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# Exploring the Dynamics of Targeting and Non-Targeting Rumour Spreaders on Twitter: A Qualitative Analysis

Master's Thesis (20 ECTS)

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# **Exploring the Dynamics of Targeting and Non-Targeting Rumour Spreaders on Twitter: A Qualitative Analysis**

## **Abstract:**

Misinformation has gained much notoriety for severe damage to our daily life. With the accessibility of the internet and the popularity of social media, misinformation has become even more challenging than ever. Many people fall into the targets of misinformation, and social cohesion is hence threatened. Although researchers have been devoted to studying targeting misinformation, there is a lack of studies on targeting rumour. However, it is crucial to understand targeting rumours for rumour detection. In this thesis, we identified the targeted groups on the PHEME-9 rumour dataset and annotated the targeting text. The targeted groups in this work were an ethnic group of people, such as the black and Muslims, being blamed for an incident. To aid in the identification of characteristics of targeting tweets, we have carried out an exploratory analysis of targeting tweets into three dimensions. From topic analysis, targeting tweets were mainly concerned with social issues, while non-targeting tweets discussed various issues. Additionally, we found that negative targeting tweets stirred up extremely negative in their following non-targeting tweets. Furthermore, we looked into the targeting users and provided a possible way of reducing targeting users. In summary, this thesis contributed to the linguistic characteristics of targeting tweets and provided possible actions to combat targeting rumours. We also extended the existing rumour dataset with targeting labels.

## **Keywords:**

Targeting Rumour, Twitter, PHEME

## **CERCS:**

P170 Computer science

## **Sihtimise ja Mittesihtimise Kuulujuttude Levitajate Dünaamika Uurimine Twitteris: Kvalitatiivne Analüüs**

### **Lühikokkuvõte:**

Väärinfo on saanud palju kurikuulsust meie igapäevaelu tõsise kahjustamise eest. Tänu interneti kättesaadavusele ja sotsiaalmeedia populaarsusele on väärinfo muutunud veelgi keerulisemaks kui kunagi varem. Paljud inimesed satuvad väärinfo sihtmärkidesse ja seega on sotsiaalne ühtekuuluvus ohus. Kuigi teadlased on pühendunud väärinfo suunamise uurimisele, puuduvad uuringud kuulujutu suunamise kohta. Siiski on oluline mõista kuulujuttude suunamist kuulujuttude avastamiseks. Käesolevas töös tuvastasime PHEME-9 kuulujuttude andmekogumis sihtrühmad ja märkisime sihtimisteksti. Selle töö sihtgrupid olid etniline grupp inimesi, nagu mustanahalised ja moslemid, keda süüdistatakse intsidendis. Et aidata kindlaks teha säutsude sihtimise tunnuseid, oleme teinud katseanalüüsi säutsude kolmemõõtmeliseks sihtimiseks. Teemaanalüüsist puudutas säutsude sihtimine peamiselt sotsiaalseid küsimusi, mittesihtimine aga erinevaid teemasid. Lisaks leidsime, et negatiivsed sihtimissäutsud tekitasid äärmiselt negatiivse mõju nende järgnevates sihtimata säutsudes. Lisaks uurisime sihtimiskasutajaid ja andsime võimaluse sihtimiskasutajate vähendamiseks. Kokkuvõttes aitas käesolev doktoritöö kaasa säutsude sihtimise keeleliste omadustele ning pakkus võimalikke meetmeid kuulujuttude sihtimise vastu võitlemiseks. Laiendasime ka olemasolevat kuulujuttude andmestikku sihtsiltidega.

### **Võtmesõnad:**

Kõmu Sihtimine, Twitter, PHEME

### **CERCS:**

P170 Computer science

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