities.

KEY THEMES AND FINDINGS

A central and unifying theme across all chapters is the critical importance of cultural context and sensitivity in combating online misinformation.

Chapter 3 reviews literature and conceptual models, emphasizing the role of cultural values in shaping trust, communication preferences, and attitudes toward authority in both global and GCC contexts. The analysis brings attention to the under-researched influence of cultural and linguistic nuances on how misinformation is received and spread across the GCC region.

It is found that tailored misinformation policies are most effective when they consider local customs and realities, while harmonizing efforts with broader regional and global strategies. Recognizing that misinformation and its countermeasures are shaped by cultural context, rather than being culturally neutral, stands out as a fundamental insight of the study.

Chapter 4 provides empirical data from roundtables and surveys, demonstrating the inherent complexity of misinformation as it unfolds across the diverse societies of the GCC region. Online misinformation emerges as a multifaceted challenge with numerous contributing causes and wide-ranging impacts affecting individual decision-making, community trust, and broader social dynamics. This complexity is amplified by the distinct cultural values, communication traditions, and trust structures present within each GCC country.

Understanding how these cultural factors shape the spread, reception, and correction of misinformation is essential. Such insight calls for coordinated, context-sensitive strategies that move beyond one-size-fits-all solutions, reflecting the lived realities and needs of the region. This approach, as discussed in the empirical chapters, draws directly from stakeholder discussions and regional analysis, ensuring that responses are both holistic and culturally attuned.

A consistent highlight, particularly in Chapters 4 and 5, is the necessity of engaging diverse stakeholders including policymakers, private sector representatives, and various levels of governance throughout the GCC countries in combatting misinformation. This engagement can take comprehensive and interdisciplinary processes involving various methods of stakeholder dialogue and analysis of existing primary and secondary data. Stakeholder identification and dialogue, as outlined in these chapters, must be carefully developed to include policymakers, technology platforms, civil society, and individuals.

The stakeholder matrix, described in the solutions framework, can foster partnerships and clarify roles and responsibilities, thereby supporting scalable and inclusive approaches to understanding and addressing the cultural features of misinformation.

Chapter 5 introduces technology-centered solutions for the detection, correction, and prevention of misinformation, with an emphasis on AI-driven tools. However, it also emphasizes the challenge of delivering these outcomes effectively to citizens and underscores the need for human oversight. Survey results indicate dedicated support for various technological tools for countering misinformation, such as identifying the original source and automated fact-checking. A key insight from this chapter is the current limitation regarding the linguistic diversity of existing datasets used to train these technologies, which predominantly focus on English.
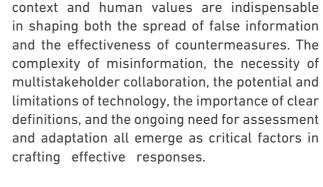
Chapters 3, 5, and 6 collectively emphasize the importance of clear definitions and scope, with a focus on differentiating types of information disorder and identifying sectors most at risk. Establishing universally understood definitions is crucial for targeted and effective interventions.

Ongoing assessment and monitoring are also stressed throughout, particularly in the final chapter, to ensure the effectiveness and adaptability of misinformation countermeasures.

IMPLICATIONS

Regular reporting and independent reviews of progress are highlighted as essential for fostering transparency and supporting continuous improvement among stakeholders and institutions responsible for addressing misinformation in the GCC region. Survey results, as documented in Chapter 4, offer valuable baseline insights into perceptions and attitudes, providing a foundation for future evaluation and adjustment of strategies.

A compelling and comprehensive understanding underscores the urgent need for fundamental changes in how online misinformation is understood and addressed. Moving beyond purely technological or one-size-fits-all solutions, it becomes clear that cultural context and human values are indispensable in shaping both the spread of false information and the effectiveness of countermeasures. The complexity of misinformation, the necessity of multistakeholder collaboration, the potential and limitations of technology, the importance of clear definitions, and the ongoing need for assessment and adaptation all emerge as critical factors in crafting effective responses.

A structured and evidence-based approach enables policymakers and stakeholders in the GCC member states to strengthen national agendas against misinformation.

By integrating cultural sensitivity at every stage of policy design and implementation from defining the problem to deploying interventions and evaluating their impact governments can build more resilient information ecosystems and better protect citizens from the harms of online falsehoods.

Achieving this requires a holistic and adaptive strategy that recognizes the dynamic interplay between global challenges and the unique realities of the GCC member states in combating misinformation.

THE STATE OF THE ART ON CULTURAL VALUES AND MISINFORMATION

THE KNOWLEDGE ON CULTURAL VALUES AND MISINFORMATION

OVERVIEW

Addressing the critical global issue of misinformation, particular emphasis is placed on the under-researched influence of cultural and linguistic nuances on its spread, acceptance, and correction. The goal is to bridge this gap by exploring the intersection of cultural values and the misinformation landscape globally and the GCC member states.

A deeper understanding of how cultural factors shape the reception and dissemination of false information is crucial for developing effective countermeasures.

Current limitations remain regarding which cultural values are most influential in different aspects of misinformation, how this influence varies across demographics, and the correlations between cultural values and attitudes toward misinformation.

A comprehensive approach is undertaken to address these gaps. First, misinformation is defined as an umbrella term encompassing various forms of false information, including disinformation and malinformation. The pervasive nature and detrimental impact of misinformation on various sectors of society are highlighted, including its role in eroding trust and exacerbating social divisions.

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August 8, 2024

Second, a review of several prominent models of cultural values, such as Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions, Schwartz's Theory of Basic Human Values, and the Inglehart-Welzel Cultural Map, among others, is provided. Key dimensions of each model and their intended meaning are briefly described.
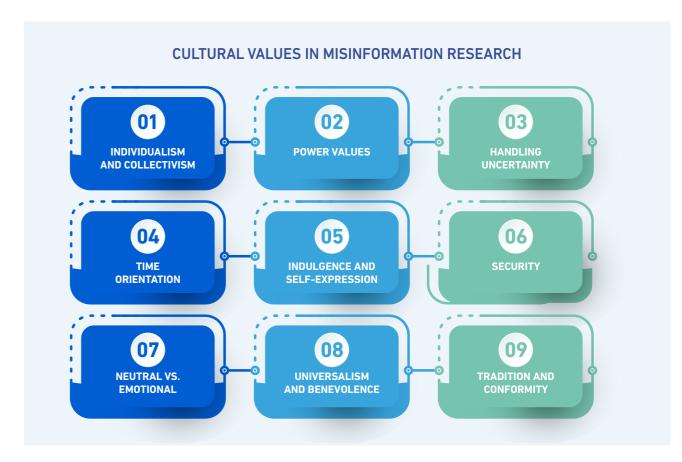
Third, existing literature on misinformation is examined to understand how these cultural values have been previously applied in this field.

Finally, a cross-sectional survey across 21 countries is introduced, aiming to empirically investigate the relationship between social media misinformation, correction strategies, and cultural values across a diverse global sample of 4,200 participants.

KEY FINDINGS

Several key findings and arguments emerge:

- **Misinformation is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon** with numerous definitions, but it generally refers to false or inaccurate information that is created and spread, either intentionally or unintentionally. The term "misinformation" is used which was also discussed with the stakeholders during the DCO Roundtable held at the headquarters of the GCC located in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia as an overarching term that includes concepts like fake news, disinformation, and malinformation

- **Cultural values play a crucial role in how individuals process misinformation and respond to its correction.** Different cultural values can influence the spread, acceptance, and mitigation of misinformation. For instance, approaches to countering misinformation might have varying effects in individualistic versus collectivistic cultures, with the GCC societies typically exhibiting strong collectivist tendencies.

- **Current research on misinformation is heavily centered on Western countries,** creating a need for more studies focused on the Global South and the unique cultural, economic, and political dynamics of the GCC member states to understand the unique dynamics of misinformation in these regions, which are influenced by local contexts, economies, politics, and social relationships.

- A detailed overview of various **models of cultural values** is provided, including their key dimensions and critiques. While many models exist, none have been specifically designed with misinformation in mind.

CULTURAL VALUES IN MISINFORMATION RESEARCH

01 INDIVIDUALISM AND COLLECTIVISM

02 POWER VALUES

03 HANDLING UNCERTAINTY

04 TIME ORIENTATION

05 INDULGENCE AND SELF-EXPRESSION

06 SECURITY

07 NEUTRAL VS. EMOTIONAL

08 UNIVERSALISM AND BENEVOLENCE

09 TRADITION AND CONFORMITY

The analysis specifically examines the relevance of several cultural values to misinformation research:

01 **Individualism and Collectivism:**

These values influence how societal structures that prioritize either community or individual rights affect misinformation spread and trust. Research suggests a complex relationship, with some studies linking individualistic traits to conspiracy beliefs and others associating collectivistic cultures such as those prevalent in the GCC with an increased belief in misinformation.

02 **Power Distance:**

The presence and acceptance of power structures vary significantly across the globe and influence both the distribution of and response to misinformation. In high-power distance cultures information from authority figures may be less likely to be questioned, while low-power distance cultures might be more inclined to challenge false claims.

03 **Uncertainty Avoidance:**

Cultures with high uncertainty avoidance may be more sensitive to misinformation that highlights norm violations and might be more inclined to seek simple solutions, including conspiracy theories, to navigate unclear situations.

04 **Indulgence and Self-Expression:**

While there is insufficient research, initial findings suggest that more indulgent cultures might be less likely to believe in conspiracy theories but could be more prone to instantly sharing misinformation without verification.

05 **Time Orientation:**

The impact of a culture's focus on the past, present, or future in handling misinformation is largely unclear, with limited research available. However, in the GCC, where traditional values and respect for heritage are highly regarded, it might relate to the lifespan of misinformation and the effectiveness of long-term interventions.

06 **Safety and Security:**

The feeling of insecurity can increase vulnerability to misinformation, especially when it exploits fears related to safety and stability. In the GCC, misinformation is of-ten viewed through the lens of its potential impact on national security and social stability, making these considerations particularly significant in shaping public responses. A robust security culture might reduce the impact of false information.

07 **Neutral vs. Emotional:**

Emotions, especially negative ones, are key drivers in the spread of misinformation. Cultural differences exist in emotional arousal levels, which might influence responses to misinformation and the design of emotionally sensitive countermeasures. Within the GCC context, where social norms often emphasize restraint and collective responsibility, patterns of sharing and verification may differ from those in more indulgent societies.

08 **Universalism and Benevolence:**

Universalism (a concern for all people) is linked to a lower likelihood of believing in false information without verification, while benevolence (a concern for close relationships) might lead to more cautious sharing to avoid harming others. In the GCC societies, strong emphasis on family ties and close community relationships often reinforces benevolent behavior, contributing to a preference for cautious information sharing within trusted circles.

09 **Tradition and Conformity:**

These values can influence how false claims or corrections are shared, with groups potentially prioritizing the preservation of traditional norms over accepting conflicting information. GCC cultures place a high value on tradition and social conformity, which can both hinder the acceptance of corrections and support the rapid spread of information aligned with prevailing norms and collective identity.

A global survey investigates these relationships across diverse cultural contexts. The questionnaire focuses on the prevalence of misinformation, the effectiveness of correction strategies, and the influence of cultural values, along with socioeconomic factors.
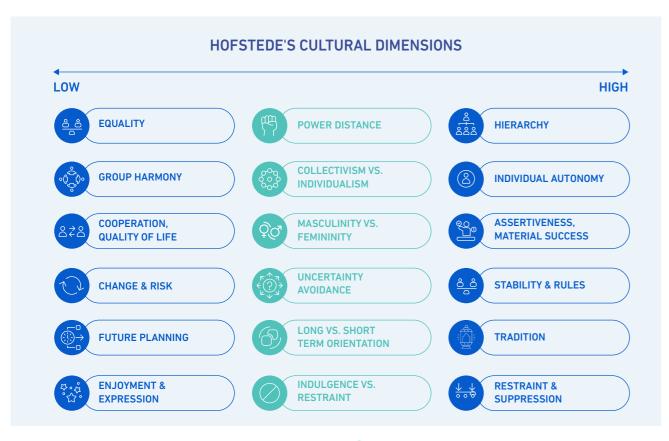
IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Significant implications arise for addressing the GCC culture-related challenge of misinformation, especially through a systematic emphasis on the crucial role of cultural values in both understanding and mitigating the spread of false information.

By providing a comprehensive overview of relevant cultural value models and reviewing their application in existing misinformation literature, the need to develop an approach to deal with misinformation is highlighted, which is based on the culturally relevant characteristics of the GCC region countries. This underscores the urgent need for more geographically inclusive research, particularly focusing on the diverse contexts of the GCC member states.

Detailed discussion of specific cultural values, such as individualism/collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and time orientation, in relation to misinformation offers valuable conceptual insights for GCC researchers, policymakers, and practitioners. Interventions in the GCC member states designed without considering these cultural nuances may be less effective or even counterproductive in certain contexts.

For example, a fact-checking initiative that relies heavily on individualistic verification might achieve different levels of engagement in collectivistic cultures that prioritize group consensus and trust in personal connections. Similarly, the acceptance of information from authority figures in high-power-distance cultures has direct implications for how misinformation originating from or targeting these figures might be addressed.

HOFSTEDE'S CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

LOW ←――――――――――――――――――――――→ HIGH

EQUALITY	POWER DISTANCE	HIERARCHY
GROUP HARMONY	COLLECTIVISM VS. INDIVIDUALISM	INDIVIDUAL AUTONOMY
COOPERATION, QUALITY OF LIFE	MASCULINITY VS. FEMININITY	ASSERTIVENESS, MATERIAL SUCCESS
CHANGE & RISK	UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE	STABILITY & RULES
FUTURE PLANNING	LONG VS. SHORT TERM ORIENTATION	TRADITION
ENJOYMENT & EXPRESSION	INDULGENCE VS. RESTRAINT	RESTRAINT & SUPPRESSION

The introduction of a large-scale, multicultural survey represents a significant step toward generating empirical data on the interaction between culture and misinformation.

The findings from this survey, spanning 21 countries, including the GCC member states, provide unique and much-needed insights into how cultural and socioeconomic contexts shape perceptions and responses to misinformation. This is particularly important for developing culturally tailored countermeasures and strategies for combating false information effectively.

Based on its analysis, increasing attention to and enhancing the incorporation of cultural factors into current research, practice, and policy is strongly recommended. This includes:

- **Prioritizing research in diverse cultural contexts,** especially in the Global South, and the GCC member states, to develop a more balanced understanding of misinformation dynamics.

- **Considering cultural values** when designing and implementing campaigns and mechanisms countering misinformation to enhance their relevance and effectiveness.

- **Leveraging data-driven insights** from cross-cultural studies to develop culturally sensitive guidelines and interventions in the GCC member states for mitigating the damaging effects of misinformation.

- Promoting **collaboration between governments, international bodies, businesses, and citizens** to address the threats posed by false information in the GCC member states, while being mindful of cultural differences in communication and trust.

- Recognizing that the **impact of misinformation on the digital economy** (e.g., erosion of trust, reputational harm) necessitates culturally attuned strategies for building resilience and protecting public discourse.

EMPIRICAL DATA ON CULTURE AND MISINFORMATION IN GCC MEMBER STATES AND GLOBALLY

THE ROUNDTABLE RESULTS

OVERVIEW

To determine the viewpoint of multiple GCC stakeholders on cultural values and online misinformation, the DCO conducted a roundtable titled "Engaging in Digital Policy: Collaborative Approaches to Combat Online Misinformation". This roundtable was held in Riyadh on November 14, 2024. The event was a hybrid format, bringing together stakeholders from the GCC countries to discuss strategies and validate the framework for addressing online misinformation. The primary purpose of the roundtable was to facilitate dialogue on the intersection of cultural

values and misinformation, examine existing and potential frameworks, collaboratively co-create actionable solutions, and equip participants with tools for effective policy development, with a specific emphasis on incorporating cultural aspects unique to the GCC region. The event involved structured sessions, including an interactive icebreaker on defining misinformation, discussions on a framework for combating misinformation, and a survey on perceptions and tool preferences.

KEY FINDINGS FROM GCC STATES STAKEHOLDERS

Several key discussion points and survey results from the roundtable with GCC stakeholders determine the viewpoints of GCC multiple stakeholders on cultural values and online misinformation.

Defining Online Misinformation:

Participants offered diverse perceptions of misinformation, frequently associating it with terms like "wrong", "mislead", "problems", and emotional impacts like "anger" and "fear". Modern drivers like social media and lack of data were also highlighted. They defined misinformation generally as incorrect or false information spread intentionally or unintentionally, noting the unique challenges on platforms like Twitter due to easy amplification of false narratives. Examples included workplace miscommunication, disaster misinformation (e.g., false advisories during floods), social media rumors (e.g., Schengen visas claims), and exaggerated health claims shared online. These examples underscored the pervasive nature and far-reaching consequences across individual decisions and societal outcomes.

Strategies to Combat Misinformation:

Education emerged as the most frequently mentioned solution for mitigating misinformation, emphasizing the importance of equipping individuals with critical evaluation skills. Other strategies included ensuring accountability, fostering transparency, awareness campaigns, cultural exchange, cooperation, and correction mechanisms, pointing to the need for a multi-faceted approach.

Impacts of Misinformation:

Discussions revealed significant impacts across economic (disrupted market confidence), social (polarization, eroding trust), health (undermining public health efforts, like during COVID-19), cultural domain (rapid spread via oral storytelling, trust in influencers), and democratic process (distorting voter perceptions, deepening polarization).

Proposed Reactions to Misinformation:

Participants suggested verifying sources, cross-checking with trusted outlets, reporting misinformation, supporting correction campaigns, and advocating for tailored education and awareness initiatives. A generational difference was noted, with younger participants more likely to verify and fact-check compared to older generations who might rely on oral accounts or traditional media.

Framework for Addressing Cultural Values and Online Misinformation:

Participants explored a framework grounded in cultural values, emphasizing that trust dynamics, communication preferences, and perceptions of authority are central to understanding how misinformation spreads in the GCC and beyond. The discussion focused on the interplay between collectivism, emotional triggers, and traditional practices, with a call to design interventions that are aligned with local values.

Solution highlights included leveraging culturally respected community figures to foster trust, integrating traditional storytelling into corrective campaigns, and localizing fact-checking tools to native languages and customs. Participants noted that tailoring responses to cultural sensitivities increases both acceptance and impact.

Key challenges identified were aligning technology and regulatory frameworks with cultural ethics, bridging generational gaps in digital literacy, and balancing the need for regulation with respect for freedom of expression. Culturally adaptive legal and educational strategies, developed in consultation with community stakeholders, were proposed to address these tensions.

Success examples from the GCC region illustrated the effectiveness of working with religious leaders, community influencers, and trusted official channels to communicate corrections, particularly during crises. Culturally relevant media literacy programs in schools and engagement through social gatherings were also recognized as impactful. Participants emphasized that investing in culturally informed public education and awareness campaigns is essential.

Recommendations included codifying shared ethical standards based on local values, collaborating with social media platforms to promote trustworthy information, and employing AI tools that reflect regional languages and cultural nuances.

Cultural Dynamics and Source Trust

- Participants in the GCC assigned the highest trust to government sources and community leaders, reflecting the strong influence of hierarchical and collectivist values. International and social media sources were rated lower, often due to perceived cultural disconnects or lack of accountability.

- Cultural traditions, generational divides, and communal trust networks were found to significantly shape information flows. Youth tend to be more receptive to digital solutions, while older generations often rely on oral and traditional sources, highlighting the need for age-targeted and context-aware interventions.

- Strategies for combating online misinformation rated most important included raising culturally sensitive awareness, rapid publication of corrections, and promoting the use of verified sources – all adapted to local habits, beliefs, and communication styles.

Pillars of a Culturally Adaptive Framework:

- Breakout discussions emphasized tailoring education and media literacy to local narratives and integrating critical thinking exercises reflective of cultural realities.

- Technological solutions must be linguistically and culturally accessible, ensuring AI and verification tools respect local norms and foster user trust.

- Legal frameworks should be co-designed with community input, balancing cultural ethics and freedom of expression. Culturally informed community interventions, such as collective verification and community pledges, further strengthen resilience.

- Traditional knowledge, social rituals, and trusted local practices serve as essential resources for both content verification and public engagement, forming the backbone of culturally attuned misinformation strategies.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Building on the insights from the GCC roundtable and survey findings, effective strategies to address online misinformation in the region must be firmly rooted in cultural realities, social structures, and trust dynamics unique to the GCC States. The strong influence of collectivist values, deep trust in government and community leaders, and the importance of social rituals and generational divides all shape the way information is received, evaluated, and acted upon.

Key recommendations and implications include:

Prioritize Culturally Embedded Education and Media Literacy:

Educational initiatives should embed critical thinking and media literacy within school curricula and public awareness campaigns, ensuring materials and messaging reflect local narratives, age groups, and community values. This approach supports both younger audiences, who are more digitally engaged, and older generations, who rely on oral and traditional sources.

Leverage Trusted Local Channels:

Disseminating accurate information should center on official government sources, trusted influencers, and respected community and religious leaders, in line with the high trust placed in these figures by GCC societies. This also includes integrating traditional storytelling and leveraging the role of social gatherings for corrective campaigns.

Develop and Localize Culturally Sensitive Technology:

AI-powered verification tools and other digital solutions must be adapted to regional languages, dialects, and cultural norms, with human oversight to address local nuances. Ongoing development and localization, especially for fact-checking tools, is essential to increase user trust and adoption.

Balancing Regulation with Cultural Values and Rights:

Legal frameworks should be co-designed with community input, ensuring that the regulation of harmful misinformation aligns with local ethical standards and cultural values, while safeguarding freedom of expression. Proportional accountability for deliberate spread and clear legal definitions will help foster trust and compliance.

Foster Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration:

Close partnerships among governments, communities, NGOs, academia, and technology platforms are critical for co-creating culturally resonant solutions. International cooperation is valuable but must always be adapted to the GCC's unique context and local stakeholder needs.

Invest Strategically in Community-Driven Initiatives:

Resources should be directed toward building long-term resilience through localized education, technology tailored to regional needs, and strengthening alliances with trusted platforms and fact-checking entities. Public education campaigns and community-based verification initiatives, such as collective pledges or locally run media literacy programs, can have a high impact.

These recommendations highlight the necessity of integrating cultural sensitivity, systemic approaches, and community engagement at every stage. The strong, interconnected foundation of trust networks, traditional practices, and digital innovation forms the backbone of effective responses to online misinformation in the GCC.

SURVEY RESULTS: GLOBALLY AND GCC

OVERVIEW

In order to determine various views of multiple stakeholders across 20 countries world, including the GCC countries, a large-scale global survey was conducted, with diverse social, economic, and cultural backgrounds. The study employed a cross-sectional survey design to explore the relationship between misinformation on social media, its correction, and cultural values. The overarching purpose of the survey was to shed light on perceptions of issues relevant to the topic of fighting misinformation on social media, aiming to address the limited understanding of how cultural factors influence the reception and dissemination of misinformation.

Data collection took place between September 23 and October 31, 2024, yielding 4,482 samples with at least 200 respondents from each country.

The GCC countries included in the survey are Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

Here are the 1220 participants from the GCC member states:

Country	Participants	
Bahrain	200	participants
Kuwait	200	participants
Oman	200	participants
Qatar	204	participants
Saudi Arabia	214	participants
United Arab Emirates	202	participants

The survey questionnaire consisted of **142 items** and included sections on socioeconomic characteristics and perceptions of/behaviors toward misinformation and cultural values, using both multiple-choice and Likert-scale questions. To ensure accessibility and accurate responses, the survey was available in **eight languages.**

This comprehensive dataset aims to provide insights into the varied cultural and linguistic backgrounds of participants and their interactions with online misinformation.

KEY FINDINGS

The survey findings highlight that cultural values such as authority acceptance, instruction seeking, group and collective orientation, and being success-driven in life goals profoundly shape how communities experience and respond to online misinformation. By examining these dynamics across different societies, including the GCC, the results demonstrate that effective solutions must be adapted to local cultural contexts to build trust and ensure lasting impact.

The demographic distribution of respondents in the global survey showed that the **25–34 age group had the highest representation** overall, which was also true for the GCC countries. Respondents' perspectives on various aspects of social media and misinformation were examined, including reasons for social media use, understanding the harms of misinformation, and views on combating misinformation.

From a GCC perspective, the survey paid particular attention to how cultural values shape trust in information sources and responses to misinformation.

In high power-distance societies like Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, respondents expressed greater trust in hierarchical authorities such as government bodies and religious leaders when evaluating the credibility of information online. This reliance on centralized authority reinforces the importance of official sources in any strategy to combat misinformation.

Regarding **technologies for countering misinformation,** the survey found strong support for tools such as **identifying the original source of a false claim** (which had the highest mean score of 3.98), automated fact-checking, tracking false claims across languages, and reverse image/video search. Most people viewed tracing the original source of false claims as the most powerful tool against misinformation. Over 70% of participants rated identifying the original source as "very important" or "extremely important".

In the GCC, preferences for technology solutions reflected cultural nuances. For example, respondents in Bahrain expressed a clear preference for reverse image and video search as a key verification method, while participants in Kuwait and Qatar indicated higher trust in AI-powered verification tools that align with local communication styles and expectations.

Globally, the survey participants expressed strong agreement that those who spread false information should be held accountable, with this view receiving one of the highest support levels in the survey. There was a high mean score (4.08) for the statement "People should be held accountable for spreading false information".

A significant majority also agreed on the need for social media platforms to remove false content and block accounts that spread it. Within the GCC, findings largely mirrored the global results, with high support for both personal accountability and active moderation by platforms. In most GCC countries, agreement with holding individuals accountable was consistent with, or even slightly higher than, the global average.

The call for social media platforms to remove false content and block repeat offenders was similarly strong, reflecting a high level of trust in authority and preference for robust regulation.

Collectivist values in the GCC were associated with stronger support for government-led regulation and communal accountability. For instance, respondents in Qatar and Saudi Arabia favored top-down policy interventions, emphasizing the role of government institutions and group responsibility in combating misinformation.

In terms of cultural values, frequency distributions of respondents' views on **uncertainty avoidance and individualism versus collectivism** across different countries are presented, revealing cross-cultural differences in these dimensions. For example, many respondents agreed on the importance of detailed instructions as part of uncertainty avoidance.

In high uncertainty-avoidance countries such as Qatar and Rwanda, survey participants frequently reported feelings of anxiety when exposed to misinformation, driving demand for stricter regulations and pre-publication content verification. By contrast, in low uncertainty-avoidance societies, indifference or adaptability was more common.

Emotional responses to witnessing misinformation were also examined, with "upset and angry" being a common reaction. Many people reported feeling upset and angry when they encountered misinformation.

Notably, in several GCC countries, emotional triggers such as anxiety and anger were heightened, further supporting the need for culturally sensitive messaging and corrective mechanisms.

Correlation analysis revealed weak correlations between uncertainty avoidance and various perceived impacts of misinformation (e.g., on decision-making, public uncertainty, harm to reputations, and shaping public opinion)

in several countries, suggesting that while a relationship exists, other factors may play a more substantial role.

The survey also asked about the **effectiveness of different sources in stopping misinformation,** with varying perceptions across countries regarding social media platforms, web search engines, traditional media, fact-checking organizations, and others. Similarly, the effectiveness of various sources in correcting misinformation, such as strangers, family/friends, social media influencers, journalists, and fact-checkers, showed diverse opinions across nationalities. Over half of the participants think scientists are the most effective source for stopping misinformation.

Within the GCC, government sources and local community leaders were consistently rated as the most effective in correcting misinformation, while international media and social media influencers were viewed with greater skepticism highlighting the importance of leveraging culturally trusted channels for corrective interventions.

Finally, sources responsible for spreading misinformation were considered, with social media platforms and ordinary citizens often being perceived as highly responsible. Many participants placed the blame for spreading misinformation on social media platforms and general public.

> The GCC results underscore the complexity of balancing traditional trust networks, technological innovation, and regulatory approaches, confirming that culturally attuned strategies are vital for effective responses to online misinformation in the region.

THE STATE IN GCC MEMBER STATES INDIVIDUAL'S PERSPECTIVES

A summary of the findings regarding individuals' perspectives on misinformation for each GCC country included in the survey, grouped by country and category.

BAHRAIN

Understanding Harm of Misinformation:

Many respondents recognized the harm misinformation can cause – about 55.5% said it significantly affects their opinions and values. About a quarter of participants reported consistently encountering misinformation from social media influencers and celebrities. Interestingly, those with high power distance values were more likely to see family as a source of misinformation.

Countering Misinformation:

Nearly 30% of participants admitted they sometimes ignore posts containing misinformation. The most common response to encountering misinformation was to unfollow or block the person who shared it.

While 59% believed social media platforms are highly and extremely capable of stopping misinformation, 17% strongly agreed that acting against it is not a major concern for them.

Technologies for Countering Misinformation:

Reverse image and video search received the highest mean score as a preferred technology. About a quarter of participants think the ability to detect fake or tampered images, audio, and videos is moderately important. 64.0% of respondents considered tracking false claims across countries and languages as very and extremely important.

Regulating Misinformation:

Values related to power showed a strong positive correlation with support for regulating misinformation.

55.5%

OF RESPONDENTS SAID MISINFORMATION SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECTS THEIR OPINIONS AND VALUES.

KUWAIT

Understanding Harm of Misinformation:

About 22.5% of respondents showed low concern that sharing misinformation harms one's reputation. Only 57% agree and strongly agree that misinformation reduces social trust, marking the lowest level of agreement among the countries surveyed.

Countering Misinformation:

About 17% believe social media can't stop misinformation at all. Collectivism did not influence how much people believe strangers can help correct misinformation. Both collectivists and individualists had similar views on this. Most felt worried or anxious when seeing misinformation, while feelings like guilt or indifference weren't linked to uncertainty avoidance.

Technologies for Countering Misinformation:

More than half of Kuwaiti respondents agree or strongly agree that better technology is needed to verify information and believe such technologies can be less biased than humans.

Regulating Misinformation:

12.0% of respondents disagreed that spreading misinformation should be made illegal. 15.5% disagreed that anonymity must be removed to discourage misinformation sharing. 28.5% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that social media, tech companies, and digital platforms must remove all content with false information. Power values didn't influence opinions on whether spreading misinformation should be illegal or if removing anonymity online is needed to discourage sharing false information. Unfollowing or blocking the person who posts misinformation did not show a significant correlation with power values. Power values had no clear link to whether people choose to comment and say something is wrong.

Cultural Values:

Cultural values in Kuwait reflect strong collectivist tendencies, as around half believe that group loyalty should be encouraged, even if it means individual goals may suffer. More than half said that group success and welfare matter more than individual goals, and nearly 47% believe individuals should consider the welfare of the group before pursuing their own goals.

57%

AGREE AND STRONGLY AGREE THAT MISINFORMATION REDUCES SOCIAL TRUST

OMAN

Understanding Harm of Misinformation:

A significant portion of Omani respondents believe that sharing misinformation increases public uncertainty and decreases social trust, making it harder for people to discern the truth. Many also feel that misinformation strongly shapes their decision-making, increasing their awareness of its potential consequences. About 9.5% of respondents reported that cultural norms and values embedded in messaging do not at all affect the spread of misinformation. 26.5% reported that misinformation has a very high impact on their political views or affiliation. 26.5% of respondents stated they always encountered misinformation from social media influencers and celebrities. 34.5% reported that ordinary citizens are very responsible for spreading misinformation.

Countering Misinformation:

In Oman, half of the respondents do not act against misinformation because they don't see it as a major concern. Sharing fabricated content, either knowingly or unknowingly, might occur more frequently compared to countries like the UK, Cyprus, and Ghana. The highest average scores for emotions when witnessing misinformation were for being worried and anxious.

Technologies for Countering Misinformation:

Over 60 percent of participants consider several tools crucial for fighting misinformation. They value detecting fake or altered images, audio, and videos, reverse image and video searches, and automatic fact-checking. Other important tools include tracking false claims across countries and languages, automatically flagging misleading posts, assessing the trustworthiness of social media accounts, identifying the original source of false claims, and evaluating the potential harm and targets of misinformation. These technologies are seen as key to effectively combating false information.

Regulating Misinformation:

37.5% reported strong agreement that anonymity must be removed to discourage misinformation sharing. Power showed significant positive correlation with regulation items. Unfollowing or blocking the person who posts misinformation did not show a significant correlation with power values.

Cultural Values:

Omani people show strong acceptance of power structures and distribution of power in decision-making and authority within society. Many expressed comfort with decisions being made by those in senior roles, reflecting trust in leadership and existing hierarchies. 42.5% agreed that instructions for operations are important. Above 70% agreed and strongly agreed that standardized work procedures help manage uncertainty, suggesting a preference for clear guidelines and organizational stability.

37.5%

REPORTED STRONG AGREEMENT THAT ANONYMITY MUST BE REMOVED TO DISCOURAGE MISINFORMATION SHARING

QATAR

Understanding Harm of Misinformation:

More than 80 percent of people in Qatar feel that misinformation significantly impacts their decision-making. They say it raises their awareness of its possible consequences, making them think more carefully before acting. At the same time, a significant number of people believe that sharing misinformation fuels public uncertainty, leaving many unsure about what to believe. 34.3% stated they never encountered misinformation from scientists. 41.2% stated they never encountered misinformation from religious and community leaders. Many people reported that social biases significantly influence the spread of misinformation. More than half of respondents reported a high or extreme level of harm to their opinions and values, political views or affiliations, religious beliefs, government, and the interests and welfare of their society. A significant portion of people in Qatar see web search engines, influencers and celebrities and social media platforms as responsible for spreading misinformation.

Countering Misinformation:

Around 80 percent of people in Qatar agreed that it is their personal responsibility to verify and correct false information. More than 80 percent strongly agreed that addressing misinformation is also the responsibility of society, including governments and the media. Additionally, 46.3 percent strongly agreed that both individuals and society should work together to combat misinformation, and 42.6 percent of respondents believe that social media platforms are very capable of stopping misinformation. There was no significant relationship between the perceived threat of misinformation to opinions and values or political views and affiliations with Collectivism. No significant relationship was found between the perceived threat of misinformation to societal beliefs and norms or the welfare of society and Collectivism. The relationship between ignoring the post and doing nothing and Collectivism was non-significant. There was no significant

relationship between the perceived effectiveness of two sources – colleagues and neighbors – and collectivism. The perceived effectiveness of strangers in correcting misinformation and collectivism was not significant.

Technologies for Countering Misinformation:

Most people in Qatar consider detecting fake or tampered images, audio, and videos as one of the most important technological tools for countering misinformation. 42.6% considered automatic flagging of misinforming messages and posts very important. Identifying the original source of a false claim showed no significant relationship with Collectivism. 41.6% considered social media, tech companies, and digital platforms must remove all content with false information as strongly agreeing.

Regulating Misinformation:

42.6% agreed that posts on social media must be verified and authenticated before publication. 42.6% reported that anonymity must be removed to discourage misinformation sharing. Most people in Qatar believe that spreading misinformation should be made illegal. The power distance showed no significant correlation with the expectations for platforms to remove false content and block accounts. Power showed significant positive correlation with regulation items. Unfollowing or blocking the person who posts misinformation did not show a significant correlation with power values. There was an inverse relationship between ignoring the post and doing nothing and power values.

Cultural Values:

Strong agreement was most evident for encouraging group loyalty even if individual goals suffer, with 29.4% of respondents expressing this view. A large portion of people in Qatar agree that having clear, detailed instructions is important so they always know what is expected of them. They also believe it is important to closely follow instructions and procedures.

SAUDI ARABIA

Understanding Harm of Misinformation:

33.2% stated they never encountered misinformation from scientists. 16.0% reported that social biases and prejudices slightly influence the interpretation of information. 13.8% reported that misinformation has a very low impact on their political views or affiliation. 15.0% reported that government officials are not at all responsible for spreading misinformation. 49.1% of participants identified as Indigenous/ Native, alongside 31.7% identifying as Middle Eastern/North African. A large majority of people in Saudi Arabia say that misinformation significantly influences their decision-making process, making them more aware of its potential consequences. They also believe that sharing misinformation increases public uncertainty, leaving people unsure about what to believe, and harms the sharer's reputation, causing others to question their credibility.

Countering Misinformation:

32.5% reported always ignoring misinformation. The highest mean score for actions taken against misinformation was for unfollowing or blocking the person who posted the wrong information. 38.6% expressed strong agreement that addressing misinformation is the responsibility of society. 45.9% expressed strong agreement that both individuals and society should work together to combat misinformation. 41.3% rated "Other" sources as "Moderately Capable" in stopping misinformation. The relationship between ignoring the post and doing nothing and Collectivism was non-significant.

Technologies for Countering Misinformation:

40.2% reported detecting fake or tampered images, audio, and videos as extremely important. No significant relationship was found between "Spreading misinformation should be made illegal" or "Posts on social media must be verified and authenticated before publication" and cultural dimensions.

Regulating Misinformation:

46.4% expressed strong agreement that spreading misinformation should be made illegal. 52.0% expressed strong agreement that social media, tech companies, and digital platforms must remove all content with false information. More than 60 percent of people in Saudi Arabia believe that anonymity must be removed to discourage the sharing of misinformation. Power showed significant positive correlation with regulation items. Unfollowing or blocking the person who posts misinformation did not show a significant correlation with power values. No significant relationship was found between posting a comment saying it is wrong and power values.

Cultural Values:

Many Saudi Arabian respondents indicated that rules and regulations are valued because they provide clear guidance on expectations. When asked about workplace interactions and decision-making, a significant portion of respondents expressed neutral views, suggesting a diversity of perspectives on social and organizational dynamics.

32.2%

STATED THEY NEVER ENCOUNTERED MISINFORMATION FROM SCIENTISTS

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Understanding Harm of Misinformation:

52.0% strongly agree that sharing misinformation harms one's reputation. A large majority of people in the United Arab Emirates believe that sharing misinformation increases public uncertainty and decreases social trust. More than 40% of respondents reported a high level of harm on their opinions and values. 49.5% of participants identified as Middle Eastern/North African.

Countering Misinformation:

Views on combating misinformation in the United Arab Emirates show that about 80% of respondents expressed agreement that it is their personal responsibility to verify and correct false information. 37.8% expressed strong agreement that addressing misinformation is the responsibility of society. About 83% of the United Arab Emirates' responses expressed agreement and strong conviction that both individuals and society should work together to combat misinformation. 42.6% rated social media platforms as "Very Capable" of stopping misinformation. The highest mean score for actions taken against misinformation was for unfollowing or blocking the person who posted the wrong information. No significant relationship was found between the perceived threat of misinformation to societal beliefs and norms or the welfare of society and Collectivism. The relationship between ignoring the post and doing nothing and Collectivism was non-significant.

Technologies for Countering Misinformation:

42.3% deemed automatic flagging of misinforming messages and posts as very important. 45.5% expressed strong agreement that posts on social media must be verified and authenticated before publication. A large majority of people in the United Arab Emirates believe that detecting fake or tampered images, audio, and videos is a very important technology for countering misinformation.
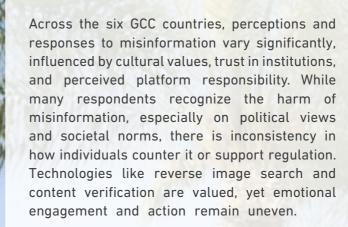
Regulating Misinformation:

About three-quarters of people in the United Arab Emirates believe that anonymity must be removed to discourage the sharing of misinformation. More than 80 percent of people in the United Arab Emirates believe that social media, tech companies, and digital platforms must remove all content containing false information. About 40 percent of respondents believe that government and political institutions are well prepared. Government and political institutions had a slightly higher average score, making them the sectors perceived as the most prepared to tackle misinformation.

Power showed significant positive correlation with regulation items. Unfollowing or blocking the person who posts misinformation did not show a significant correlation with power values.
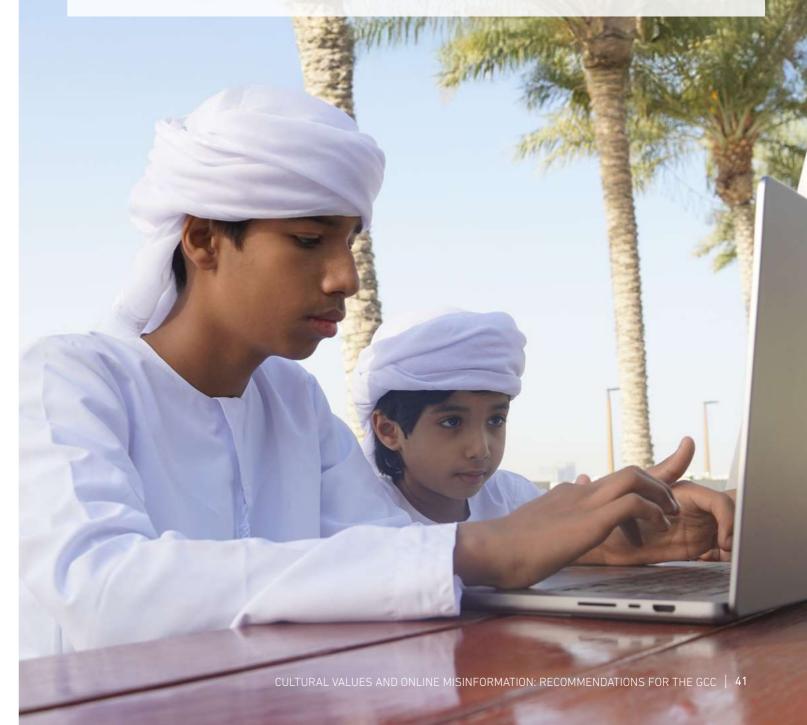
Cultural Values:

A large majority of people in the United Arab Emirates, who tend to avoid uncertainty and follow instructions, believed that standardized work procedures are helpful.

Among United Arab Emirates respondents, opinions varied regarding workplace decision-making and communication. Approximately one-third indicated a preference for less frequent consultation between higher and lower positions, while just over half expressed agreement with following decisions made by those in leadership roles.

Across the six GCC countries, perceptions and responses to misinformation vary significantly, influenced by cultural values, trust in institutions, and perceived platform responsibility. While many respondents recognize the harm of misinformation, especially on political views and societal norms, there is inconsistency in how individuals counter it or support regulation. Technologies like reverse image search and content verification are valued, yet emotional engagement and action remain uneven.

Power distance and collectivism shape attitudes differently across contexts, highlighting the need for culturally tailored strategies. Effective misinformation mitigation in the region requires aligning regulatory, technological, and educational efforts with local cultural dynamics.

THE STATE IN GCC MEMBER STATES ON CULTURAL VALUES

Here is a summary of the findings regarding cultural values for each GCC country included in the survey. Out of the nine cultural values, already mentioned in the preceding section, covered in the survey, four received relevant feedback: power distance, collectivism–individualism, uncertainty avoidance, and life goals for which countries are categorized into distinct cultural value groups (e.g., high vs. low) to highlight key patterns and differences across the GCC.

BAHRAIN

Power:

Bahrain is listed under High Power countries. Individuals with high power distance cultural values are more likely to perceive the family as a source of misinformation. Power showed significant positive correlation with regulation items.

Collectivism-Individualism:

The relationship between the perceived effectiveness of strangers in correcting misinformation and collectivism was not significant.

Long-term Orientation:

Managing money carefully (saving) was rated extremely important by 38.5% and very important by 32.5%. About 60 percent of people in Bahrain value sticking with things even when facing challenges (persistence).

KUWAIT

Power:

Kuwait is listed under High Power countries. For example, 44.6 percent of people believe that individuals in higher positions should avoid social interaction with those in lower positions. Power values do not significantly relate with behaviors like unfollowing/blocking misinformation sources, commenting to correct misinformation, or attitudes toward making misinformation illegal and removing anonymity.

Collectivism-Individualism:

Group loyalty should be encouraged even if individual goals suffer: 30.5% rated it as not important or slightly important. No significant relationship was found between the perceived threat of misinformation to government institutions and Collectivism. The relationship between "I ignore the post and do nothing" and Collectivism was non-significant. The relationship between the perceived effectiveness of strangers in correcting misinformation and collectivism was not significant.

Long-term Orientation:

Managing money carefully (saving) was rated extremely important by 30.0% and very important by 42.5%.

OMAN

Power:

In Qatar, most people either disagree or remain neutral regarding the belief that those in higher positions should make most decisions without consulting individuals in lower positions. Males are more likely to value power distance compared to females. In some countries (Greece, Ghana, Qatar, the United Kingdom, and the United States), there was an inverse relationship between "ignoring the post and doing nothing" and power values, meaning individuals valuing power structures were less likely to ignore misinformation and more likely to take action. Power distance showed no significant correlation with the expectations for platforms to remove false content and block accounts. Power showed significant positive correlation with regulation items.

Uncertainty Avoidance:

Cultural norms and values embedded in messaging: About 9.5% of respondents reported that cultural norms and values embedded in messaging do not at all affect the spread of misinformation. Importance of instructions for operations: 38.5% agree, 34.0% strongly agree. Managing uncertainty: 30.5% agree, 42.0% strongly agree for "Clear procedures are important to manage uncertainty".

Collectivism-Individualism:

Among those who strongly agree that they do not act against misinformation because it is not a major concern, 25.5% were from Oman.

Long-term Orientation:

Managing money carefully (saving) was rated extremely important by 33.5% and very important by 39.5%.

QATAR

Power:

Males are more likely to value power distance compared to females. There was an inverse relationship between "ignoring the post and doing nothing" and power values, meaning individuals valuing power structures were less likely to ignore misinformation and more likely to act. Power distance showed no significant correlation with the expectations for platforms to remove false content and block accounts. Power showed significant positive correlation with regulation items.

Collectivism-Individualism:

Group loyalty should be encouraged even if individual goals suffer: Strong agreement was most evident (29.4%). There was no correlation between the perceived threat of misinformation to opinions and values or political views and affiliations with collectivism. No significant relationship was found between the perceived threat of misinformation to societal beliefs and norms or the welfare of society and collectivism. The relationship between "I ignore the post and do nothing" and collectivism was non-significant. There was no significant relationship between the perceived effectiveness of two sources (colleagues and neighbors) and collectivism.

Long-term Orientation:

Managing money carefully (saving) shows higher importance (43.9% very important). Giving up some fun today for future success was rated as very important (48.0%). Supporting group loyalty, even if it impacts my own goals: Very important ratings were significant (47.1%).

SAUDI ARABIA

Power:

Saudi Arabia is classified as a high-power country; however, a significant portion of respondents, 35.4%, remained neutral on the statement that people in higher positions should not delegate important tasks to those in lower positions. Unfollowing or blocking the person who posts misinformation did not show a significant correlation with power values. No significant relationship was found between "I post a comment saying it is wrong" and power values. Power showed a significant positive correlation with regulation items.

Collectivism-Individualism:

Individuals should only pursue their goals after considering the welfare of the group: Agreement was seen in 45.5% of respondents. The relationship between "I ignore the post and do nothing" and Collectivism was non-significant.

Long-term Orientation:

Managing money carefully (saving) was rated extremely important by 41.2% and very important by 35.8%.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Power:

United Arab Emirates is listed under High Power countries. Government and political institutions: 40.1% rated this sector as "Well Prepared". Power showed significant positive correlation with regulation items.

Collectivism-Individualism:

No significant relationship was found between the perceived threat of misinformation to societal beliefs and norms or the welfare of society and Collectivism. The relationship between "I ignore the post and do nothing" and Collectivism was non-significant.

Long-term Orientation:

Managing money carefully (saving) was rated extremely important by 39.7% and very important by 42.2%. Giving up some fun today for future success was rated extremely important by 35.3% and very important by 36.3%. Supporting group loyalty, even if it impacts own goals, was rated extremely important by 32.2% and very important by 36.8%.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Survey findings from the GCC provide actionable insights into how misinformation is perceived and managed across the region, highlighting both commonalities with global trends and unique local dynamics shaped by cultural values such as power distance, collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance.

Strong public support for technologies that identify the original source of false claims, especially among GCC respondents, underscores the need for investment in culturally adapted verification tools, such as reverse image and video search, as well as multilingual fact-checking systems.

The high level of agreement in the GCC that individuals and platforms should be held accountable for spreading misinformation suggests strong public backing for more robust regulatory frameworks, platform moderation, and consequences for repeated offenders.

Divergent attitudes toward uncertainty avoidance and collectivism within GCC societies mean that "one-size-fits-all" approaches are likely to be ineffective.

For example, high uncertainty-avoidance societies like Qatar and Oman show greater demand for strict content regulation and clear instructions, while collectivist values in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE point to the importance of group-based accountability and leveraging trusted local networks.

Since trust in information sources differs greatly across GCC countries, with government authorities and religious/community leaders consistently rated as the most effective for corrective action, interventions should prioritize these channels for public communication, awareness campaigns, and media literacy initiatives.

Because social media platforms and everyday users are widely viewed as key sources of misinformation, effective strategies in the GCC should combine enhanced platform accountability with targeted media literacy programs that encourage personal responsibility and informed decision-making at the individual and community levels.

By prioritizing these culturally sensitive, multi-level interventions, GCC policymakers and stakeholders can build a resilient information environment — one that empowers citizens, strengthens institutional trust, and reduces the harmful impacts of online misinformation.

POLICY ANALYSIS RESULTS

OVERVIEW

Cultural values play a defining role in shaping both national digital strategies and the societal resilience required to combat online misinformation. In the context of the GCC, policy effectiveness is closely tied to how well strategies reflect the unique cultural dynamics of the region. Strategy recommendations are presented for strengthening national digital agendas in combating online misinformation.

The primary objective is to provide a thorough analysis of existing digital strategies, norms, and standards aimed at combating misinformation. The relationship between culture, values, and online misinformation is examined as a cross-cutting element throughout the analysis, ensuring that any digital strategy accounts for local attitudes, trust structures, and communication traditions.

This analysis reviews national and international approaches to identify best practices and highlight gaps, informing policymakers and stakeholders about effective measures to enhance public resilience against misinformation, promote media literacy, and foster collaboration among governments, civil society, and businesses. The ultimate goal is to contribute to creating a more resilient and informed society and promote a safe and sustainable digital economy.

The methodology involved a literature review of national and global strategies, norms, and standards. This included reviewing over 100 national legal norms from numerous countries across Africa, Asia, the Middle East and North

Africa, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Oceania, Eurasia, and North America. Eight key international strategies from organizations such as NATO, the UN, the EU, ASEAN, OECD, UNESCO, WEF, and the Council of Europe were also reviewed. Alongside the broader global analysis, special attention is devoted to the distinctive approaches, legal frameworks, and challenges found within the GCC.

Additionally, the analysis included a comprehensive review of resources cataloged in the RAND Corporation and the Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS) databases, examining over 80 tools and 270 interventions to assess their underlying norms and standards

KEY FINDINGS

A review of approaches to combating misinformation highlights diverse strategies, norms, and standards at national and international levels. These frameworks vary by context but collectively aim to address the spread, impact, and management of false information.

Importantly, successful frameworks increasingly recognize that cultural values such as attitudes toward authority, collectivism, and trust in traditional institutions directly shape both the vulnerabilities to and effectiveness of misinformation countermeasures.

HOW NATIONS DEFINE MISINFORMATION AND WHAT AREAS THEY TARGET

Political Stability and National Security
- **Electoral integrity:** Brazil and Canada target misinformation related to elections, political candidates, and parties to protect the integrity of electoral processes.
- **National security and defense:** Angola and Azerbaijan prohibit false information that constitutes propaganda against national defense or threatens state security.

Health and Safety
- **Public health crises:** Cambodia and Russia target misinformation during health emergencies, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, to prevent public harm and ensure accurate public health information.

Economic Stability
- **Financial and economic security:** Costa Rica targets misinformation that can distort or harm the security and stability of the financial system.

Content Integrity and Cybersecurity
- **Social media and online content:** Bangladesh and China regulate the dissemination of false information online, holding platforms and individuals accountable for spreading misinformation through digital channels.
- **Cybersecurity and data protection:** Nigeria and Kyrgyzstan focus on cybersecurity and penalize the spread of false information that can harm digital infrastructure and public trust in digital communications.

Reputation and Defamation
- **Defamation and harm to reputation:** Madagascar and Malta penalize misinformation that defames individuals or entities, protecting personal and corporate reputations from false and damaging statements.

Media and Journalism
- **Media regulations:** Belarus and Ethiopia impose restrictions on media entities, requiring them to ensure the accuracy of the information they publish and penalizing the dissemination of false news.

Special Circumstances and Emergencies
- **Emergency regulations:** Eswatini and Lesotho impose harsher penalties for misinformation that can exacerbate crises or emergency situations, ensuring that accurate information is disseminated during critical times.

Public Order and Security
- **Undermining public security or order:** Algeria punishes the dissemination of misinformation likely to undermine public security or order.
- **Causing panic or fear:** Jordan focuses on misinformation that causes public panic or fear, especially regarding health crises like COVID-19.

Review of National Norms:

National legal norms reveal both commonalities and key differences in how countries define and respond to misinformation, particularly in areas such as penalties, accountability, adaptation to emerging technologies, and timing of legislative responses.

Definitions and Targeted Areas: Most countries define misinformation as false or misleading information with harmful effects, focusing regulations on areas such as public safety, political stability, economic integrity, health, and crisis situations. Where cultural values prioritize social cohesion and public order, laws often reflect these societal priorities.

Penalties: Penalties include imprisonment, fines, and regulatory actions, often increasing in severity during emergencies. Both users and service providers may face accountability, with obligations for content removal and transparency.

Responsibility and Accountability: Accountability is typically shared between users and digital platforms, with legal frameworks requiring prompt content removal and penalizing harmful misinformation.

Challenges of Novel Technologies: Most countries lack specific legal provisions for AI, generative technologies, and deepfakes, highlighting a growing regulatory gap.

Reactive Legislative Approaches: The COVID-19 pandemic spurred a wave of reactive legislation, with new laws aiming to protect public health and maintain order. Cultural attitudes toward risk and uncertainty often shape the urgency and nature of legislative action against online misinformation.

Review of International Strategies

International strategies for addressing online misinformation consistently emphasize the need for **multi-stakeholder collaboration and the promotion of digital literacy to build societal resilience.** Collaboration among governments, civil society, the private sector, and media organizations is recognized as fundamental for mounting effective responses to digital threats. In this context, **information integrity and trust** serve as central guiding principles, reinforcing the value of transparency and coordinated action.

A **diverse array of platform governance measures** is employed internationally, including self-regulation, co-regulation, and public-private partnerships, supported by formal legal frameworks or voluntary codes. These strategies are complemented by **ongoing technological innovation** to address the challenges posed by rapidly evolving tools such as artificial intelligence and other emerging digital threats. The **integrity of media and journalism,** as well as dedicated crisis communication and risk mitigation mechanisms, are also essential for safeguarding democratic processes and public trust, especially during periods of heightened risk.

Crucially, best practices increasingly highlight the importance of **cultural sensitivity and regional adaptation.** Successful interventions are those that align with local values, communication traditions, and trusted social structures, recognizing that cultural context shapes both the vulnerabilities to and effectiveness of any anti-misinformation strategy. This holistic and adaptive approach demonstrates that progress in countering misinformation requires not only robust technical and legal solutions but also meaningful engagement with the cultural realities of each society.

Strategic Interventions and Norms

Effective responses combine technical tools, public awareness campaigns, and policy measures. Interventions rooted in community values, local communication practices, and culturally trusted messengers are more likely to succeed in countering online misinformation.

Fact-checking and Verification:

Fact-checking and verification are fundamental to countering misinformation.

Awareness Campaigns:

Public awareness campaigns and media literacy initiatives help inform and empower citizens.

Content Integrity:

Content integrity guidelines and best practices support global consistency.

Crowdsourcing:

Crowdsourcing and community engagement foster vigilance and collective action.

Policy Advocacy:

Policy advocacy supports the development and enforcement of effective legal frameworks.

Research-based Approaches:

Research and data-driven approaches inform best practices and norms.

Standards

Establishing standards ensures consistency, reliability, and accountability in digital tools and interventions.

Detection and Tracking Tools:

Detection and tracking tools follow defined technical standards.

Fact-checking and Verification Tools:

Verification tools comply with recognized fact-checking standards.

Media Literacy and Education Tools:

Education tools support critical thinking and digital literacy standards.

Credibility Scoring Tools:

Credibility scoring tools use standardized criteria for assessing trustworthiness.

Browser Extensions and Apps:

Browser extensions and applications integrate user-centered standards for filtering content.

KEY STRATEGIC DIMENSIONS IN COMBATING MISINFORMATION

Information Integrity	Multi-Stakeholder Engagement
Digital Literacy And Public Empowerment	Platform Governance And Self-Regulation
Media And Journalism Integrity	Technological Innovation And Emerging Trends
Transparency And Accountability	Risk Mitigation And Crisis Communication
Cultural Sensitivity And Diversity	Legal Frameworks And Enforcement

THE REGULATIONS IN GCC MEMBER STATES

The following analysis explicitly addresses how GCC member states develop and implement legal and policy frameworks to combat online misinformation. Each GCC country has introduced or strengthened regulations aimed at curbing the spread of misinformation, reflecting a broader trend to preserve social order and trust in a rapidly digitalizing information environment.

Bahrain's Press Law addresses the publication of false or forged material that could disrupt public security or affect the public interest. In Kuwait, the Electronic Media Law places a duty on editors and content managers to verify information and publish official corrections when requested. Oman's Media Law encourages licensed media outlets to curb the spread of inaccurate reports, incitement, and misleading advertising. Qatar links its Cybercrime Prevention Law with Penal Code, establishing liability for circulating news deemed harmful to national security or likely to incite public opinion, with stricter consequences during wartime. Saudi Arabia's Anti-Cyber Crime Law provides for action against digital content including defamatory material that could undermine public order, morals, or state security, while the United Arab Emirates' Federal Law on Combatting Rumors and Cybercrimes similarly assigns liability for sharing or amplifying rumors or false information (including via automated accounts), imposing enhanced penalties in times of national crisis.

A defining feature across all GCC regulations is their grounding in cultural values such as collective responsibility, deference to authority, and the prioritization of public order and national security. While every country addresses false news, the regulations differ in how responsibility is allocated. Bahrain, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia focus primarily on individual authors or sharers, whereas Kuwait, Oman, and the UAE extend accountability to publishers or platform operators illustrated by Kuwait's requirement to publish official corrections and the UAE's provisions on automated amplification.

Penalties may become more stringent during emergencies in the UAE and Qatar, and Oman's 2024 Media Law drafted after the global COVID-19 experience signals a shift toward a more forward-looking, preventive approach. Enforcement measures vary from content removal and fines to possible imprisonment.

The DCO highlights five core dimensions –

- DEFINITIONS
- PENALTIES
- RESPONSIBILITY
- ADAPTATION TO NEW TECHNOLOGY
- TIMING

GCC regulations already align well with the first two: each expressly prohibits false news, and all provide clear penalties that broadly fit the tiered approach the DCO recommends.

On responsibility, several Gulf statutes now extend liability beyond individual users to publishers or platform operators, yet the more systematic transparency and shared-accountability measures envisioned by the DCO could further strengthen the regional framework. With respect to new technology, the DCO encourages preparation for challenges such as AI-generated deepfakes.

Most GCC regulations have not yet turned to this issue, suggesting an opportunity for future refinement.

Finally, while many of the current provisions were adopted in response to recent crises, Oman's 2024 decree illustrates how the region is beginning to move toward more anticipatory, crisis-triggered protocols – an evolution the DCO framework would view as a positive next step for other GCC jurisdictions.

Country	Legal Regulation	Content
Bahrain	Press Law, Article 70 (c)	Liability for publishing false news or falsified or forged papers aimed towards disrupting public security and affecting public interests.
Kuwait	Law 8 of 2016 Regulating Electronic Media, Article 17	Responsibility of content managers for ensuring accuracy and publishing official corrections or replies upon request.
Oman	Royal Decree 58/2024 Issuing the Media Law	Accountability of media entities for preventing the spread of misinformation, including prohibitions on false content, incitement, and misleading advertising.
Qatar	Cybercrime Prevention Law Crimes against the Internal State Security Section of the Penal Code, Article 136 bis	Liability for publishing or promoting false news that threatens national security, public order, or incites public opinion, with heightened penalties during wartime.
Saudi Arabia	Anti-Cyber Crime Law	Liability for defamation and dissemination of content that undermines public order, morals, or state security through digital platforms.
United Arab Emirates	Federal Decree Law No. 34 of 2021 on Combatting Rumors and Cybercrimes	Liability for publishing or promoting false news and rumors, including through bots, with heightened penalties during crises or if used to incite public opinion.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The analysis reveals a diverse landscape of efforts but also significant gaps. Addressing misinformation requires a concerted effort in the GCC member states grounded in well-defined strategies, norms, and standards. Recommendations for strengthening national digital agendas aim to bridge identified gaps and foster a more effective, proactive response.

Key recommendations include adopting forward-thinking and adaptable strategies, such as clarifying and expanding definitions of misinformation to include novel technologies like deepfakes and AI-generated content. Countries should shift from reactive to proactive approaches, introducing anticipatory measures and early-warning systems for critical periods like elections or health emergencies. Enhancing cross-border cooperation through information-sharing agreements and joint task forces is crucial for tackling the transnational nature of misinformation. Engaging in targeted public awareness campaigns focused on vulnerable groups (elderly, youth, isolated communities) is also recommended.

Recommended norms for GCC member states emphasize establishing a societal foundation for combating misinformation. This involves promoting shared accountability for both platforms and individuals. Incorporating public education and digital literacy as core values is essential, expanding efforts beyond schools to reach the wider population. Fostering international collaboration and multi-stakeholder engagement is critical for developing coordinated, cross-border solutions. Lastly, promoting transparency in platform operations by requiring regular transparency reports on content moderation and algorithmic decisions builds public trust and ensures accountability.

Recommended standards aim to establish clear and enforceable guidelines. This includes developing clear, graduated legal penalties distinguishing between minor and severe misinformation offenses. Countries should require platforms to uphold accountability and implement reporting standards for content moderation. Crucially, standards should be set for AI and deepfake disclosures, requiring clear labeling of AI-generated content to help the public distinguish authentic from fabricated media. Establishing crisis-specific standards that trigger automatically during emergencies ensures rapid response teams and stricter penalties for misinformation related to the crisis. Finally, standards for verifiable content moderation should be implemented, possibly through mandatory third-party audits, to ensure platforms are not inadvertently amplifying harmful content.
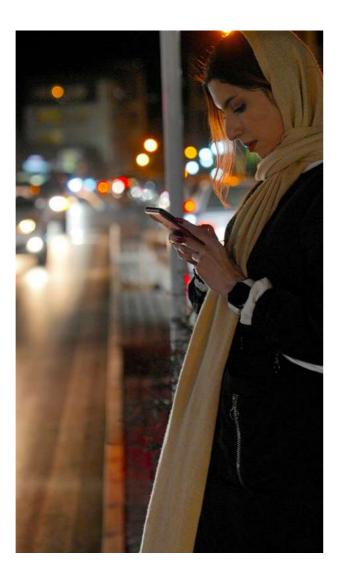
KEY LEGAL NORM DIMENSIONS TO COMBAT MISINFORMATION

01	02	03	04	05
HOW NATIONS DEFINE MISINFORMATION AND WHAT THEY TARGET	HOW NATIONS PENALIZE THE SPREAD OF MISINFORMATION	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE AND ACCOUNTABLE FOR THE SPREAD OF MISINFORMATION	CHALLENGES OF NOVEL TECHNOLOGIES	REACTIVE LEGISLTATIVE APPROACHES

SOLUTIONS FOR GCC
MEMBER STATES TO
COUNTER MISINFORMATION

CORE APPROACHES AND ACTIONS TO MITIGATE MISINFORMATION

OVERVIEW

Cultural values shape the way societies interpret and respond to online misinformation, especially in regions such as the GCC where trust networks, traditions, and social norms play a defining role in daily life. Recognizing this, a dedicated framework has been developed to guide the design of effective misinformation countermeasures that are closely aligned with the unique cultural fabric of the GCC. Rather than approaching each pillar as a standalone solution, the framework interweaves cultural understanding, policy development, technology, and community action, ensuring that every intervention is relevant, accepted, and sustainable within the region's diverse settings.

The Cultural Values and Misinformation Mitigation Framework highlights how local beliefs, authority structures, and communication styles influence both vulnerability to, and resilience against, misinformation in the GCC. By understanding these factors, the framework enables the creation of targeted and widely accepted interventions, ensuring that solutions address the root causes and leverage local strengths.

Seven interconnected pillars capture how cultural values are embedded in every step of the response from community interventions to technology integration and media literacy. These pillars do not operate in isolation but are woven together through common themes such as trust, collective responsibility, and respect for tradition, which are central to the GCC context.

KEY FINDINGS

This framework emerged from global research, expert consultations, and GCC roundtables, aiming to ground every strategy in the region's social realities. Culturally tailored strategies are developed by understanding how values like collectivism, trust in authority, and the use of traditional knowledge affect the spread, perception, and correction of online misinformation. Its three core components – pillars, dimensions, and actions – work together. Pillars provide directions. Dimensions break down cultural drivers and challenges within each area. Actions offer concrete, collaborative steps for policymakers, technology leaders, educators, and communities.

The following examples show how different aspects of the framework are linked and mutually reinforced within the GCC context:

01 Cultural values setting is central to the framework, exploring how factors such as individualism, collectivism, and power distance shape the acceptance of information and the authority of messengers. In the GCC, trust in community leaders and collective responsibility underpin both the perception of truth and the dissemination of corrections. Culturally aligned trust-building campaigns, use of respected local figures, and adapting message formats for traditional and digital platforms are all connected actions.

02 Misinformation risk assessment draws on the region's norms around uncertainty avoidance, emotional triggers, and respect for tradition. By embedding corrections in familiar stories or community rituals, and minimizing emotional manipulation, interventions become both credible and culturally resonant.

03 Strategies and policy development reflect the importance of balancing global best practices with local realities. In the GCC, involving local communities in policy creation and regulatory measures ensures interventions respect cultural sensitivity and maintain public trust.

04 Culturally informed community interventions leverage collective verification, social accountability, and trust networks – tools already valued in GCC societies – to foster resilience from the ground up.

05 Technology integration and trust is not a standalone effort but is deeply shaped by local attitudes toward digital solutions. Localizing AI tools, ensuring ethical use, and collaborating with local experts helps build acceptance and impact.

06 Media literacy and empowerment draw on storytelling and familiar cultural symbols, aligning lessons with regional narratives to foster critical thinking and responsible sharing, especially among youth.

07 Culture values-based resources recognize that interventions are strongest when grounded in the region's own knowledge systems. Traditional practices, verification methods, and community-based resource kits all reinforce the other pillars, making responses truly sustainable.

Each pillar, dimension, and action in the framework is connected – anchored in the lived experience of the GCC and designed to move beyond siloed solutions. The result is an integrated, adaptive approach that equips societies to resist misinformation in ways that are relevant, trusted, and resilient.

Each pillar of the framework is composed of distinct dimensions and corresponding actions that address specific aspects of online misinformation. The following insights highlight how these pillars and their practical elements are reflected in each GCC country, showcasing the unique ways national contexts shape both vulnerabilities and responses.

BAHRAIN

In Bahrain, high power distance shapes the information environment, with individuals displaying a strong tendency to trust hierarchical authorities. This reliance on hierarchical decision-making (Pillar 1: Cultural values setting) influences how misinformation is addressed, as government and other official sources are often regarded as the most credible. Rather than engaging in public correction, individuals commonly unfollow or block misinformation sources, reflecting a preference for social harmony (Pillar 4: Culturally informed community interventions). Additionally, those who score high on power distance are more likely to view family as a source of information, reflecting the importance of traditional information channels (Pillar 7: Culture values-based resources). A strong preference for reverse image and video search highlights the need for locally relevant verification tools (Pillar 5: Technology integration and trust).

KUWAIT

Kuwait's high power-distance culture shapes how information is evaluated and who is seen as a trusted authority (Pillar 1: Cultural values setting).

Individuals with strong collectivist values are more likely to publicly call out misinformation, posting comments to correct wrong information (Pillar 1: Cultural values setting). Misinformation frequently triggers emotions such as worry and anxiety (Pillar 2: Misinformation risk assessment), especially among those with higher uncertainty avoidance, who are more likely to feel unsettled by false or unclear information (Pillar 2: Misinformation risk assessment). In this environment, top-down structures are the norm, so global interventions are most effective when endorsed by respected local authorities (Pillar 3: Strategies and policy development). Trust in digital tools and AI-powered solutions is relatively high (Pillar 5: Technology integration and trust), and success depends on aligning media literacy and interventions with local values and communication habits (Pillar 6: Cultural empowerment through media literacy).

OMAN

Oman's high power-distance culture shapes information dynamics, with a preference for deference to authority and established hierarchies (Pillar 1: Cultural values setting). Exposure to misinformation often produces feelings of worry and anxiety, especially among those with higher uncertainty avoidance – a trait common in the local context (Pillar 2: Misinformation risk assessment). Campaigns that use traditional storytelling and narratives build greater trust and impact (Pillar 7: Culture values-based resources). Because of the prevalence of top-down decision-making structures, global interventions to combat misinformation are most effective when endorsed by local authorities and tailored to respected hierarchies (Pillar 3: Strategies and policy development).

QATAR

Qatar's social environment is characterized by relatively low power distance, where open dialogue is more accepted, yet the culture also exhibits high uncertainty avoidance (Pillar 1: Cultural values setting; Pillar 2: Misinformation risk assessment). Exposure to misinformation frequently produces anxiety and increases public demand for stronger regulation and pre-publication content verification (Pillar 2: Misinformation risk assessment; Pillar 3: Strategies and policy development). As a collectivist society, there is strong support for government-led initiatives to address misinformation (Pillar 1: Cultural values setting; Pillar 3: Strategies and policy development). People tend to place higher trust in health and education systems, viewing government institutions as particularly well-prepared to counter misinformation (Pillar 1: Cultural values setting; Pillar 3: Strategies and policy development). Communication in Qatar often relies on implicit, narrative-based styles characteristic of high-context societies (Pillar 1: Cultural values setting). This climate of trust enables policy co-creation and supports strong partnerships across government, private sector, and communities (Pillar 3: Strategies and policy development). There is also a high level of trust in digital solutions, further supporting the adoption of technological tools for misinformation mitigation (Pillar 5: Technology integration and trust).

SAUDI ARABIA (KSA)

Saudi Arabia demonstrates a high-power-distance and collectivist culture (Pillar 1: Cultural values setting), where social structures reinforce deference to authority and community over individualism. Within this context, trust is especially strong in health and education systems to provide reliable information, while government institutions are viewed as well-

prepared to address misinformation (Pillar 1: Cultural values setting; Pillar 3: Strategies and policy development). Collectivist attitudes contribute to the widespread belief that government bodies are more effective than individual actors at countering misinformation, a view less common in more individualistic societies (Pillar 1; Pillar 3). This confidence in institutional preparedness makes public-private-community policy co-creation more feasible and acceptable (Pillar 3: Strategies and policy development). Social media is a primary channel for information gathering, suggesting that media literacy programs should be designed to teach users about source verification and bias awareness (Pillar 6: Cultural empowerment through media literacy). Consistent with the country's high-power-distance orientation, top-down initiatives are preferred for implementing policy responses to misinformation (Pillar 3: Strategies and policy development). Cultural resources, such as religious teachings and respected community leaders, are highly effective for disseminating accurate information and correcting false narratives (Pillar 7: Culture values-based resources).

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (UAE)

The United Arab Emirates exhibits a high-power-distance culture (Pillar 1: Cultural values setting), where authority and institutional leadership are deeply respected. In this environment, government institutions are widely perceived as well-prepared and capable of managing misinformation effectively (Pillar 3: Strategies and policy development). This high level of institutional trust also means that public-private-community partnerships for policy co-creation are likely to gain broad acceptance, as stakeholders generally believe in the readiness and legitimacy of government-led initiatives (Pillar 3: Strategies and policy development).

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Analysis of the current landscape in GCC member states highlighting country-specific trust networks, social norms, and unique emotional responses to misinformation shows the necessity of moving beyond generic, one-size-fits-all approaches.

The Cultural Values and Misinformation Mitigation Framework builds directly on these findings, offering a pathway for policymakers and practitioners to design strategies that are not only effective but also culturally resonant.

For example, survey and roundtable results from across the GCC underline the importance of group accountability, particularly in collectivist societies where community leaders and trusted groups are uniquely positioned to verify and disseminate information.

This insight is reflected in the framework's pillar on Culturally Informed Community Interventions, which calls for empowering these actors and building trust at the local level.

At the same time, the variation in emotional responses (such as anxiety and uncertainty avoidance found in Kuwait, Oman, and Qatar) highlights the need for mitigation strategies that address specific cultural vulnerabilities.

The framework's focus on Misinformation Risk Assessment and Media Literacy directly addresses these vulnerabilities, recommending tailored campaigns that minimize emotional manipulation and embed corrections in traditional storytelling.

Country-level analysis also revealed how power distance and trust in authority (seen in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE) shape the public's perception of legitimate information. The framework addresses this through pillars on Cultural Values Setting and Strategies and Policy Development recommending co-creation of policy with community input and the use of respected authority figures to lend legitimacy to corrective campaigns.

By integrating these insights into the development and implementation of policies to combat misinformation, GCC policymakers can foster greater resilience, ensuring that interventions are both effective and widely accepted across the region's diverse cultural landscape.

The framework thus serves as a dynamic guide – one that links directly to lived experiences and local realities identified in the analysis of each GCC state.

CULTURALLY ADAPTED GUIDELINES FOR MISINFORMATION MITIGATION

OVERVIEW

Online misinformation in the GCC is not a passing crisis, but a persistent challenge shaped by deep-rooted cultural values, social trust structures, and everyday communication practices. Strategies imported from outside the region often overlook the central role that collective identity, power distance, language, and narrative play in how information is both spread and resisted in the GCC. Efforts to manage misinformation are most effective when grounded in these realities and reflect the region's lived experience, rather than generic models from the Global North.

Analysis of cultural value frameworks, together with new survey data from the GCC, reveals clear

KEY FINDINGS

In the GCC, social trust is shaped by collective values, respect for authority, and a preference for group-based or indirect responses. Unfollowing, blocking, or reporting sources of misinformation is more common than public confrontation or debate. Most people see government officials, religious leaders, healthcare providers, and traditional media as highly capable of stopping misinformation – much more than in many other regions.

patterns in how trust, authority, and emotion drive both misinformation and its correction. Every intervention, whether digital, policy, or educational, should be informed by how these forces play out in local communities and online spaces.

Successful strategies to combat misinformation begin with a nuanced understanding of local culture and values, offering entry points for adapting verification, correction, and community engagement.

Emotional storytelling and the use of stereotypes are widely recognized as powerful drivers of misinformation, with the majority in Qatar, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE noting their strong influence. At the same time, language, tone, and perceived complexity strongly affect the acceptance of corrections. Many in the region want social media and technology platforms to actively manage and block false information but also value culturally familiar fact-checking methods and community involvement.

THE STATE IN GCC MEMBER STATES

In the GCC, countries apply a range of approaches to content verification and handling of misinformation, influenced by local values, trust in institutions, and communication preferences.

The following key insights offer a comparative snapshot of common methods, trusted actors, and the influence of cultural and emotional factors throughout the region.

BAHRAIN

Content Verification Methods:

Resistance and Self-Correction:

The most common action taken against misinformation is to unfollow or block the person who posted it. Reporting the post for removal is also frequent. A notable 21.5% admitted sharing fabricated content to an extreme degree.

Trust Building:

Regarding perceived capability, various entities are perceived as highly capable of stopping misinformation by over 50% of people, including government officials, religious leaders, fact-checking organizations, traditional media, Web search engines, and social media platforms. Over 50% also perceive the healthcare system, government, political institutions, and media as highly prepared to combat misinformation.

Misinformation Handling Methods:

Values and Language:

There is high agreement (over 65%) that both the emotional appeal of narratives and the use of stereotypes significantly or extremely influence the spread of misinformation.

Other Misinformation

Handling aspects: Encountering misinformation did not show a significant relationship with feelings of worry or anxiety in this context, suggesting other factors might be at play.

KUWAIT

Content Verification Methods:

Resistance and Self-correction:

The primary action taken against misinformation is to unfollow or block the person who posted it, and reporting the post is also common. 18.0% admitted sharing fabricated content to an extreme degree.

Trust Building:

While most sources like traditional media, fact-checking organizations, Web search engines, religious leaders, and government officials are seen as highly capable of stopping misinformation by between 41% and 50% or more, traditional media falls slightly below the 50% mark for high capability (41.4%). The media is perceived as highly prepared by 54.5%, but government/political institutions by only 45.6%.

Misinformation Handling Methods:

Values and Language:

The perceived influence of language choice (tone, complexity) and stereotypes on misinformation spread is lower compared to other GCC countries, with less than 50% seeing them as significantly or extremely important.

Technology we use to correct:

Unlike most other countries surveyed, people in Kuwait do not generally appreciate technologies that track false claims and assess potential harm, positioning it as an exception in the general demand for advanced tools.

Other Misinformation Handling aspects:

Correlations for government officials, scientists, and religious/community leaders with power values were insignificant. Participants reported less concern about the harm of misinformation on reputation.

OMAN

Content Verification Methods:

Resistance and Self-correction:

The most frequent action against misinformation is to unfollow or block the person who posted it, with reporting the post also being frequent. 22.5% admitted to sharing fabricated content to an extreme degree.

Trust building:

A wide range of sources are perceived as highly capable of stopping misinformation by over 50% of people, including traditional media, religious leaders, Web search engines, fact-checking organizations, social media platforms, government officials, and scientists. The healthcare system, community centers, and the media are also perceived as highly prepared by over 50%. highly prepared.

Misinformation Handling Methods:

Values and Language:

A very high percentage (over 75%) consider the emotional appeal of narratives and the use of stereotypes as significantly or extremely important influences on misinformation spread.

QATAR

Content Verification Methods:

Resistance and Self-correction:

Common actions taken against misinformation include unfollowing or blocking, private correction, public correction through comments, and reporting the post.

Trust building:

Over 54% perceive government officials, religious leaders, traditional media, Web search engines, fact-checking organizations, and social media platforms as highly capable of stopping misinformation. Over 61% perceive the healthcare system, community centers, government/political institutions, and media as highly prepared.

Misinformation Handling Methods:

Values and Language:

An extremely high percentage (over 83%) believe the emotional appeal of narratives and the use of stereotypes are significantly or extremely important influences on misinformation.

Other Misinformation Handling aspects:

Males were more likely to value power distance compared to females.

SAUDI ARABIA (KSA)

Content Verification Methods:

Resistance and Self-correction:

Common actions against misinformation include unfollowing or blocking, private correction, public correction through comments, and reporting the post.

Trust building:

Over 55% perceive religious leaders, social media platforms, government officials, traditional media, scientists, Web search engines, and fact-checking organizations as highly capable of stopping misinformation. While the media is perceived as highly prepared by 51.7%, government/political institutions fall just under 50% (49.8%).

Misinformation Handling Methods:

Values and Language:

A high percentage (over 72%) believe the emotional appeal of narratives and the use of stereotypes are significantly or extremely important influences on misinformation.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (UAE)

General Context: Social media is viewed as very important for staying informed on current news by 50.5% of participants. The country ranks poorly on press freedom. The GCC countries are typically considered part of the Global South.

Content Verification Methods:

Resistance and Self-correction:

Common actions against misinformation include unfollowing or blocking, private correction, public correction through comments, posting a correction on one's own account, and reporting the post.

Trust building:

Over 56% perceive Web search engines, government officials, religious leaders, traditional media, scientists, fact-checking organizations, and social media platforms as highly capable of stopping misinformation. The healthcare system, community centers, government/political institutions, and media are perceived as highly prepared by over 70%.

Misinformation Handling Methods:

Values and Language:

A very high percentage (over 80%) believe the emotional appeal of narratives and the use of stereotypes are significantly or extremely important influences on misinformation.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The finding regarding the over-reliance on Global North research that neglects Global South and the GCC member states suggests a strong need for a shift toward more inclusive and geographically diverse studies to achieve a better global understanding of misinformation dynamics. This includes focusing research efforts on the Global South and GCC member states and non-English-speaking contexts to address the current imbalance.

The recommendation to differentiate between culture and values calls for more sophisticated research methodologies that can disentangle the complex ways in which broader cultural contexts and specific values influence the reception and spread of misinformation. This nuanced understanding is crucial for developing targeted and effective interventions.

The emphasis on the role of community leaders suggests that grassroots approaches, leveraging the trust and influence of local figures, can be a powerful tool in combating misinformation. Policymakers should consider strategies to support and empower community leaders in their efforts to disseminate accurate information.

The recommendations for preemptive strategies, localized fact-checking, collaborative efforts, computational tools, and narrative-based corrections provide a multipronged approach to misinformation management. These strategies highlight the need for a combination of proactive measures, culturally sensitive information verification, community engagement, and technology-driven interventions that are aligned with user values.

Technology alone is insufficient to solve the misinformation problem. The integration of human values into the development and deployment of computational tools is essential for ensuring their effectiveness and acceptance across diverse cultural contexts.

Furthermore, the emphasis on narrative-based corrections aligned with user values suggests that storytelling and framing information in a way that resonates with cultural beliefs and norms can be a more persuasive approach to countering misinformation than purely factual corrections.

A TECHNOLOGY-CENTERED TOOL TO MITIGATE MISINFORMATION

OVERVIEW

Across the GCC, digital transformation is accelerating but so is the threat of online misinformation. Combating this challenge requires technology tools that are not only powerful, but also culturally aware and trusted by diverse user groups.

Misinformation, broadly defined as false or inaccurate information shared intentionally or unintentionally, often overlaps with related terms like "fake news" and "disinformation" (where the latter implies deliberate intent).

In the GCC, social media plays a central role in daily news consumption, so any solution must fit seamlessly into these platforms and address the region's linguistic, social, and cultural realities.

Developing technology to counter misinformation in the GCC requires a comprehensive approach: this means not only deploying automated systems such as bots to disseminate corrections or precisely target messages but also ensuring that every element is grounded in the local context. Insights from existing research, as well as laboratory-based studies, are supplemented with region-specific knowledge to outline functional and non-functional requirements that fit the needs of GCC users.

The ultimate goal is to ensure that principles from bot-based and human-centered experiments can be directly embedded into social media platforms widely used in the GCC, so that interventions are not only efficient but also credible and culturally attuned.

Evidence-based recommendations help these platforms address misinformation in ways that resonate with GCC audiences moving beyond generic tools to culturally relevant, trusted solutions.

KEY FINDINGS

Several key findings shape the direction of **technology-enabled misinformation solutions** in the GCC. Misinformation is distinct from disinformation (intentional falsehoods) and malinformation (truth used to cause harm). **Automated systems** like bots are now capable of operating at scale, responding in real-time, and delivering corrective content but their effectiveness depends on sensitivity to user values, local language, and social context.

Research suggests that **different correction formats** – short, direct refutations and non-narrative corrections – can improve belief accuracy, particularly when messages come from trusted contacts or friends. In the GCC context, these approaches may be especially effective when integrated with respected voices (community leaders, religious figures) and tailored to the values of local audiences. Tone can matter, but credibility and familiarity of the source often have a greater impact.

Fact-checking organizations in the GCC and beyond often use varied formats for publishing corrections, which complicates integration into automated systems. Standards like ClaimReview, which allow for structured markup of fact-check data, are promising but need broader adoption and quality assurance, especially to support Arabic and regional languages. Current datasets remain predominantly English-focused, so expanding language and local fact-checker coverage is a critical priority for the GCC.

Non-functional requirements highlight accessibility for all populations, robust information security, ethical and unbiased operation, adaptability to changing technologies, and sustainable maintainability. These criteria are especially vital in the multicultural, multilingual, and rapidly evolving digital landscape of the GCC.

Essential functional requirements include:

MISINFORMATION DETECTION AND IDENTIFICATION ACROSS **MULTIPLE GCC LANGUAGES AND DIALECTS.**

TAILORED CORRECTIVE MESSAGING THAT RESPECTS THE WRITING STYLES, COMMUNICATION PATTERNS, AND TRUSTED SOURCES IN THE GCC.

INTEGRATION WITH **TRUSTED LOCAL AND GLOBAL FACT-CHECKING DATABASES.**

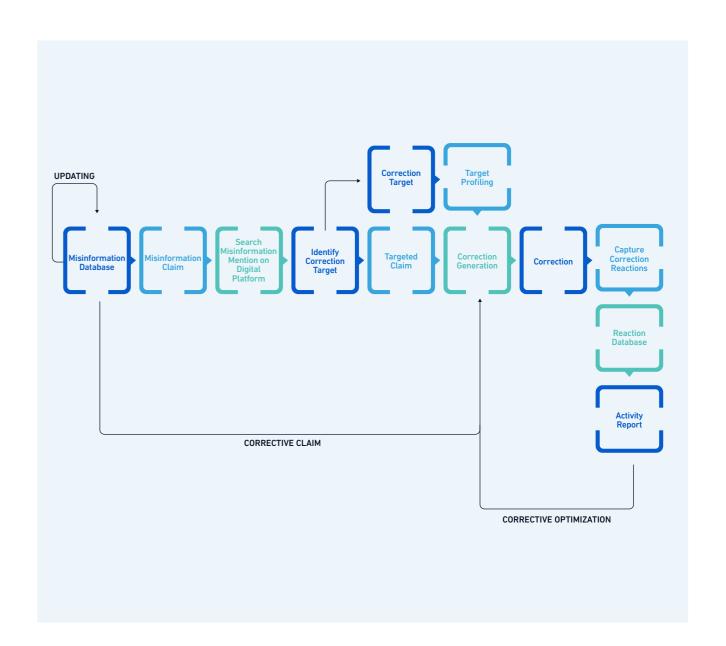**MECHANISMS FOR FLAGGING,** ESCALATING, AND ONGOING ERROR HANDLING.

PROFILING OF SENDER CHARACTERISTICS (SUCH AS LANGUAGE, TOPIC INTERESTS, CREDIBILITY, AND ALIGNMENT WITH CULTURAL VALUES).

COMPREHENSIVE **REPORTING AND MONITORING** INCLUDING METRICS RELATED TO CULTURAL VALUES AND IMPACT WITHIN GCC COMMUNITIES.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Designing **technology-centered tools** for misinformation correction in the GCC should focus on **short, direct refutations and non-narrative corrections,** especially when delivered via trusted contacts or respected figures. Automated systems need to leverage local network structures and cultural trust, not just technical efficiency.

Broadening the adoption of standards like **ClaimReview** among regional fact-checking organizations is essential for effective data integration. **Bridging language and regional blind spots,** particularly the dominance of English in global fact-check datasets, will make these tools more relevant and sustainable for the GCC's diverse populations.

Functional requirements such as sender profiling and culturally sensitive corrective messaging are not just technical checkboxes.

They are essential for ensuring interventions feel legitimate and relatable in the GCC. Continuous monitoring, including regular reporting on cultural value alignment and system impact, should be built into every deployment to ensure ongoing relevance.

Responsible development and deployment are crucial. Tools must be accessible, secure, unbiased, adaptable, and maintainable in a region where social expectations and digital habits are evolving quickly.

Social media platforms in the GCC are strongly encouraged to adopt these **evidence-based principles** from bot-based experiments, while also investing in stronger, locally anchored fact-checking infrastructure.

Beyond direct interventions, platforms should empower stakeholders such as journalists, educators, and community leaders with dashboards and prevalidated correction templates, making technology a force multiplier for community-driven resilience.

The most effective solutions for combating misinformation in the GCC will blend advanced technology with cultural insight, ensuring that every intervention – no matter how automated – is credible, accepted, and impactful within the region's digital public sphere.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GCC POLICYMAKERS

These recommendations are designed to provide the GCC policymakers and stakeholders with actionable guidance on effectively combating online misinformation. These recommendations collectively underscore the critical role of cultural values, technological interventions, policy frameworks, educational initiatives, and collaborative strategies in building resilience against the pervasive threat of online misinformation. By integrating evidence-based insights and recommendations from these diverse sources, this document aims to equip the

GCC policymakers with a nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities in this evolving landscape, fostering the development of culturally attuned and impactful interventions.

The recommendations emphasize a holistic approach that moves beyond purely reactive measures and instead promotes proactive strategies, focusing on empowering individuals and communities while fostering a more trustworthy information ecosystem.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE GCC MEMBER STATES

01. Prioritize Culturally Sensitive Strategies for Misinformation Mitigation

Recommendation:

Tailor measures to combat misinformation explicitly aligned with GCC cultural norms, communication preferences, and hierarchical trust structures. Strategies should leverage these trusted authorities to ensure effective dissemination of corrective information and guidance.

Engage trusted community leaders actively in the design and dissemination of corrective information (key stakeholders: government and regulatory authorities, civil society and community organizations).

Impacts and Considerations:

Ensuring cultural sensitivity will significantly enhance public trust, acceptance, and effectiveness of misinformation interventions. This approach directly responds to regional survey data showing high trust in authority and the importance of social cohesion in the GCC.

02. Integrate Culturally Adapted Media and Digital Literacy Programs

Recommendation:

Implement culturally resonant media and digital literacy curricula within educational institutions, emphasizing critical thinking tailored to local narratives and community experiences.

In the GCC, effective programs must use local languages and dialects, incorporate real-life cases from the region, and draw on storytelling traditions (education sector, civil society and community organizations, government and regulatory authorities).

Impacts and Considerations:

Enhancing digital literacy tailored to local cultures builds sustainable resilience against misinformation. This meets a core pillar of the framework and survey findings that highlight the effectiveness of locally relevant educational interventions.

03. Foster Robust Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration

Recommendation:

Establish regional collaboration platforms enabling coordinated responses and information exchange between governments, technology providers, media entities, academic researchers, and civil society groups.

The diversity of GCC societies and regulatory environments means that shared action, built on dialogue between public and private sectors, will help bridge cross-border gaps, harmonize standards, and enhance effectiveness of digital trust networks (government and regulatory authorities, technology and digital industry, media and fact-checking entities, education sector, civil society and community organizations).

Impacts and Considerations:

Effective coordination among stakeholders enhances collective capabilities in combating misinformation. Multi-stakeholder councils and digital trust networks should be institutionalized as ongoing mechanisms across the region.

04. Strengthen Local Fact-Checking Capacities

Recommendation:

Expand support for independent local fact-checking organizations, ensuring easy public access to accurate, verified information in Arabic and local dialects through digital platforms and traditional media.

Given that GCC citizens often consult local news sources and express skepticism toward international outlets, fact-checking entities must reflect regional language, context, and cultural sensitivity, and work closely with both mainstream and social media channels (media and fact-checking entities, technology and digital industry)

Impacts and Considerations:

Building trusted fact-checking resources enhances the public's ability to distinguish credible information rapidly. Locally relevant and accessible verification tools were a top priority in the GCC survey data and project deliverables.

05. Deploy Advanced Technology for Misinformation Management

Recommendation:

Invest in and responsibly deploy AI-driven tools adapted to regional linguistic and cultural contexts, with clear, user-transparent mechanisms for misinformation detection, correction, and reporting.

The GCC region faces a unique challenge of multi-dialect Arabic content and rapidly evolving digital platforms. AI systems must recognize local expressions, religious references, and context cues unique to Gulf societies (technology and digital industry, government and regulatory authorities).

Impacts and Considerations:

Enhancing digital literacy tailored to local cultures builds sustainable resilience against misinformation. This meets a core pillar of the framework and survey findings that highlight the effectiveness of locally relevant educational interventions.

06. Modernize Regulatory Frameworks with Cultural and Technological Considerations

Recommendation:

Continuously update regulatory frameworks addressing misinformation, explicitly including emerging technologies such as AI-generated content and deepfakes. Balance effective misinformation control with protection of cultural integrity.

GCC states' evolving laws demonstrate the importance of adapting quickly to new threats while respecting cultural and religious norms. Regulatory reviews should include input from community and faith leaders as well as tech experts (government and regulatory authorities).

Impacts and Considerations:

Adaptive and culturally sensitive regulations ensure effective and sustainable misinformation mitigation.

07. Leverage Traditional Communication and Community Trust Networks

Recommendation:

Use traditional communication channels such as community gatherings and trusted community figures to deliver accurate information and counter misinformation directly at grassroots levels.

GCC culture places a premium on oral traditions, family ties, and respect for authority. Integrating these networks is critical to successful outreach and correction efforts (civil society and community organizations, media and fact-checking entities).

Impacts and Considerations:

Leveraging trusted local channels maximizes acceptance and dissemination of accurate information. Such approaches have a proven track record in crisis communication and were emphasized in both the empirical survey and roundtable results.

08. Address Emotional and Psychological Triggers Effectively

Recommendation:

Design and implement communication strategies specifically addressing emotional triggers and uncertainty avoidance prevalent within GCC populations, emphasizing clarity, accuracy, and emotional sensitivity.

Messages should minimize fear and confusion while resonating with local norms (government and regulatory authorities, media and fact checking entities, civil society and community organizations).

Impacts and Considerations:

Culturally sensitive emotional messaging improves corrective messaging efficacy and reduces misinformation-induced anxiety. This aligns with the cultural dimensions and risk assessment pillars, and addresses documented emotional responses in the region.

09. Strengthen International Cooperation and Standardization

Recommendation:

Engage actively in international forums to align global misinformation standards with local cultural and regulatory requirements, enhancing regional influence on international digital policy.

The transnational nature of misinformation and the diversity of the GCC require the region to participate in setting adaptable global standards, ensuring both harmonization and cultural fit (international organizations and partners, government and regulatory authorities).

Impacts and Considerations:

Enhanced international engagement promotes globally harmonized, culturally attuned misinformation management. This supports proactive regional leadership, as recommended in both the solutions and policy analysis chapters.

10. Establish Continuous Monitoring and Feedback Mechanisms

Recommendation:

Implement regular monitoring and feedback mechanisms involving independent evaluation and community input to ensure misinformation strategies remain relevant, effective, and culturally sensitive.

GCC-specific feedback systems should draw on both digital data and traditional community consultations, with findings transparently reported to build trust and accountability (government and regulatory authorities, civil society and community organizations, media and fact-checking entities).

Impacts and Considerations:

Continuous improvement based on regular evaluations maintains the effectiveness and trustworthiness of misinformation management strategies. This completes the policy cycle with accountability and adaptability, in line with the best practice standards and project deliverables.

CONCLUSIONS

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This comprehensive analysis demonstrates that the complex challenge of online misinformation cannot be addressed effectively without recognizing the indispensable role of cultural values in shaping its spread, acceptance, and mitigation, especially within the GCC region.

Drawing on a global survey, extensive literature reviews, and consultations with regional experts and stakeholders, the findings confirm that universal, one-size-fits-all approaches are insufficient.

The evidence from the GCC highlights the critical need for strategies attuned to local cultural dynamics, especially trust in authority, collective responsibility, and preferred modes of communication.

Several key recommendations emerge as central to strengthening national responses.

GCC policymakers and stakeholders should prioritize the development and implementation of culturally sensitive frameworks and interventions.
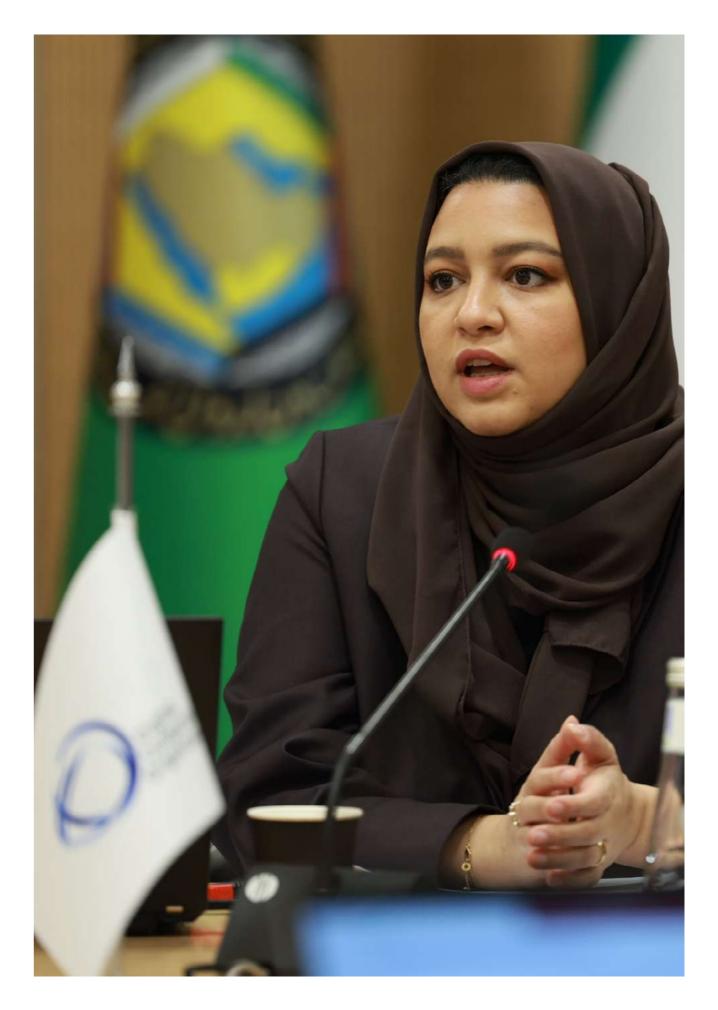
This includes empowering respected community leaders and influencers to disseminate accurate information, leveraging narrative-based corrections that resonate with local traditions, and embedding digital and media literacy programs within educational systems to foster long-term resilience. Technological innovation is equally crucial for the GCC. Investment in user-friendly fact-checking tools, automated detection systems, and collaborative verification platforms adapted for regional languages and contexts will be essential. Strengthening fact-checking infrastructure in the GCC and encouraging the adoption of standardized data formats, such as ClaimReview, will further enhance the reach and effectiveness of these solutions.

The significance of these findings cannot be overstated. Misinformation remains a clear and present danger to public health, democratic engagement, social cohesion, and economic stability across the region.

Neglecting the cultural dimensions of this challenge risks implementing countermeasures that are not only ineffective but may also undermine trust and social harmony.

With urgency, GCC policymakers and stakeholders are called upon to champion a holistic, collaborative approach bridging global standards with local realities, and ensuring continuous adaptation to evolving threats.

By embracing these insights and recommendations, the GCC can lead the way in building a more resilient, informed, and trustworthy digital information ecosystem, safeguarding informed decision-making and the well-being of society in the digital age.