

ST. MIRA'S COLLEGE FOR GIRLS, PUNE

# COMPULSORY ENGLISH ASSIGNMENT

SEMESTER: V

GROUP: 03

2022-2023





# FAKE NEWS





# TABLE OF CONTENTS:

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**BACKGROUND**

**THE MISLEADING POST**

**OVERVIEW OF THE FAKE NEWS**

**PROVING THE NEWS AS FAKE**

**IMPACT OF THE SPREAD OF FAKE NEWS:**

**RECEPTION OF THE FAKE NEWS**

**STEPS TO CONTAIN FAKE NEWS**

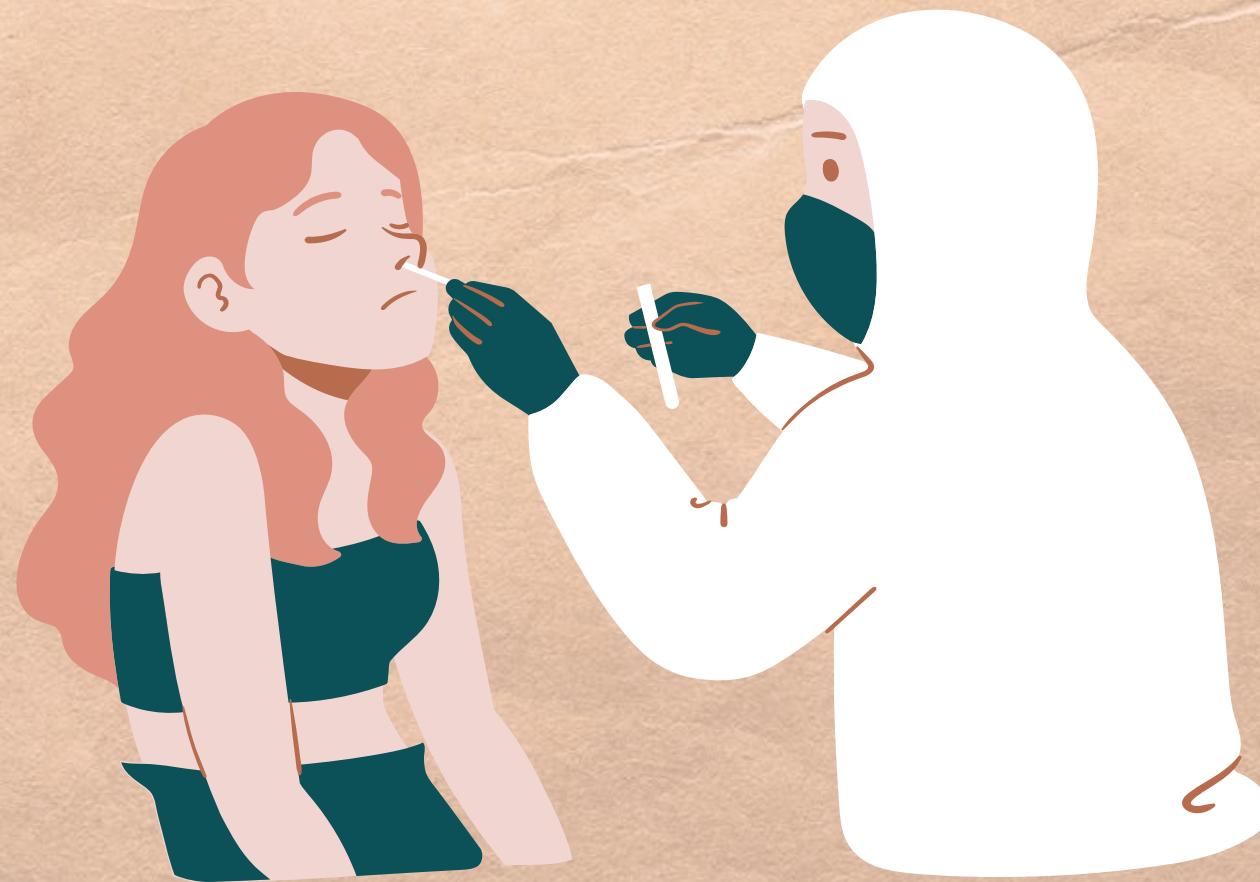
**BIBLIOGRAPHY AND WEB REFERENCES**





# BACKGROUND

The fourth and the biggest phase of the COVID-19 vaccination drive in India commenced on **May 1, 2021**. Registrations had finally opened up for all the population above the age of eighteen. We were going through a time when our nation was struggling with the worst crisis since the beginning of the pandemic. In that situation, getting vaccinated was the need of the hour for us. While people did have a lot of questions and doubts about vaccines, there continued to be some myths and misinformation which clouded acceptance.





# THE MISLEADING POST

This post, which started circulating on social media channels, **specifically WhatsApp forwards and Facebook re-shares** around **24th April, 2021** gained significant traction in the week leading up to the beginning of a nation-wide vaccination drive for all people above the age of 18.





# OVERVIEW OF THE FAKE NEWS

Within days of the Indian government's announcement that everyone in the country above the age of 18 can get vaccinated against COVID-19 from May 1, 2021, a message started making rounds online warning women not to take the jab five days before and after their periods.

This claim actually pushed women into raising concerns about getting a COVID-19 vaccine jab while they were in the middle of their menstrual cycle fearing that their “**immunity will be very less**” during periods, as was claimed in the message.

The post also mentioned that the first dose of the vaccine “**decreases**” immunity and later gets built up weeks later, hence, women who do get vaccinated on their periods face a high risk of contracting the infection and falling sick.

This made women more anxious and confused, and triggered a lot of them into believing that the COVID-19 vaccine wasn't fully safe for them.







This notion of vaccines affecting periods was picked up by people spreading misinformation on social media, and anti-vaccine and conspiracy theory groups presented genuine accounts of people's personal experiences as evidence of vaccines causing damage, or being part of a sterilisation plot by global elites.





# PROVING THE NEWS AS FAKE

- With fear rising amongst people, it was natural that such an absurd thought was questioned. With the internet being a lifeline for today's generation, Google is the answer to every question.
- **The Serum Institute of India**, manufacturers of the Covishield vaccine approved by 96 countries, answers this 'Frequently Asked Question' in their official website's FAQ section saying–

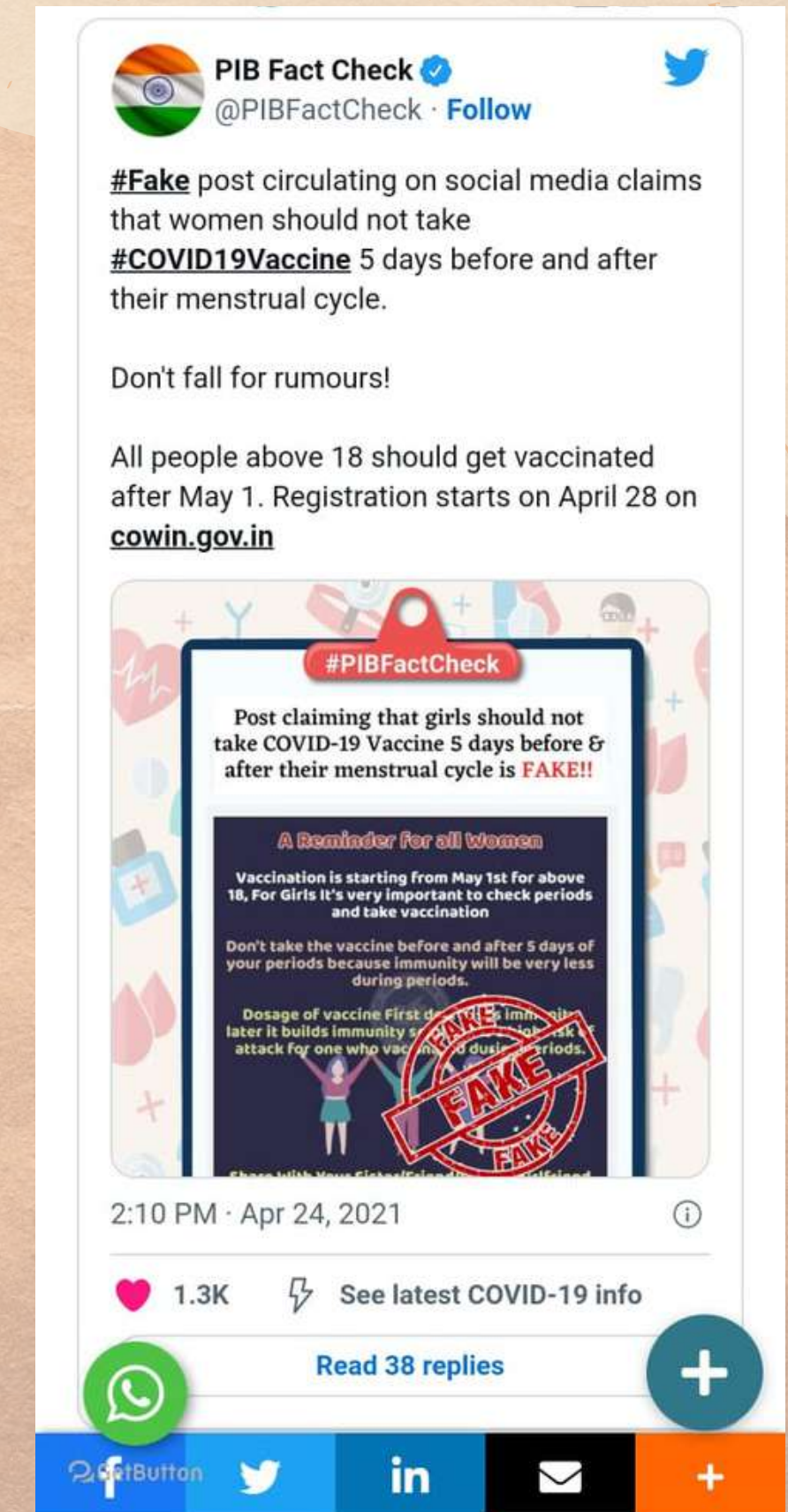
*"There is no correlation between menstruation and the effect of the vaccine. Moreover, this is a physiological phenomenon and it has nothing to do with immunity. Women on their periods can take the vaccine. In fact, there is no prohibition to take any vaccine during menstruation".*





- In an attempt to clear the air around the claim, the Government of India — through a Press Information Bureau tweet — appealed to people “to not fall for rumours” and get vaccinated.

- Menstruation is a normal bodily occurrence and it doesn't actually restrict or lessen the body's immune response. Hormonal changes brought on by menstruation may have a small impact on how one responds to a disease or its symptoms, but they in no way lower immunity.





- In **WHO's episode 41** of 'Science in 5' series on "Vaccines, pregnancy, menstruation, lactation, fertility", Dr. Soumya Swaminathan belonging to the organisation said that there was nothing scientific to come in the way of a menstruating woman in taking the vaccine apart from the fact that she may feel a little tired. She further added that there was no problem in taking the vaccine if the appointment date was the same day a woman had her period.
- India's largest newspaper company, **Times of India**, on 30th April in an online article asserted that menstruation was a natural process, involving hormonal changes and that it would minimally impact how you react to an illness or react to side effects, but in no way does it actually decrease immunity.
- **BBC** published an article on 13th May, 2021 highlighting that although the vaccine could cause changes in the period cycles, there is no link to low immunity during a cycle, the effects are temporary and that social media is misinforming its people about the vaccine.





- Addressing in a press conference on the questions being asked whether the vaccine can be taken by women during menstruation, Dr V.K. Paul, Member-Health, **Niti Aayog**, on April 26, 2021, said that the vaccine can be taken during periods and there was no reason to postpone the vaccination.
- In a study conducted to investigate the prevalence and impact of menstrual abnormalities after the COVID-19 vaccine among females residing within the **Middle East and North Africa (MENA)**, it was found that out of the 2269 females surveyed online–
  - 66.3% of participants reported menstrual symptoms post-vaccination.
  - 46.7% experienced them after their first dose.
  - **93.6% of participants' symptoms resolved within 2 months.**
- **This indicates that the vaccine has temporary side effects and encourages women to go and get the vaccine.**





Apart from the government declaration, multiple doctors commented on the falsity of the rumors using their social media platforms for a positive influence

Here are a few examples:

1) In a New York Times article, Alice Lu-Culligan and Randi Hutter Epstein at Yale School of Medicine also debunked the claim and said, "So far, there's no data linking the vaccines to changes in menstruation."

"Even if there is a connection, one unusual period is no cause for alarm," they said.

2) A lot of patients messaging me asking if it's safe/ effective to take the vaccine during their period. Some silly WhatsApp rumour has spooked everyone.

Your period has no effect on the vaccine efficacy.

Take it as soon as you can.

Spread the word, please.

— Dr. Munjaal V. Kapadia (@ScissorTongue) April 24, 2021





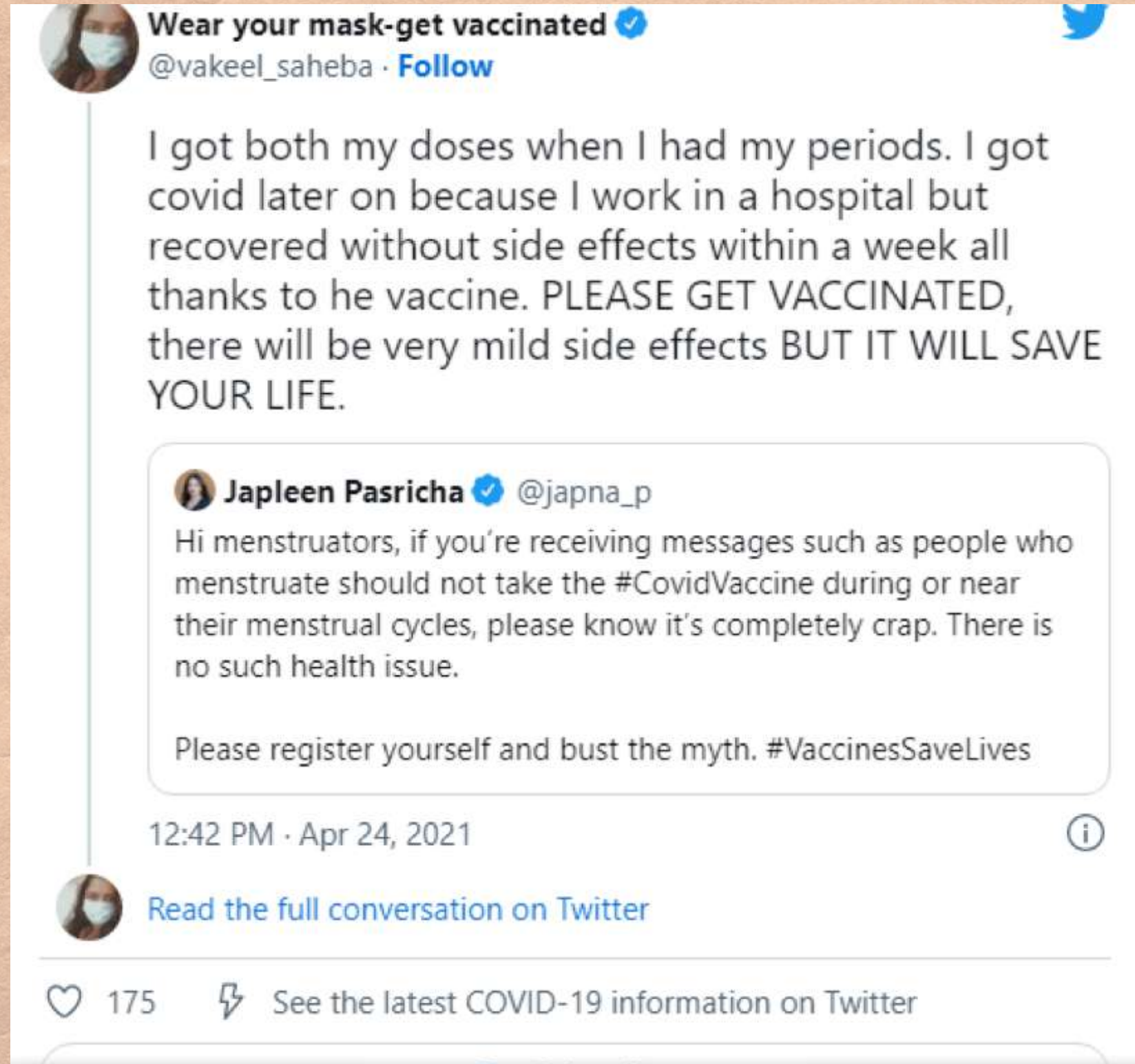
- For one, there is no actual evidence or data connecting COVID vaccines to menstruation. Millions of women across the world have already been immunized against COVID-19 and no claims were recorded. According to Dr Astha Dayal, Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology, the CK Birla Hospital, Gurgaon, vaccines are absolutely safe, period or no period.



- "COVID vaccine can safely be taken during periods. There is no data or study validating this claim. The vaccine is life-saving and should be taken as early as possible. Currently, the vaccine is safely recommended for all women above 18, excluding pregnant and breastfeeding mothers."
- It's also important to understand that menstruation is a natural body process and doesn't really limit or decrease the body's immune response. Menstruation involves hormonal changes which may minimally impact how you react to an illness or react to side effects, but in no way does it actually decrease immunity.



## A woman's personal opinion on the rumors:





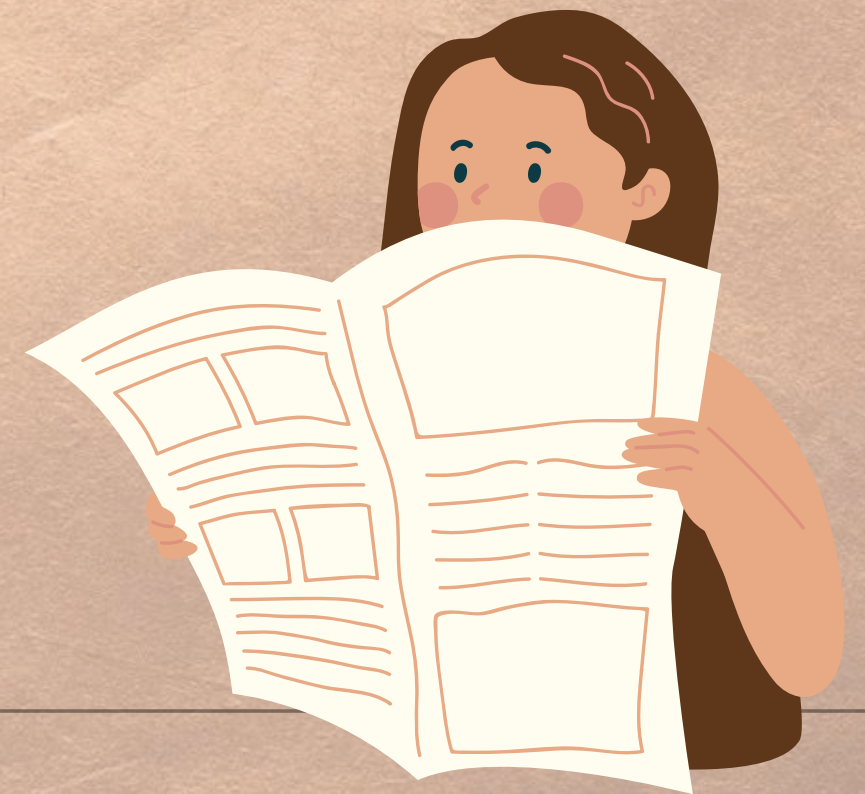




# IMPACT OF THE SPREAD OF FAKE NEWS:



- With the second wave of the pandemic at its peak, unscientific claims like this one **fueled greater concerns**, as both vaccine-hesitant and anti-vaccine individuals and organizations **conflated the possibility of short-term menstrual changes with long-term harms to fertility**.
- As the SARS-CoV-2 vaccine became available to adolescents, calls to understand the menstrual changes associated with the vaccine increased as parents felt that they were weighing their child's pubertal development and future fertility against their risk of becoming sick with coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).
- Pundits, politicians, religious leaders, and wellness influencers worked the oft-used framing of protecting women to advise against the vaccine (5–9).





- The concern over periods was first reported in February 2021 by the Israeli newspaper Haaretz, after some vaccinated Israeli women reported having irregular periods. Other women took to social media to share their personal stories of period changes after the vaccine.

- In a post to the Hebrew-language “**Talking about Vaccinations**” Facebook group, one woman asked whether there could be a link between menstrual bleeding and the COVID-19 vaccine. A number of women responded that they had similar experiences.

- A professional in the field of medicine said it was possible that this was simply the result of psychological distortions that relate to what she called the **law of large numbers**. “When a large number of women of child-bearing age get vaccinated at the same time, the moment that someone notes the phenomenon of bleeding as linked to the vaccination, others also begin seeing the connection,” she said.





- The reluctance of women to get vaccinated due to this fear lead to a lot of wastage of doses as appointments were cancelled.
- This further increased the strain on the government's already limited resources as more beds, oxygen cylinders, and other medicines were needed to cater to the rising number of COVID positive cases, a lot of who were unvaccinated, as reported by serveral news outlets.





# RECEPTION OF THE FAKE NEWS

- Many people were reluctant to receive vaccinations during the unlocking phase of the lockdown because they had heard that some people had short-term illness after receiving the shot. It was only necessary for the shot to take effect and develop immunity against the antigens that are the virus's primary cause.
- Despite the government's assurances, people were still afraid of that schedule and reluctant to "test" it, so they began looking for ways to avoid getting the immunisation. As soon as one person started disseminating bogus news, others followed suit!
- People often acknowledge information that aligns with their own beliefs. Adoption of fact-checking of a certain fake news narrative may be hampered by preexisting ideologically skewed and biased beliefs.
- The fake news viewers cover a negligible portion of the internet's influence, but the majority of readers continue to support the well-known news outlets.
- False news may have a negative impact on news media environments even if specific fake sites only draw small audiences since it makes it harder for readers to distinguish between real and untrue information.





# STEPS TO CONTAIN FAKE NEWS

- Learn about the forwarded message labels: When a message is forwarded through a chain of five or more chats, meaning it's at least five forwards away from its original sender, a double arrow icon and the "Forwarded many times" label will be displayed. If you're not sure who wrote the original message, double check the facts.
- Check your biases : Watch out for information that confirms your pre-existing beliefs; review the facts yourself before sharing information. Stories that seem hard to believe are often untrue.
- Fact check information with other sources: Fake news often goes viral, and photos, audio recordings, and videos can be edited to mislead you. Even if a message is shared many times, this doesn't make it true. If you receive information that's fake, inform the sender that they sent you incorrect information and recommend they verify messages before sharing them.
- If you're unsure whether a message is true, we recommend checking trusted news sites to see where the story came from. When a story is reported in multiple places and from trustworthy sources, it's more likely to be true. You can consult fact-checkers, or people you trust, for more information. For a list of fact-checkers affiliated with the International Fact-Checking Network, see this article.





- If a contact is constantly sending fake news, report them.
- Many unwanted messages and links that you might receive have spelling or grammar mistakes, or ask you to share personal information.
- People ought to have a basic understanding of media literacy.
- Long-standing news organisations typically control their domains and have a uniform appearance that you are undoubtedly accustomed to.
- Sites with such domain suffixes as .com.co should raise your suspicions and serve as a warning that you need to do more research before deciding whether to trust them.
- This holds true even if the website includes well-designed, professional-looking logos.
- For instance, although looking similar, **abcnews.com** is a reliable news source, whereas **abcnews.com.co** is not.





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• Content



# Thank you!





# Assignment 1

## Compulsory English

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### Semester 5



*Topic : Fake News*



# Index

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- Introduction
- Claims
- Proof/Evidences of the claims stated are wrong
- Measures taken to control rumors about the alteration in DNA
- Impact of the false news
- Conclusion
- Steps taken to control rumors spread and affect.





# Claim : Covid-19 vaccines alter human DNA

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- Multiple sources have claimed that Covid-19 vaccines can alter human DNA.
- Researchers emphasized that people who have recovered from the Corona virus infection do not necessarily remain infectious because of the viral integration in their body.
- But critics charged them by spreading unfounded fears that the vaccines might alter human DNA.
- "YES THE 'VACCINE' ALTERS YOUR DNA," read one post.
- Waking Times, a website that frequently publishes conspiracies and pseudoscience, released an article titled, "Bill Gates Explains That The COVID Vaccine Will Use Experimental Technology And Permanently Alter Your DNA."







*"I was told Covid vaccine  
has animal DNA in it  
and it can mess up our DNA.  
Are people making up stories  
or is this true."*

-Janice Lecklider



**The Corona Cure** @TheCoronaCure\_ · Dec 6

For those of you who think the **vaccine will** return life to normal.

It won't.

The only thing it **will change** is **your DNA**.





# **BILL GATES EXPLAINS THAT THE COVID VACCINE WILL USE EXPERIMENTAL TECHNOLOGY AND PERMANENTLY ALTER YOUR DNA**

May 15, 2020





# Claims stated are wrong

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The World Health Organization (WHO) was the first to respond to the claims about the vaccines and alteration of human DNA by stating the following :

“COVID-19 mRNA vaccine technology has been rigorously tested for safety, and clinical trials have shown that mRNA vaccines provide a long-lasting immune response. The mRNA vaccine technology has been studied for decades, including in the context of vaccines against the Zika virus, rabies and influenza. mRNA vaccines are not live viral vaccines and do not interfere with human DNA.





Professor Jeffery Alond released a statement saying the following :

“Injecting RNA into someone does nothing to human cell DNA,” says Professor Jeffrey Alond of Oxford University. It works by instructing the body to produce a protein found on the surface of the corona virus. The immune system then learns how to recognize and produce antibodies against that protein.”

Experts from Clinical Center of Montenegro had also been asked about the accuracy of the claim and they said that the materials that made up the vaccine were based on ribonucleic acid and when they enter the body they do not penetrate the nucleus hence would not cause any harm to the DNA structure of human body.







PROVED



# Measures taken to control the rumors

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- In an effort to contribute to preventing the dissemination of coronavirus misinformation and to promoting credible sources of information, UNICEF's young reporters have decided to check the accuracy of information published on social media and in the media that has attracted public attention.
- World Health Organization had provided necessary steps to tackle the misinformation that was being spread in the period of pandemic. These messages are :
  1. Vaccine safety
  2. Vaccine development
  3. Vaccine reduces your risk of sickness





## MESSAGE A

### VACCINE SAFETY



**APPROVED  
COVID-19  
VACCINES  
MUST BE  
THOROUGHLY  
TESTED AND  
CHECKED**



**A PROCESS  
FOCUSED  
NOT JUST  
ON WHAT  
WORKS,  
BUT WHAT  
IS SAFE**



**INVOLVING  
TENS OF  
THOUSANDS  
OF PEOPLE  
ACROSS AGE  
GROUPS**



**IT'S A SAFE  
SOLUTION  
DEVELOPED  
AT SPEED**





## MESSAGE B

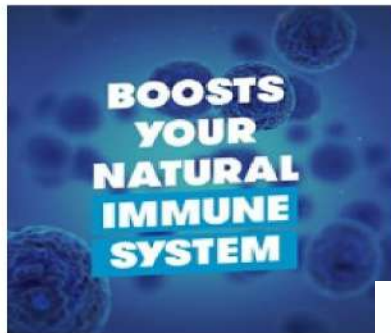
### VACCINE DEVELOPMENT





## MESSAGE C

# VACCINES REDUCE YOUR RISK OF SICKNESS





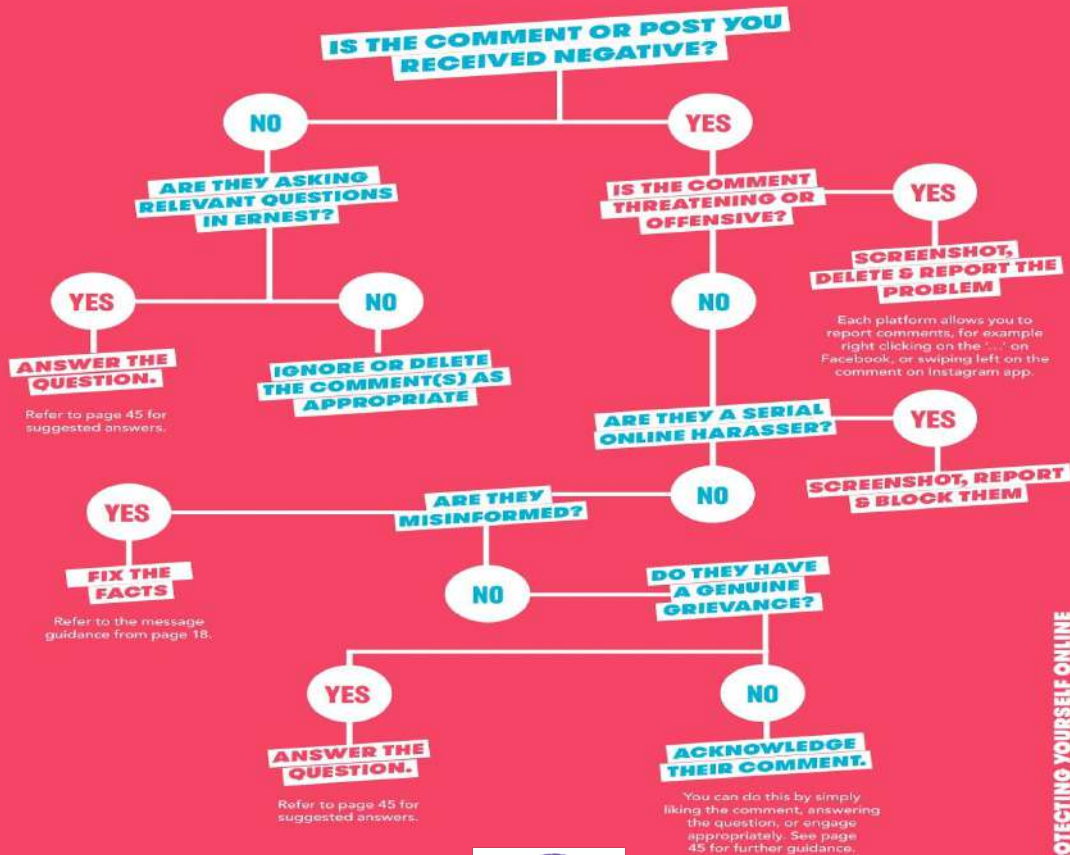


**#VaccinesWork**

*This is the hashtag that the UK government is encouraging all the individuals worldwide to use while sharing vaccine facts and information!*









- 
- Identify your jurisdiction's existing information sources
  - Create and maintain a social media influencer list
  - Create and maintain a rumor log
  - Analyze and develop insights

In our efforts to fight #COVID19 infodemic, @WHO has partnered with the UK  government to run “Stop The Spread,” an awareness campaign on the risks of incorrect and false information about the pandemic. Together, for a healthier, safer world!

— Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus (@DrTedros) May 25, 2020





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WHO and the United Kingdom collaborated to fight the ‘infodemic’.

‘Stop the Spread’ was broadcasted on BBC World television, websites and apps to raise public’s awareness about the volume of misinformation about the pandemic and encouraged to double check information hence reducing the damage happening by all the false claims and narratives.

‘Reporting Misinformation’ was launched to show people how to report misinformation to various social media platforms.





# Impact of the false news of vaccines

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The foremost impact of this false news or claim that got spread that the vaccine of corona virus will alter out DNA structure was 'Fear'.

Individuals around the world where the the rumor was spread were in dilemma and fear of whether or not to get the vaccine. Those who know about the effects and the materials used in the making of the vaccines were in no harm but those who were unaware were in a stressful situation.

Experts from WHO as well as national and local authorities addressed this tissue as a means to let people know about the truth of the vaccines.





# Vaccine MYTH

VS.

# Vaccine Fact

It's too soon to know if the vaccine is safe and effective.



All vaccines were thoroughly tested and studied to meet safety and effectiveness requirements.

If I had COVID, I don't need the vaccine.



Natural immunity may not protect you against getting the virus again, and vaccines appear to protect people longer.

I don't need to wear a mask after getting the vaccine.



Vaccinated people can still carry and spread the virus to people who haven't or can't get vaccinated yet.

The vaccine causes infertility in women.



The vaccine does not interact with a woman's reproductive system or cells and there are no reports or evidence to support this.

The vaccine gives you COVID-19.



None of the vaccines use any part of the coronavirus that causes COVID-19 and cannot give you the virus.

The mRNA technology is new and changes your DNA.



The mRNA technology has been used and studied for 20 years. It doesn't interfere with DNA and cannot change it.

Get the facts about COVID-19 vaccines

## The vaccines can't change your DNA.

mRNA vaccines provide instructions to your cells for how to make a coronavirus protein. This protein will trigger an immune response that will help to protect you against COVID-19. After the protein is made, our cells break down the mRNA and get rid of it. The mRNA vaccines never interact with your DNA.





# Conclusion

Why does this spread of false news occur?

A study :

James McDaniel [...] said he created a fake news website...as a joke to see just how naive Internet readers could be. UndergroundNewsReport.com was launched Feb. 21. In less than two weeks, more than 1 million people had viewed stories on the site and spread them across social media platforms. [...] "I continued to write ridiculous things they just kept getting shared and I kept drawing more viewers," McDaniel told PolitiFact. "I saw how many fake ridiculous stories were making rounds in these groups and just wanted to see how ridiculous they could get."

McDaniel even tried to warn viewers by putting a disclaimer on the bottom of his web pages saying his posts "are fiction, and presumably fake news." While a handful of people took the time to email him to ask if stories were real or send hate mail, most of the comments on his links blindly accepted what he wrote as the truth.



(Quoted from Politifact.com)



People low in analytic ability, people with less relevant knowledge and people who score low on the personality factors conscientiousness and open-mindedness are most susceptible to fake news.

Technology has given people access to a lot of information, and it can be difficult to know what to believe.

Fake news target the emotional side of an individual thus becoming successful in their mission. They targeted people's emotions and life altogether by spreading the rumor that corona vaccines can alter human DNA which in itself is impossible.





# Steps to be taken to reduce the spread of fake news

- Giving information literacy training.
- Spreading the news to think and analyze critically of the news they watch or read.
- Making sure to trust only reliable sources that one has a complete knowledge about or by going through the news of the official website of the organization.





# THANK YOU!





## ASSIGNMENT BRIEF ON FAKE NEWS

### TYBA SEM V (2022-23)

Fake news may be defined as: *News articles that are intentionally and verifiably false designed to manipulate people's perceptions of real facts, events, and statements. It's information presented as news that is known by its promoter to be false based on facts that are demonstrably incorrect, or statements or events that verifiably did not happen.*

The sheer volume of fake information in circulation calls for a serious look at issues surrounding it. There is a large number of people who don't effectively evaluate the credibility of the information they are presented with. Stanford's history and education professor Sam Wineburg says, about people and fake news, "They don't ask where it came from. They don't verify it. They simply accept the news as fact." For this project you will **study a piece of fake news that has been in circulation to analyse its impact. This project as an exercise in investigative journalism.**

**Create a PPT presentation on the following:**

1. Identify and provide an overview on the piece of fake news selected. Offer information on the subject of the fake news and where you located/ uncovered this fake news i.e. the platform(s) on which it was in circulation (YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Newspapers, Radio)
2. Prove the news as fake: discuss the research you conducted to uncover the truth of the matter i.e. – prove the news fake
3. Present the impact of this fake news i.e. the effect of the spread of this fake news
4. Study the reception of the fake news. For example - how many people shared it. What were reactions news? Study also what happens when the fake news is revealed as fake; the effect of that on people.
5. Offer a conclusion/rationale for why you think this occurs. What steps can be taken to contain fake news?

#### **NOTE:**

- **The total number of slides should not be less than 20**
- **Maintain a bibliography page of all the sources referred to.**
- **If you are allocating roles to group members then mention the same in the final slide. For e.g. XYZ – Research / ABC – PPT design and layout, etc.**

#### **Outcome of the assignment:**

1. Critically evaluate news sources in order to determine content credibility and develop the skill/ ability to determine what is reliable information/news and unreliable information/news (PSO - Skill-based Competence)
2. Make informed opinions about current topics and issues in order to become a better informed citizens. (PSO - Ethical, Moral and Social Competence and Sensibilities)
3. Analyse behaviours and practices of media consumption; research and analyse the psychological and social impact of media (PSO – Academic Competence)
4. Develop 21st-century skills specifically critical thinking and media literacy; expand knowledge of vocabulary related to news and the media (PSO – Academic Competence)





### Grading Rubric for TYBA Fake News Assignment

Your written work will be evaluated by the criteria below. This criteria serves as a guideline. Your assignment will not be graded point by point by these items; it will be graded for its overall quality.

PowerPoint Presentation Overall (5 marks)
1. The main claim is clearly stated, and the focus of the PPT is clear and consistent.
2. Organization is planned, and the slides are connected into a well-ordered logical flow.
3. The design content and ideas are presented in an interesting way. Presentation design shows an attempt at creativity.
4. All graphics, images and clips are appropriate and support the theme/content of the presentation.
5. Presentation is free of spelling and grammatical errors. Punctuation, grammar, spelling, and syntax are appropriate.
Content ( 6 marks)
1. Original and relevant pieces of news offered – the news selected is clearly identified and adequate information is offered on the subject and the platform of circulation
2. Research-based information offered to prove the news as fake.
Analysis (7 marks)
1. The impact of fake news i.e. the effect of the spread of fake news is accurately interpreted. Explanations are evidence – based.
2. The study of the reception of the fake news includes different perspectives/ views
3. Expresses a clear, coherent conclusion.
Assignment Specific Criteria (2)
4. Sources are properly cited and bibliography is maintained.
5. Information is not plagiarised. (No copy and paste)
6. The presentation demonstrates the time/ enthusiasm/ dedication devoted by the student.

**Total Marks – 20**

**Date of submission – 25<sup>th</sup> August 2022**

