

1 **Hierarchical Association, Harmonized Aggravation, and Hashtag Assemblies: A**
2 **Dogma Community keeping its Twitter Candle Lit**
3

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6 Staying relevant in the hearts and minds of the general populace is increasingly driven by social media footprint. Using a mixed-methods
7 approach, we examine the online activity of a community of social media accounts engaged in collective action to keep the death of
8 an Indian movie star, and its investigation, alive on social media. We find that the community develops de-facto hierarchies, which
9 engineer large assemblages of social media activity online. The use of affordances, language, coercion, and temporal organization
10 allows us unique insight both into how coordinated activity can keep an issue alive online, and also into how a dogma community
11 fashions itself around an unwavering narrative.
12

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17

18 **1 INTRODUCTION**
19

20 A long history of work in fandom has explored the ways that people driven by affection for an individual or cause
21 can go to obsessive extremes to protect, promote, and attack in the articulation of their dedication. Social media has
22 introduced means of networking with others with interests in similar subjects, or objects, to form communities that
23 engage with each other and express fandom through various material and virtual means. Elements of fandom derive
24 some of its practice and structure from religious practice, especially that which centers around a key charismatic figure,
25 even deriving rituals, attitudes, and organizational structures. Fan clubs are often spoken of in the same vein as ‘cults’
26 in common parlance, often because of the acts of extreme and public devotion by individual fans, and indeed that the
27 object of their affection is typically a living person.
28

29 While fandom typically focuses on a body of work related to an individual or cause, a separate kind of behavior
30 relates to a specific event. Such behavior can often border on obsessive concern with an event, and can be related to
31 an event in one’s own life, which research and practice in Psychology refers to as Real-Life Obsessive Compulsive
32 Disorders or Rumination. When such obsessive behavior relates to an event in another individual, particularly when
33 the understanding of the event deviates from a mainstream narrative, it is often ascribed to conspiratorial thinking.
34 While there are various ways of understanding such behavior, a commonly observed frame among its adherents is one
35 that is relational - in which causal inferences are drawn on interpretations of various events, perceived behaviors of key
36 actors, and social tropes as contributing to a narrative sequence around the core event. There are various examples of
37 such conspiratorial thinking, especially around the deaths of individuals who command fandom, such as Diana Spencer
38 or John F Kennedy, in which a community of individuals with a dedicated belief in wrongdoing engage each other in
39 conversations that cast aspersions on key actors and tropes that they see as involved in the event.
40

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Social Media has given tools that allow such communities to do two things – first, it gives them a means of engaging each other on the core issue of the event or individual, such as exchanging ideas or theories. Second, it gives the core community a means to popularize its ideas. One such community active in India centers its attention on the death of Bollywood film star Sushant Singh Rajput (SSR), who by all official investigative accounts has been shown to have committed suicide at his home in June 2020. The community of individuals engaging in discourse around the star's death include both fans and individuals who have come around to the star's work after his passing. The actor was mostly a self-made who came from outside film industry families with insider connections, and rose quickly to become one of the highest paid men in the industry.

The discourse around his death has several of the features that mirror other similar events. Some of these are at the heart of what we see as dogmatic beliefs, some with broad factual agreement, others driven almost entirely by belief internally generated by the community. These are important and form the backbone of an argument on what sustains the normative core of the community. They include the idea that key actors such as politicians or film industry titans are involved in the death of the actor, directly or indirectly. That there is a pattern of exclusion and nepotistic targeting of people from the Indian hinterland who come to work in large cities (like Mumbai, where the actor died), and that this is a broader signal to show an outsider their place. In turn, there is a dogmatic belief that what the fans in the community, referred to as SSRians, are doing what they are in the interest of a larger social goal of equity, opportunity, and justice rather than something that is solely related to the star alone. In this, they refer to themselves as 'warriors'. While investigation into the death of the actor has been the central focus of the community, other elements such as appreciation for his screen roles, celebration of his birthday, and his charity work have also been a major part of the mobilized online engagement.

The overall conversation in the community has some diversity, since at different points, different people have been in the community. There is some talk of suicide, which is invariably followed by conversation not about mental health, but culpability. Another set of users explicitly believe in the *conspiracy theory* that the death was not caused by suicide, but through assassination, and that the same could not be unravelled owing to the incompetency around the investigation carried out by the state authorities. It is important to understand that these two lines of discussion are still ongoing in the community.

In this paper, we examine the networks and discursive strategies of this core community of people who send public messages about Sushant Singh Rajput consistently. We refer to this core community as a *dogma community*, since they are neither well described by fandom (which revolves just around the person of interest and not much around a specific event), nor by misinformation related to the community. The community is dogmatic about beliefs related to the actor's death but are also unflinchingly positive on his acting, philanthropic activities, and on his personality being broadly beyond reproach. The community is also united in that Sushant Singh Rajput's is the overwhelmingly dominant topic of conversation in their output, unlike others who may be fans of the late star, or believers in conspiracy theories, without that topic being the defining characteristic of what they do on Twitter.

We study the networks and output of messaging from this community with two motivating reasons in mind. First, we aim to provide a rich understanding of a dogma community outside of those traditionally studied or understood in the West. The community is interesting not just because it has been squarely situated during a critical period in global history, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in India which brought with it a unique set of insecurities about trust in the state and institutions as well as peoples' collective future, but also because it happened at a time when a vast number of people in India were relatively new entrants to social media, with a very different history of experiences with information veracity and trust in mainstream media sources.

105 2 MOTIVATION

106 Our research imperative is to provide a descriptive and empirically grounded account of a dogma community that
107 provides an in-depth description of one specific community, but also creates a framework for understanding other
108 similar communities. With this end in mind, we examine two facets of the community – the hierarchies between nodes
109 in the retweet network within the community, and the discourse that shapes the community. While the first is primarily
110 examined through quantitative techniques, the second is studied interpretively by diving into individual messages that
111 have found significant buoyancy in the network.
112

113 Our work presents a case in which there is a dogma but there is also dogmatic behavior around the following of key
114 leaders in the community and their institutions. The most obvious overlapping domain of study is conspiracy theories.
115 Clearly the notion of conspiracy is absolutely central to the SSR community, but the community engages in a broader
116 discourse around systematic exclusion. Indeed, conspiracy communities also similarly extrapolate specific concerns to
117 broader ideas (Vaccine rejectors speaking of big government), but this is precisely where the nature of dogma helps us
118 push for a different lens. The dogma is the broader effort to undermine a subset of Indians, and that it is perpetrated by
119 an elite, and all the conspiracy theories are threads that work under this umbrella. This is also why fandom alone is not
120 an adequate frame, indeed several of the current SSRians were not fans of the star at all prior to his passing.
121

122 We see the articulation of dogma, in both the explicit commentary, as measurable through the content of tweets,
123 but also through the ways in which the community is organized structurally, and how people relate to each other,
124 harmonize into coherent voices, and discipline deviations.
125

126 3 RELATED WORK

127 We discuss here relevant literature around the two characteristic features around the dogma community, namely dogma
128 and organized narratives.
129

130 3.1 Dogma

131 Scholarship in the history of religion have generally eschewed the notion of dogma in favor of more interpretively
132 examinable notions of text and ritual when it comes to the practices of communities, or charisma, when it comes to
133 the central figures of communities. The notion of dogma is typically associated with some authoritative belief, whose
134 verifiability is unconnected to its acceptance. The fundamental notion of dogma is typically associated with religion
135 since the notion, by definition, cannot be subjected to the scientific method. But the notion of dogma is arguably at the
136 center of philosophical examinations of phenomena, going back to Greek traditions dating back to Socrates [6] and
137 Plato [51]. The early engagements were over the notions of what it meant to be a dogmatist, as against a skeptic who
138 questions dogma [11].
139

140 The philosophies of skepticism and dogma in philosophy, rarely considered closely in the studies of social media
141 systems, have been driven for millennia by questions of whether the human acts or can act as an independent agent, or
142 as one driven by dogma or group force [68]. This notion of questioning dogma was present in various philosophical
143 traditions of skepticism including in China [18], in Vedic and Upanishadic traditions of argumentation in India [73],
144 and in West African philosophy [31]. While the grappling with dogma has been consistent through the ages, the modern
145 manifestation is typically rooted in the exchanges that transcended religion to the fundamental nature of being. Among
146 the key western philosophical turns at understanding dogma and religion in human behavior was that of David Hume,
147 who proposed that faith and its intensity cannot be viewed or argued from the prism of reason, wherefore the beliefs
148

of another cannot be rationally analyzed nor converted on [55]. This position aligns well with the Indian tradition of *Bhakti* in which the individual object of devotion is treated with an intense emotional connection that transcends reason [69]. *Bhakti* provides a departure from traditional religious practice, and paves the way for an alternate means of thinking about a figure of worship. While the strictness of dogma as exists with mainstream religious practice is missing in *Bhakti*, there is a new dogma of the individual, their divinity, and right to single-minded adoration from their fans [43].

Another notion that is central to our work here is that of cults. While dogmatic devotion in traditional religion is an accepted practice, when it is centered around an atypical entity, it can be seen as a cult. Cults are defined variously, but a few key elements tend to be true across definitions – first that there are rituals or leader worship or veneration, and that such leader worship is done in a public fashion, putting a spotlight on the devotee and its object as well. [24]. Second there is an implicit expectation of a closed and tightly controlled community that abides by certain norms that cannot be deviated from [40]. Finally, there is a community interface - one that focuses on presenting a certain picture of itself to the outside world, and offering elements of its dogma for general consumption [29].

As a result of the closeness of cults with extreme and organized fandom, there has been much work from across disciplines including psychology, cultural studies, and communications examining the intersection of fandom with cult activity [30]. While the traditional work on cults has proposed that dislocation in the communicational and orientational institutions of societies drives cult behavior [24], work on fandom has shown that alienation at the individual level can add to that for seeking community in the adoration of an individual or collective [35].

A vast body of work on fandom in India pre-social media has examined various elements of intense and performative fan activity [52, 64], high degrees of community organization, practically at the levels of a religious or political organization [20, 50], and a blurring between god and star [47, 54] for fans of Indian cinema. The SSR case is situated within a broader blurring between fantasy and reality in which the notion of the star as a dogmatically worshipped object that the fan toes certain lines on, not to be crossed [53]. While this intense fandom had traditionally been a phenomenon more centered in the south of the country, social media has changed this and increasingly made this a pan-Indian phenomenon.

3.2 Organised Narratives on Twitter

The spread and sustenance of dogmatic beliefs generally require the community of practice to engage in building an organized narrative, since by definition, dogma is signified by collective falsehood that a large body of people agree to. Organized narratives enable a belief to achieve maximum propagation across the community, and in many cases, to expand the community in size. Several studies focus on organized narratives on social media that benefit different communities of practice. There are several examples of political organizations, candidates, and their supporters leveraging social media to bias the citizens towards a certain entity through organized narratives around social media campaigns [1, 16, 32, 45, 45, 46, 48], conspiracy theories [22, 27, 36, 38, 49, 56, 71], fake news [13, 26, 41, 44, 66, 70], clickbait [14, 15, 62] and hate speech [5, 25, 39, 57].

Other studies explore the various organized messaging strategies through which religious organizations extend their authority within social media [19, 28]. Unfortunately, similar to political groups, popularizing belief systems around organized religions often involve hate speech and disinformation [12, 17], chiefly with the purpose of denigrating other religions and establishing the supremacy of one religious order. Existence of similar organized narratives on social media has been established in the domain of pop-culture [8–10], pandemics and other social crises such as

209 gun-shootings [59, 65] and protests [7, 67]. There is also a parallel body of work [5, 42, 59, 60] studying the role of
210 social bots in perpetuating these narratives in online spaces.

211 The various tactics employed by these communities of practice on social media to organize narratives, range from
212 usage of event or entity specific words or phrases while messaging [58], posting messages containing certain linguistic
213 attributes [63], use of automated messaging [4, 61], to organizing the propagation pattern of messages and astroturfing
214 [37, 72]. Importantly, different tactics of organized messaging and controlling of social media narrative are not always
215 confined within the bounds of a particular social media platform, but are at times characterized by simultaneous
216 involvement of multiple platforms. A relevant example in this direction is *Trend Alert* [33] where numerous WhatsApp
217 groups that supported a certain political party in India were used to frequently alert their members on various hashtag
218 manipulation campaigns in the form of mobilization messages with lists of pre-written tweets.

219 Our work studies the community of users who gathered around the death of SSR. As discussed in the previous section,
220 while this community's exceptional preference towards the star's personality traits and works can be compared to
221 fandom, the appearance and hyper-activism of a majority of its members specifically after the actor's death differentiates
222 it from conventional fan communities. The community is persistent in generating and spreading conspiracy theories
223 around the actor's death, which in turn feeds into the fundamental dogma of the 'outsider' in India being victim to the
224 whims of a corrupt elite. We also find evidence of nearly all of the organized messaging strategies to shape the narrative
225 according to the beliefs of this community. We describe our methodology of collecting data on this community and our
226 major findings in the subsequent sections.

227 4 METHODOLOGY

228 Here, we outline the data collection pipeline that was implemented to curate the list of Twitter users that form the basis
229 of further analysis in this study. We use a snowball-sampling approach for exploring and detecting a sub-community
230 (also the dogma community) on Twitter, starting with an initial seed set of 10 most active user accounts that were
231 engaged in tweeting about Sushant Singh Rajput (henceforth referred to by his initials, SSR) - we call this the *initial seed*
232 set (S_0). These users were sampled from the results of another study on conspiracy theories around the actor's demise
233 [2, 3]. At the time of this study, four of these initial set of accounts were either deactivated or banned from the platform
234 - we removed them from the initial seed in accordance to Twitter's batch compliance policy. We then collected the
235 user details for every account followed by these initial seed accounts (also known as their *friends* in Twitter parlance).
236 On this expanded set of accounts, we only retained those that are followed by at least 50% of S_0 so as to only retain
237 accounts well-connected and buoyant within the community.

238 We also checked if the profiles of these users and their previous 20 tweets (from the day of data collection) contained
239 at least one keyword/hashtag from a set of 20 popular keywords/hashtags related to the SSR issue (e.g. "ssr", "sushant",
240 "rajput", "#justice4sssr", etc.), and removed those with no such keywords/hashtags in their profiles or previous 20 tweets.
241 Let us refer to this set of seed users, along with their one hop friends remaining after filtering as set S_1 . We recursively
242 repeated the snowballing process on S_1 and retained only those accounts followed by 75% of S_1 . The rationale behind a
243 higher bound here is to ensure that no highly-networked individual is left out in the analysis that wasn't captured in
244 the first degree of snowballing due to a potential bias in the initial seed. The resultant set of 250 accounts found post
245 keywords/hashtags-based filtering is what we refer to as the core users, who form the most active and influential set of
246 members or the *dogma community* we want to study.

247 To understand which entities these users dominantly mention in their tweets, we tracked all the handles ever
248 mentioned in tweets by this community (from 14 June 2020 to 20 April 2022). We found that the highly mentioned
249

261	Originator	Tagline	Retweets	Spread among core users (%)
262	Satya91539128	955	1070	89.25
263	Hemant36182804	58994	67658	87.19
264	LoveYouSushant1	81840	96052	85.2
265	sushii4747	22481	27460	81.87
266	janisarSSR_2020	163930	201406	81.39
267	blacksheep_119	99786	123201	80.99
268	Justice4SSR1986	6410	8079	79.34
269	MEENU82433774	34649	43953	78.83
270	__Sushuri__	9106	11639	78.24
271	sabkapyarajerry	5129	6570	78.07

Table 1. Percentage of SSR tweets by randomly selected users from the core community

entities were overwhelmingly in one of the three categories – the first were general influencers such as India's prime minister, various influential public officials, and members of the press, whose attention was sought through tweeting with a demand for justice in the commonly believed victimization of the actor; the second were influencers who were being attacked by the SSR core community for alleged complicity in his death such as other film stars or politicians; and the third were influencers who had at some point or the other expressed sympathy for the actor or his fans in a tweet. We left out direct members of the star's family or his close associates active on Twitter since they are not part of a dogma community that has coalesced around fandom and the event as specified in our research.

To understand if this core community of users (also referred to as core users) actively engage in tweeting primarily about the SSR issue, we collected all tweets posted by a random sample of 10 users selected from the core community, during the event timeline. We then calculated the percentage of tweets that somehow use an SSR related keyword/hashtag in this collection (i.e., tweets that talk about the SSR issue). From table 1, we can see that all of the sampled users exhibit a significantly high percentage of SSR tweets. Thus, we get an indication that our method of selecting the core community of users is valid, and selects only those users who are heavily engaged in posting material related to the SSR issue. All further analyses are performed on a corpus of tweets and retweets ($N = 6031269$) authored by these core users (S_2) over the entire period of study (14 June 2020 - 20 April 2022).

296 5 FINDINGS

We describe here our findings with respect to two primary ways in which the dogma community popularizes and sustains the community narrative: through maintenance of hierarchical association among users in terms of their influence within the community, and through organized messaging.

303 5.1 Hierarchies of Influence

In this section, we attempt to see if there exists a hierarchy of influence in association, within the retweet network of core users. For this purpose, we calculate the indegree (number of core users retweeting a user), the outdegree (number of core users retweeted by a user), and the eigenvector centrality (influence of a user) for all users in the retweet network of the core community. Based on the cumulative distribution (CDF) for the eigenvector centrality as shown in figure 1, we experimentally determine thresholds to divide the core community into multiple user bins. We consider the set of user accounts with eigenvector centrality ≥ 0.1 (95 percentile point) as the highest influence alpha users, that with

Bin	Corr(indegree,influence)	Corr(outdegree,influence)
All users	0.986	0.008
Alpha users	0.989	0.263
Influential spreaders	0.953	0.084
Non-influential users	0.953	0.085

Table 2. Correlation of indegree and outdegree with influence for the three different categories of users

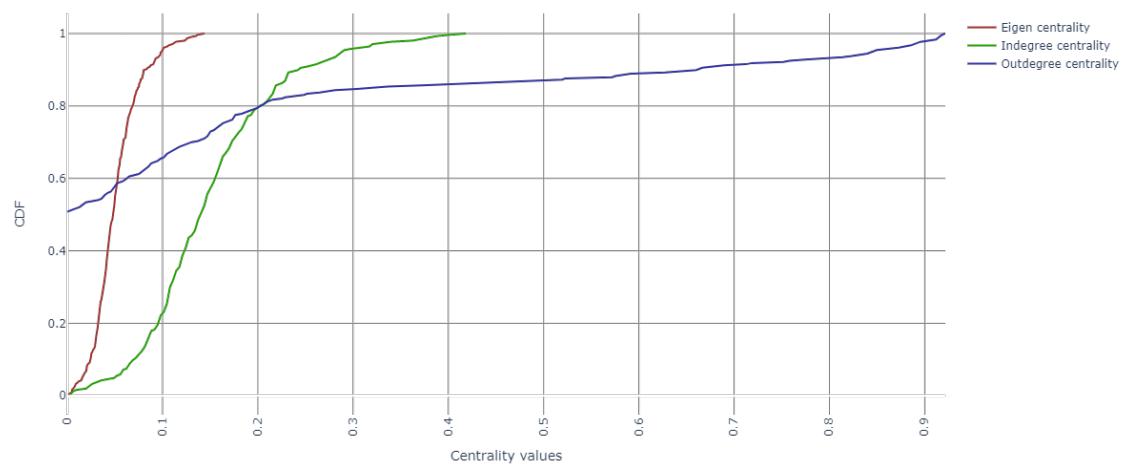


Fig. 1. CDFs for the three centrality values for the dogma community retweet network

In table 2, we report the correlation of indegree and outdegree with the eigenvector centrality (or influence) for each of these bins/categories of core users, and for all users. We see that for most bins of users, the correlation of indegree and influence is high, and that between outdegree and influence is negligible. This indicates that irrespective of the set of nodes or users considered, the influence of a user in the core network generally depends on the number of other core users retweeting them. Contrarily, the users who significantly retweet others do not exhibit high influence (provided they themselves do not get retweeted by many as well). Thus, the core community of users in the SSR issue shows a clear hierarchy – there exists a small set of users (*alpha users*) who get highly retweeted, thereby exhibiting high influence and leading the community narrative. These users do not show a propensity of retweeting others in the network. The second-tier influential spreaders consist of users who are not retweeted as much as the alpha users, and naturally have lower influence. However, these users tend to retweet the core community (and mostly alpha) users significantly, thereby sustaining the community narrative or keeping the *candle lit*. Finally, the last set of users neither retweet many users, nor get attention from others in the core community. These users are generally dormant, and show sporadic activity. We show the centrality values for all alpha users in table 3.

	Event	Median Spread	Outdegree	Influence
365	nilotpalm3	128	1	0.144
366	MadhumitaroyC	122	181	0.137
367	Aaaaaaastha	119	0	0.135
369	Khushi4Justice	118	202	0.130
370	NehaT1923	114	0	0.126
371	sushfanseg	110	281	0.125
372	suniketroy	113	160	0.123
373	PiyaliBh	103	54	0.114
374	ApurvaU21	103	249	0.113
375	Ssr_truth	97	25	0.110
376	HashiTammy	97	14	0.100
377	Shraddha_4SSR	98	0	0.100
378	Nadiaa_Islam	91	0	0.100
379	hkaur0353	89	0	0.100
380				

Table 3. The alpha users and their indegree, outdegree, and centrality values in the community retweet network

Among all of these core users, we find the maximum eigenvector centrality (0.14) for the user `@nilotpalm3`. This user is one of the alpha users who retweets only one user in the core community¹, but is retweeted by 128 core users. While there exist a few other users in the network with a higher indegree to outdegree ratio, `nilotpalm3` shows the highest influence in the network as also corroborated by other reports [34]. Figure 2 shows the scatter plot of core users based on their indegree to eigenvector centralities. The three hierarchical categories of alpha users (red), influential spreaders (green), and non-influential spreaders (blue) can be seen in the plot.

An important feature of this dogma community of users is the fluctuation in the number of active users over time as seen in figure 4 – new users often join the movement by tweeting or retweeting about the SSR issue, while a few older user accounts get deactivated/banned/disinterested. However, we also find continued presence and activity of a small set of users throughout the timeline of the event. These dedicated users or *perpetuators* enable sustenance of the community narrative. Figure 3 shows some top users in the dogma community over the seven quarters across the event timeline, based on the number of times they have authored a tweet or a retweet. We clearly see continued presence of a few users (e.g. `FaktTruth`, `sushfanseg`, `blacksheep_119`, `manisha_1604`, etc.) across most quarters. Contrary to our expectation, we do not find many of the top perpetuators among the alpha users – only 3 of the 10 most frequent perpetuators feature among the top 10 alpha users with the highest influence in the network. This phenomenon is probably related to astroturfing where the true leaders of the community (like `nilotpalm3`) do not target high visibility in the form of tweets/retweets to avoid getting banned, and are rather represented and popularized by the second/high-third tier information spreaders. Thus, other than observing clear hierarchies of influence in the association among the dogma users, we find the existence of a set of non-alpha perpetuators, who aid in sustaining the movement over a long duration. This is also evident from figure 4. The plot shows the number of active accounts in the community (users tweeting about the issue), and the number of tweets per active account in the community, for each date. We find that initially, the number of active accounts rise, indicative of new users joining the movement. However, this trend flattens out eventually (either due to banning of accounts or some users losing interest), despite the number of tweets per account

¹nilotpalm3 retweets the user with handle SandyDutta11, who does not retweet anybody in the network. This user is also one of the most consistent users tweeting about the issue, their latest tweet on SSR issue being on 12th July 2022.

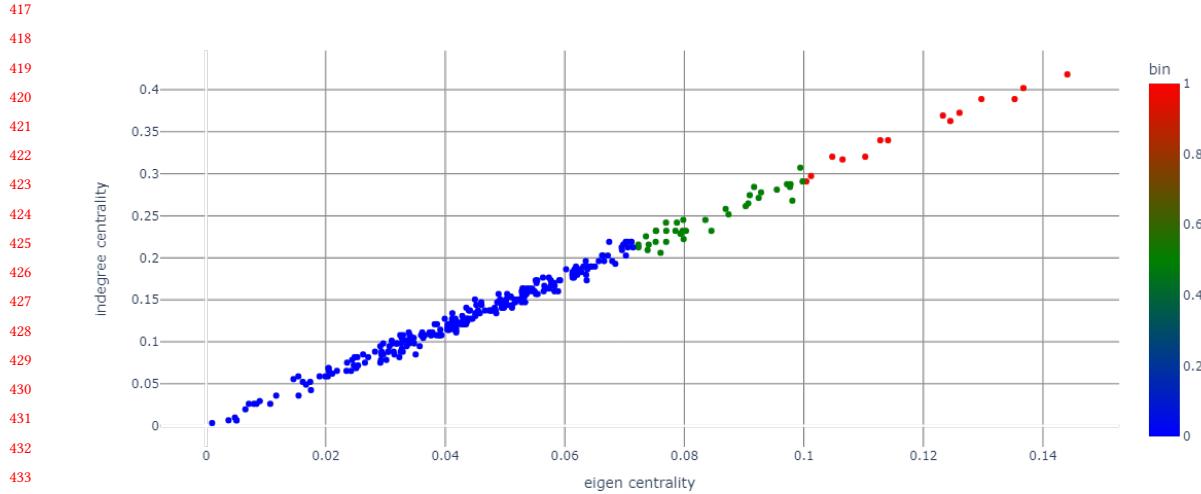


Fig. 2. Scatter plot for users with in the core network: The three categories of alpha users (red with eigen centrality above 0.1), influential spreaders (green with eigen centrality above 0.07 and below 0.1), and non-influential spreaders (blue) can be seen. nilotpalm3 appears as the rightmost point in the plot.



Fig. 3. Most active core users over time (from Sept 2020 - Feb 2022) in terms of number of tweets or RTs authored: The dedicated users can be seen colored in red in the clouds

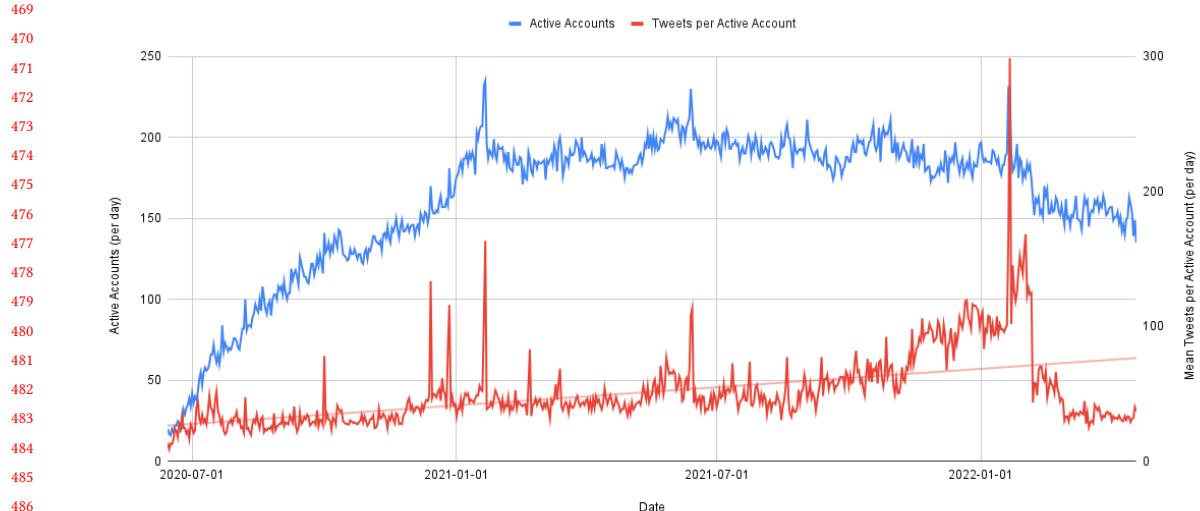


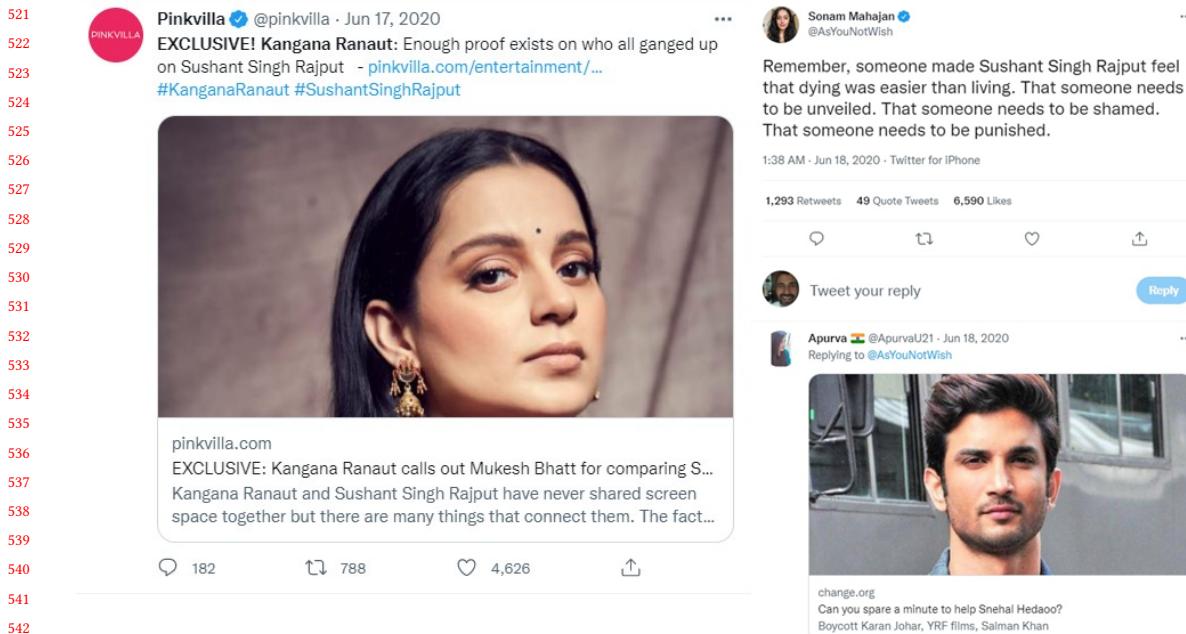
Fig. 4. Timeline of Average Tweets per account

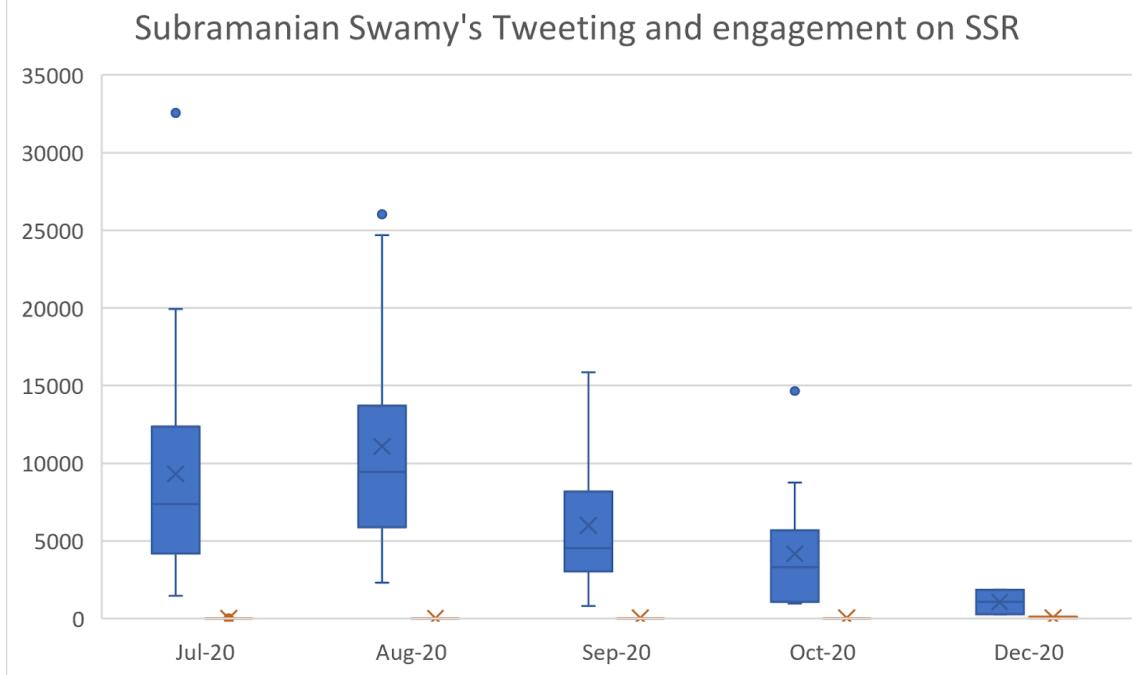
showing a significantly increasing trend throughout the timeline. This observation is indicative of a small set of constant perpetrators sustaining the movement by aggressively posting about it.

5.2 Organized Management of Discourse

As discussed earlier, various conspiracy theories around the death of SSR add up to the overall dogma around the issue. In this section, we provide evidence towards how the social media movement around the SSR issue was initially commenced, instigated, and brought into mainstream attention by a set of non-core, external influencers through these conspiracy theories; the different motives fuelling these conspiracy theories; and finally, how the movement was eventually sustained and managed through carefully organized messaging around the issue by the dogma community.

5.2.1 Conspiracy theories spread by non-core influencers. We present here some findings related to the conspiracy theories that spiked in social media around the issue since the very start of the event, through external influencers who do not belong to the core dogma community. A misinformation community typically has a few large-scale influencers who bring mainstream attention to the issue under consideration. We find this fact to be true even in the SSR case where the set of entities involved in the initial spread of the narrative around the death of SSR include television channels, media houses, and mainstream celebrities and influencers (like film actors and politicians). Akbar et al. [3] showed that television networks and their online channels, particularly *Republic* and *TimesNow*, had a sustained engagement in the story from prime-time viewers, and at the same time, politicians used the story as a means of attacking the Maharashtra state government, which was in charge of the investigation of the actor's death. We find evidence of several celebrities tweeting on the issue immediately following the demise of the actor. One of the very first tweets demanding retribution was by *Kangana Ranaut*, a popular actor with a high number of followers. Subsequently, activist Sonam Mahajan also tweeted on the issue. Both of these tweets received a significant number of retweets as can be seen in figure 5. These can be seen as examples where the actor is portrayed as a victim to the existing nepotism within the film fraternity.





616
617 Fig. 7. Monthly engagement of @swamy39 with SSR-related tweeting showing that the account stopped engaging it as the public
618 engagement fell

619
620
621
622
623
624
of the head of the ruling dispensation in Bihar (a state in India), claiming Sushant Singh (originally from the state who migrated to Maharashtra for work) as a son-of-the-soil, both to impact the North Indian voter bank in Maharashtra and also to influence the voters in the Bihar legislative elections in 2020 as seen in figure 8.



Fig. 8. Tweets by BJP politicians, including Sushil Modi, using the Sushant Singh Rajput case as a poll issue in Bihar, and opposition and journalists calling it out

645 Other influencers, not as directly complicit as @swamy39 in suggesting wrongdoing contributed to the overall
646 movement by asking questions that threw shade on the investigation – these included actors with large social media
647 footprints like Sonu Sood (@sonusood), Akshay Kumar (@akshaykumar), Paresh Rawal (@SirPareshRawal), and Simi
648 Garewal who also asked for CBI probes. Such one-off engagement by mainstream stars like Sood and Kumar brought
649 very important legitimacy and mainstream attention to the narrative than accounts like those of @Swamy39 who carry
650 the weight of being distrusted for their past sensationalist messaging on Twitter.

651 We see in figure 9 that several influential accounts (larger bubbles) have a massively outsized impact on the discourse,
652 both in scale and in the number of messages (Swamy for instance, posted more messages in the study period than Sushant
653 Singh Rajput's own sister). We also see that many other influential accounts including media channel @republic, BJP
654 spokesperson @ippatel, character actor @shekharsuman7, and anchor @pradip103 were key drivers of misinformation.
655 We find that the majority of the dogma (or core) community sits on the top-left section of the plot, i.e., higher number
656 of posts about SSR, but relatively lower overall impact as measured through retweets earned.

657 We thus see that in the beginning, the SSR issue was brought into attention of a large section of followers by influential
658 people like popular actors, politicians, and public personalities through spread of conspiracy theories. Eventually,
659 however, the number of tweets by these influential entities waned. This is when the discourse was taken over by the
660 core dogma community of users, with a significant interest in the issue (in the form of tweets and constant engagement),
661 but with relatively lesser numbers of followers.

662 *5.2.2 Different motives behind conspiracy theories.* The set of users (including external influencers) tweeting around
663 conspiracy theories in the SSR issue shows signs of typical conspiracy communities. Research [23] shows that during
664 crisis periods, acceptance of conspiracy theories spike. The intersection of the COVID-19 lockdown created conditions
665 that enabled some of these conspiracy theories to spike – there was a high degree of uncertainty due to lockdown, a
666 spike in household consumption of news, and an overall sense of existential fear.

667 Research in psychology [21, 23] shows that most conspiracy communities tend to be fueled by epistemic, existential,
668 and social motives. Epistemic motives are among the most basic drivers of misinformation and conspiracy as they are

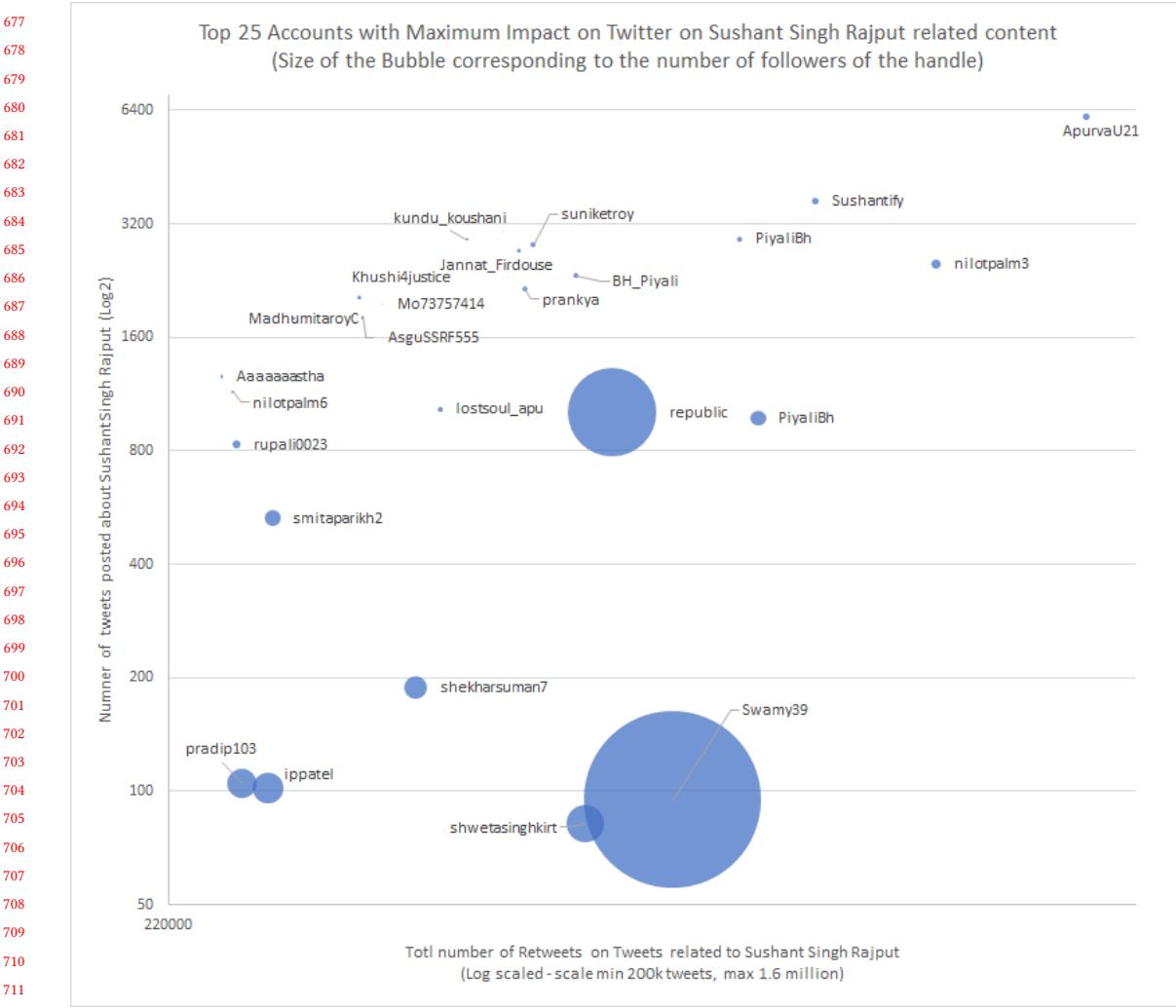


Fig. 9. Bubble plot of Tweets (log-scaled on Y axis) of key players and the engagement to their original tweets on Sushant Singh Rajput

primarily a struggle with the inability to make sense of an event. The lack of clear resolution drives misinformation, and people want to be able to explain what is going on. Innuendo by influential accounts and media channels help through doubt and confusion, increasing the drive for epistemic uncertainty. However, over time, the slow progress with the case, despite several clean chits from investigation agencies suggests that institutions have allowed this community to thrive. It is important that the case has still not been closed, allowing this sense of uncertainty to continue. Epistemic concerns are essentially fueled by speculation – as many unanswered possibilities that appear can add more possibilities for threads of misinformation. We see in figure 10 a few examples of threads started by various individuals – *Apurva21*, the long-standing member of the SSR community was the first to throw doubt, followed by digital influencer *soumyadipta*, but it was Subramanian Swamy's 26-point breakdown of reasons for doubt which drove up the conspiracy theories,

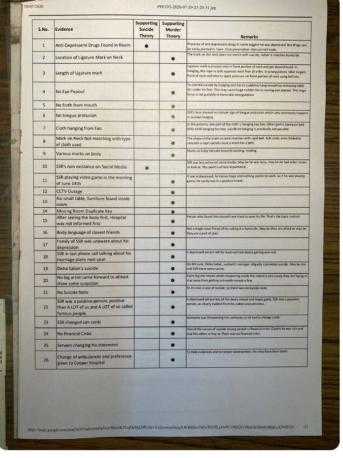
729
 730 Pinned Tweet
 731  Apurva
 732 #CBIEInquiryForSushant
 733 Given that Sushant had a very good height:-
 734 1) It's impossible for him to hang himself there where
 735 the distance bw the bed and the ceiling fan is not
 736 enough to even stand it checked properly
 737 2) The neat prominent blood wrecked neck marks do
 738 not cause due 1/n
 739 2:32 PM - Jun 19, 2020 - Twitter for Android
 740 1,923 Retweets 276 Quote Tweets 2,536 Likes
 741 
 742 Did you notice this?
 743 This is a still of Sushant Singh Rajput from the
 744 #DilBecharaTrailer.
 745 The face is joyous and happy but the T-shirt says just
 746 the opposite.
 747 2/n
 748  Soumyadipta
 749 Did you notice this?
 750 Subramanian Swamy
 751 Why I think Sushant Singh Rajput was murdered
 752 
 753 6:48 AM - Jul 30, 2020 - Hootsuite Inc.

Fig. 10. Examples of epistemic motives in conspiracy: Tweets that challenge the popular narrative by proposing speculative possibilities

especially in August and September of 2020, when insinuations were being rapidly amplified – and the tweet from BJP spokesperson bringing attention to an unconnected person is a case in point.

The second type of contributors to misinformation spread are existential drivers, which are typically around fears related to one’s group. This makes people willing to trust conspiracy theories. Idea of systematic discrimination vs. outsiders, and peoples’ self-identification as outsiders in some setting as can be seen from the examples in figure 11. Several viral messages used the notion of Biharis as outsiders in Mumbai, harping on the difficulty of ‘making it’ in an India where nepotism is rife. These messages suggest that one is at risk, and that what happened in the case of SSR is something that could happen to anybody. While the majority of what we see as existential misinformation tends to be Bihar centric, there is also a general sense of the individual as being at the mercy of a nepotistic system. Here, as within some of the other threads of misinformation, there is an initial spark thrown by a commentator not necessarily seeking to trigger conspiracy theories, but end up doing it. The case here is of journalists Shekhar Gupta and Rahul Kanwal starting conversations about outsiders in Bollywood, which triggers a series of quoted tweets that push speculation.

The third type of contributor to conspiracy theory is that around social drivers. These relate to engaging in misinformation because it aligns with one’s social worldview, as it relates to one’s group identity. Here, one attempts to show oneself, or one’s social group, as superior by proposing misinformation about another. When the social driver is group-oriented, it usually presents a social antagonist, which could be a collective such as people of a certain religion, ideology, or gender identity – they could be based on values such as “women who eschew religious orthodoxy”, crafted as antagonists for #MenToo activists, or “Muslims” crafted as antagonists in the immediate post Tablighi Jamaat discourse around COVID-19. In the SSR case, nationalistic language was incorporated into the social drivers of misinformation, presenting the murder of Sushant Singh Rajput as something perpetrated by a group of defined antagonists, mainly leading members of the Bollywood industry – often Muslim male stars, presented as a cabal hand in glove with a

781  @ShekharGupta
Sushant Singh Rajput's death shows how Bollywood can be so unfair to the outsider...

782 Because it is a brutally competitive game with no umpires, adjudicators or whistle-blowers...

783 I write from some first person experience...

784 #NationalInterest

785 

786 

787 1:39 PM - Aug 20, 2020 - Twitter for Android

788 767 Retweets 84 Quote Tweets 1,254 Likes

789  @AnishhSawena
GLOBAL MOVEMENT FOR SUSHANT 🙏🙏
SHAME on those who is saying "Bihari logo ka yhi kaam h" 🤦

790  @Anam
What happened to Sushant Rajput, if similar happens to you, your parents will also ask for justice, regardless of their state

791 But if you're from Bihar, liberal media will declare them toxic Bihari family

792 These liberals who talk against stereotypes themselves create stereotypes

793 WHOLE WORLD is with TRUTH 🇺🇸❤️

794 9:42 AM - Aug 8, 2020 - Twitter for Android

795 6,600 Retweets 275 Quote Tweets 26.9K Likes

796  @SoumyadipDatta
Lakhs of Biharis come to Mumbai every year for work, leaving their family behind.

797 They are lonely. They stick to each other and support themselves in Mumbai where everything is moving at break-neck speed.

798 For them, Sushant was an inspiration, who came to Mumbai and became a star.

799 2:04 AM - Sep 27, 2020 - Twitter Web App

800 245 Retweets 5 Quote Tweets 832 Likes

801  @RahulKarmel
Nationwide support for SSR holds lessons not just for Bollywood but also for Congress. Indians have had it with closed cosy clubs that don't open their doors to meritorious outsiders. Nepotism in films and politics has passed its use by date. Are Congress & Bollywood listening?

802 11:58 PM - Aug 23, 2020 - Twitter for iPhone

803 3,129 Retweets 836 Quote Tweets 21.3K Likes

804 9:11 PM - Sep 4, 2020 - Twitter Web App

805 260 Retweets 24 Quote Tweets 609 Likes

Fig. 11. Examples of existential drivers of misinformation, tweets that promote the idea that one is at fundamental risk

806 broader conspiracy against the national good as can be seen in figure 12. We see for instance several tweets which hint
807 at an involvement between the SSR case and mafia don Dawood Ibrahim, or a Pakistani conspiracy.

808  @Priyankali1604
Rhea Chakraborty interrogated for 4 hrs by ED. Dumb Bollywood actress can't stand ED interrogation for long, will spill all.

809 SSR N Disha Salian case will ultimately result in cleaning biggest anti Hindu propaganda establishment in India under the Karachi Rule?

810 9:06 AM - Aug 7, 2020 - Twitter Web App

811 61 Retweets 2 Quote Tweets 210 Likes

812  @ByRakeshRSimha
Sushant Singh Rajput was victimised because he had non star background, but also for his name. Remember Jo Jeeta Wohi Sikandar? Bad guys are from Rajput College. Why? Film was by Manseor Khan and Nasir Hussain. Today Karan Johar, Kapoor, SRK, Aamir have created anti Hindu cartel

813 2:52 AM - Jun 15, 2020 - Twitter for Android

814 249 Retweets 7 Quote Tweets 546 Likes

815  @Aparna123
.@narcoticsbureau Interrogating former Bodyguard of Sushant Singh Rajput.

816 NCB arrests Bandra drug lord & Dawood fan who collects snakes & weapons in pertinence to SSR Case !

817 NCB Arrests Harish Khan in regard to SSR Case.

818 They're on a roll 🌟

819  @AkhilNirWithIn
From Gulshan Kumar to Sushant Singh Rajput, why do all the controversial Bollywood deaths end up having a Maheesh Bhatt angle? Why doesn't the act when he always knows it all?

820 11:49 AM - Jun 2, 2021 - Twitter for Android

821 443 Retweets 12 Quote Tweets 342 Likes

822 
Modi Ji Serve Justice to SSR

823  @SatyaSSRFan
Bollywood promotes nepotism, terrorism, Anti-Hindu Conspiracy, drug consumption.

824 They are a menace to the society and if you want to save your future generations #BoycottBollywood

825 3:31 PM - Mar 2, 2021 - Twitter for Android

826 125 Retweets 10 Quote Tweets 212 Likes

827  @SushantPredictor
Sushant Predictor BW Collapse

828 2:55 AM - May 7, 2022 - Twitter for Android

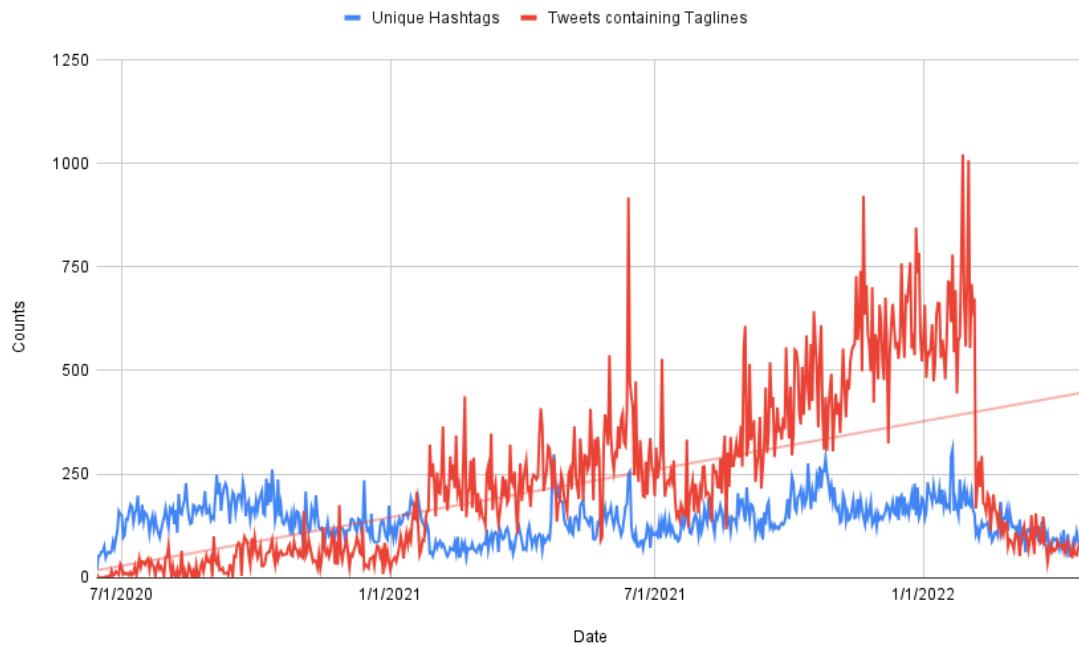
829 47 Retweets 22 Likes

Fig. 12. Examples of social drivers of misinformation — tweets where the conspiracy theory acts in support of one's perception of a social group

830 5.2.3 *Coordinated messaging*. The spread and sustenance of conspiracy theories in social media require dedicated
831 coordinated messaging where a set of high influence users guide others in the community on what, when, and how
832 to post on an issue. These influential users also provide instructions to others in the community about the general

833 guidelines for the maintenance of the community discourse. While the conspiracy theories discussed in the previous
 834 section were initially generated or promoted by external influencers, they were spread and sustained on social media
 835 by the core dogma community through coordinated messaging.
 836

837 There are various ways in which a community of practice on Twitter can be influenced to push a particular narrative.
 838 It can be through hashtags, taglines, or direct calls to quote/retweet a message. A tagline is a block of text that serves as
 839 the motto for a community, and is copy-pasted exactly as is by multiple users, but with other text along with it in the
 840 tweeted message. This method avoids the attention that hashtags may attract from Twitter, since frequent usage of
 841 hashtags may lead to blocking/banning of an account by Twitter as it often indicates obvious collusive activity. We
 842 now see how a set of users used taglines and hashtags to influence the entire community to spread specific messages
 843 about the SSR issue. Figure 13 shows the number of tweets with hashtags and taglines over time in the community. The
 844



872 Fig. 13. Timeline of the contrasting use of taglines and hashtags
 873

874 plot shows an interesting trend: while immediately after the death of the actor, hashtags dominated the community
 875 narrative, they were taken over by taglines on Jan 18th, 2021, i.e., three days before the star's birthday. The taglines
 876 drastically go up in number subsequently, showing a high correlation with the number of tweets (0.82). They gradually
 877 keep growing till February 2022, i.e., a month after the star's birthday. Thus, we find that probably owing to the fear of
 878 getting banned, the community messaging majorly moved towards taglines, dominating, and in many cases, replacing
 879 hashtags. Henceforth, we present some of our relevant findings with respect to tagline messaging, which evolves as a
 880 primary feature of this dogma community.
 881

We manually looked at a few tweets containing the word *tagline* on the day the taglines surpassed the hashtag tweets in number. Most of them were messages guiding the community to post the taglines relevant to SSR's birthday, also termed by the community as *Sushant Day*. While #SushantDay remained the top trending hashtag for sometime subsequently, as seen in figure 14a, the user *nilotpalm3* can be seen to specifically instruct the community members to use taglines instead of hashtags. We also looked at the second major peak and drop in taglines towards the end of January 2022. We find that most of these taglines contain messages asking for justice for SSR's murder (e.g. *Raniji Unmask SSR Killers*, a tagline requesting current minister and former Chief Minister of Maharashtra Narayan Rane to unmask the actor's killers). Thus, we see that even during the recent times, the dogma community is persistent in spreading conspiracy theories related to the issue.



(a) *nilotpalm3* instructing the community to use only taglines (b) *nilotpalm3* banned due to mass reporting by external users instead of hashtags on SSR's birthday

Fig. 14. Tweets indicating top-down instruction on tagline spread, and banning of an influential account due to mass reporting

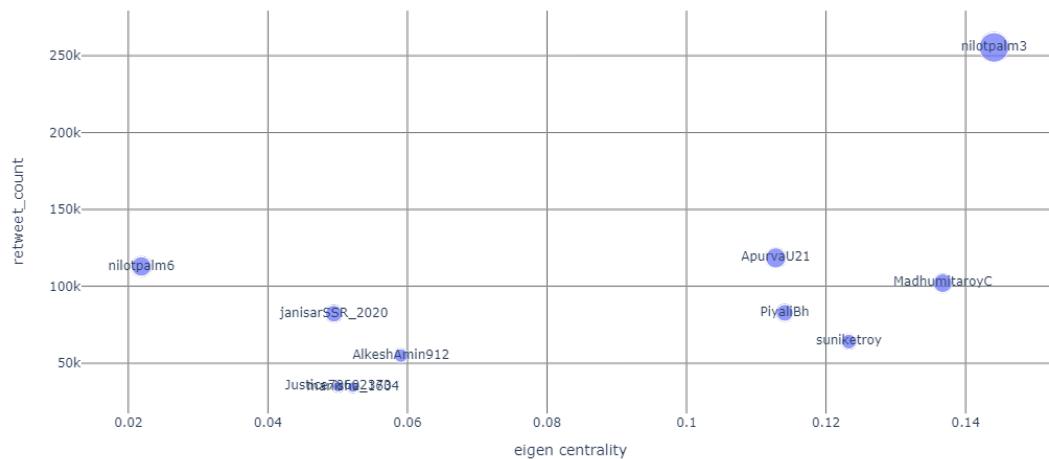
Incidentally, we find that all of the top 10 most retweeted original taglines in the dogma community are generated by the alpha user *nilotpalm3* who has the highest influence in the network, which is an outcome of the hierarchy of association that we show in section 5.1. These highest retweeted taglines appear in the user's tweets starting Jan 30th 2021, six months after the actor's death, and mostly revolve around seeking justice related to the death of SSR and his celebrity manager Disha Salian (who also committed suicide around five days before the actor's death), intended to promote the conspiracy theory of the two having been murdered. Table 4 shows the top five taglines, their retweet counts, and the percentage of users in the core community who retweeted them. Most of these top taglines are seen to be significantly retweeted across the community, i.e., above 60% of the dogma users retweet them. This provides us clear indication of top-down management of the spread of conspiracy theory, and the significance that taglines by some alpha users have in the dogma community.

Additionally, the most popular of all original taglines are concentrated to a small set of high influence users in the community. Figure 15 shows the plot of top 10 most popular users in terms of the retweets they receive on their original taglines. We see that the top three most popular tagline authors have a high influence (eigenvector centrality) in the network. While some low influence authors also seem to generate popular taglines, the number of retweets received by their taglines (or their popularity) is significantly less than those of the influential users. We see that *nilotpalm3* receives a disproportionately high number of retweets on his taglines. Interestingly, the third most popular account in terms of taglines is *nilotpalm6*, which is an alternate account of the user *nilotpalm3*, indicating the propensity of the user in

937	Originator	Tagline	Retweets	Spread among core users (%)
938	<i>nilotpalm3</i>	SUSHANT JUSTICE MATTERS	1809	89.8
939	<i>nilotpalm3</i>	CBI Custody 4 Pithani	1316	71.3
940	<i>nilotpalm3</i>	Who Killed Disha And Sushant	1295	61.6
941	<i>nilotpalm3</i>	No Mercy 4 Sushant Killers	1288	74.2
942	<i>nilotpalm3</i>	Punish SSR Killers	1264	81.4
943				

944 Table 4. Spread of the top five most retweeted taglines: All of them are created by *nilotpalm3*, the user with highest influence in the
945 network

946
947
948 shaping the community narrative through taglines via multiple accounts. The gini coefficient (a measure of income
949 inequality bounded in [0,1] where 1 represents highest inequality in income distribution, and 0 represents perfect
950 equality) of the number of retweets received on taglines for all users in the community comes close to 0.84, which also
951 indicates high inequality or concentration in the attention received by the dogma users. This is primarily due to the
952 hierarchical association among the dogma users: a set of highly influential users generate taglines and instruct others
953 to post them, to maintain the movement, and these few alphas gather the highest attention through their taglines.
954
955



956
957
958
959 Fig. 15. Top 10 most popular users in terms of number of retweets received on their taglines: Size of the bubble represents the number
960 of retweets received
961
962

963
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965
966
967 We also observe that the alpha user's account with highest influence, *nilotpalm3*, was temporarily banned possibly
968 due to mass reporting during July 2021 (figure 14b). We show in figures 16a and 16b the word clouds for the user's
969 tweets before his ban and after he reappeared on Twitter. We see that while the word *tagline* appears as a major term
970 immediately prior to his ban, it loses its significance post his reappearance. This might have been because the user
971 carefully refrained from using the word *tagline* afterwards, since such tweets might have led to him getting banned in the
972 first place (probably due to mass reporting by other Twitter users). This is another sign of coordinated messaging where
973
974

the influential users or leaders of the movement carefully adjust their messaging strategies, to avoid over-exposure and account termination (figure 14b).

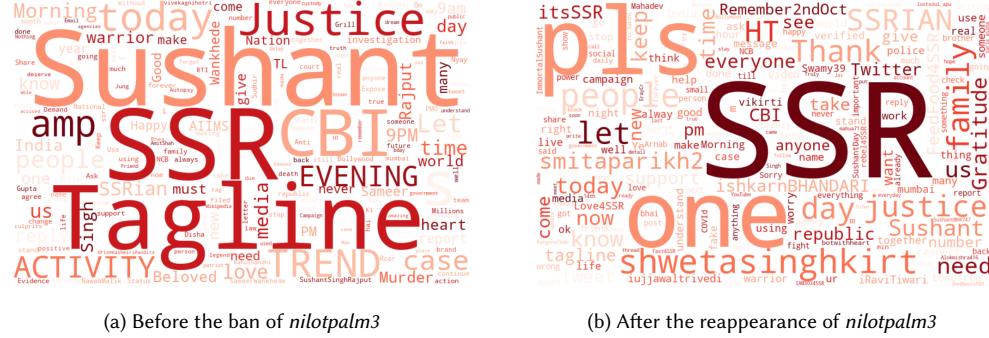


Fig. 16. Wordclouds from the tweets of *nilotpalm3*

It is evident from figure 13 that despite frequent fluctuations, tagline tweets gradually grow in number within the dogma community. One reason behind this behavior is that alpha users other than *nilotpalm3* continue posting taglines. Another reason is that a significant number of second tier (in terms of influence) information spreaders take up the task of retweeting the tagline tweets, which receive even more retweets than the original. We see in figure 17 how the first order and second order popularity of users posting taglines evolve over time, in terms of the number of retweets received by them. For this purpose, we find the topmost retweeted user/author with respect to their original message (tweet authored by the user) for each date, also termed as first order popularity of the user. We also find the topmost retweeted user with respect to their second order popularity (i.e., the user whose original message received maximum number of retweets, when retweeted by another user). We find that during the start of the event timeline, the first order popularity of the users dominate the community. This is indicative of the alpha users starting the community narrative by themselves (using the word *tagline*), and receiving a high number of retweets on these original messages. Midway in the timeline (Jan - June 2021), the second order popularity of users catch up to their first order popularity as can be seen from the two curves mostly overlapping in the plot. This indicates that during this time, the second level information spreaders come into play, and retweet the alphas' messages so as to gain a high number of retweets on these retweeted taglines. After this duration, the second order popularity again comes down, possibly indicative of the information spreaders' disinterest in the issue. During this period, the alpha users once again rely on their own, first order influence to sustain the movement.

The primary objective of any community involved in spreading conspiracy theories is to popularize the movement outside the community as well, in order to gain more members with time. By examining the tweets authored by and the total number of retweets on those tweets received by the core users in figure 18, we find that the concerted activity within the network does drive the overall retweet rates outside of the core network. We also see that the peaks and drops in tweeting activity by the dogma community closely aligns to the peaks² and drops in the retweets received. This is also evident from the high correlation (Pearson correlation coefficient = 0.785) between the number of tweets and retweets on them.

²Most of the major peaks observed in the tweet and retweet timeline occur around mid-January and mid-June, corresponding to the actor's birthday and date of death, respectively.

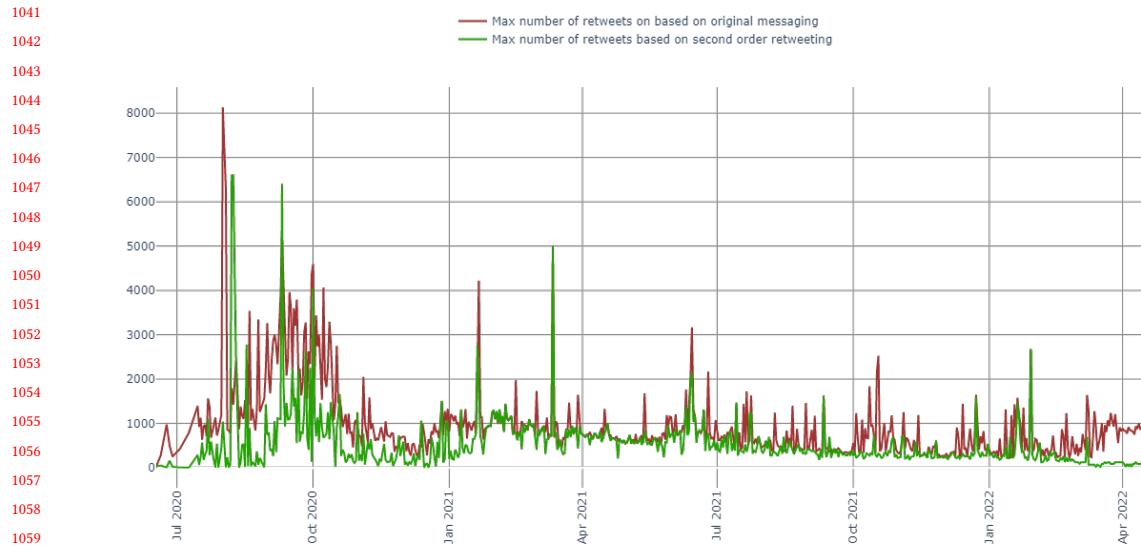


Fig. 17. Maximum number of retweets received by taglines over time, considering retweets of original messages (first order popularity) and retweets of retweets of the original messages (second order popularity)

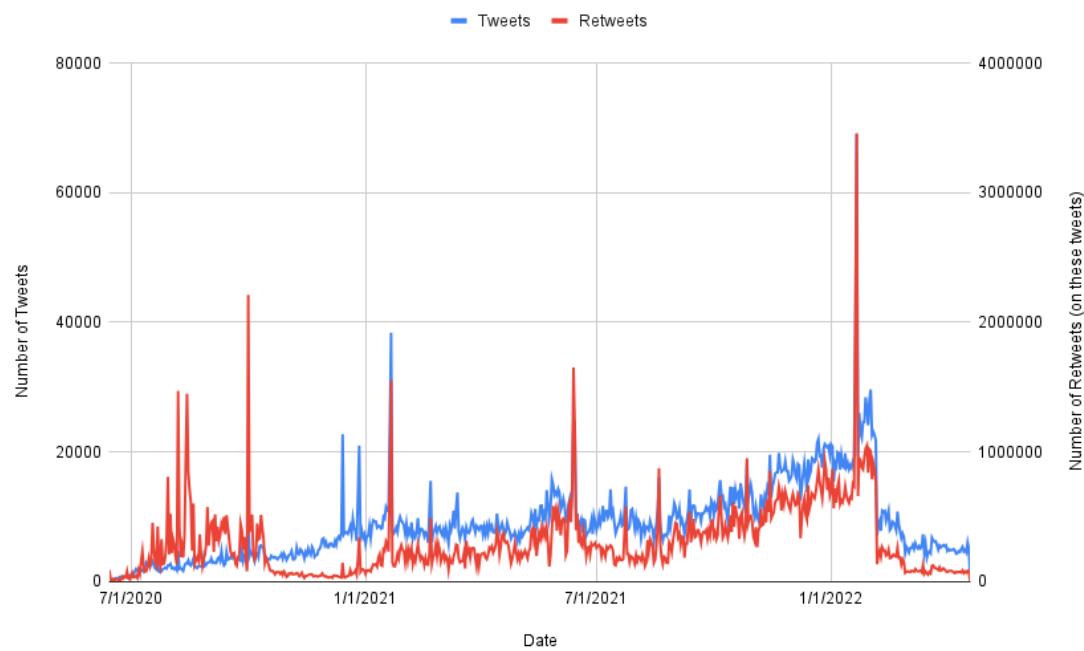


Fig. 18. Movement of the number of tweets by the core users, and the number of retweets on those tweets over time

1093 5.2.4 *Infighting and disciplining of rule-breakers.* As discussed earlier, an important feature of the SSRian community is
 1094 its dynamic nature. We see a significant number of fluctuations in the number of active users in the community, and
 1095 several of these users have faced account suspensions multiple times. This dynamism of the community also includes
 1096 frequent infighting where users not adhering to the rules set by the community leaders are disciplined. Figure 19 shows
 1097 some evidences of infighting, partisanship, and disciplining within the community around *nilotpalm3*, *smitaparikh2*,
 1098 and *suniketroy*, all of whom are among the high influence accounts. Thus, although the community coalesced around
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1118 *nilotpalm3* and a few key user accounts at various points in time, there exists tension around the leadership of the
 1119 community. In a community whose foundational belief is that of suspicion, it is often difficult to maintain a certain
 1120 level of centralization consistently. The community therefore shows frequent signs of infighting on the decision of
 1121 what is to be trended online, and more importantly, who is to be followed.
 1122

Sayani @SayaniGS · 18 Dec 20
 Very Serious note to all,
 Wake up and "try" 2b united. I dnt hv ego
 prob to accept a Centralized team that has
 both **SSR** friends(Smita di, **Nilotpal Sir** etc)
 and old HT decision Telegraph Team leads.
 Wats d prob if u r nt in the list. Evn Im
 not..So?
 #JusticeForSushantSinghRajput

IAMSUSHANT @weat... · 08 Feb 21
 This what they want... If **nilotpal sir** is not
 here... Please someone after him must decide
 and get on track
 THIS SHOULDN'T STOP PEOPLE...
 PLEEEEEEASE 🙏

suniketroy @su... · 07 Feb 21
 No new HT or tagline no worry hit this one
 above 500k

Fig. 19. Evidence of infighting surrounding the influential users *nilotpalm3*, *suniketroy*, and *smitaparikh2*

6 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Fandoms are formed by a set of people who are driven by exceptional affection towards a key charismatic figure, which often exhibits analogies to religious practice and worship. Indeed, communities of fans of a celebrated individual often show unparalleled devotion towards the individual, which often transcends logical boundaries. However, while fandom typically revolves around an individual, the community studied in this paper shows a similar behavior around the event of the untimely demise of the actor Sushant Singh Rajput - a subtle departure from fandom. Such behavior around an event often can lead to a skewed and uncorroborated understanding of it, fueling dogmatic beliefs and practices.

This community, termed the *dogma community*, was actively promoted in its early days by major influencers, confirming that it was not conspiracy theories about Sushant's demise alone, but the ecosystem of actors such as politician Subramaniam Swamy, who actively drew strength from loose threads on systemic attacks on the weak and set fire to the situation. It is important that while any major influencer with any mainstream following has disappeared from talking about the case, the central agencies have still not closed the case, and continue to make arrests or statements on loosely related issues such as minor drug charges against Sushant's friends or partner. All the while the case on the actual suicide is left open, as fuel to the flame.

We find clear indications of this dogma community shaping the internal discourse around SSR's death in an orchestrated fashion, to keep the movement alive. First, the community exhibits a clear hierarchical association among

1145 its members in terms of their influence on the community – a few highly influential members generating the dogmatic
1146 content around the issue, some non-alpha information spreaders spreading this content across the network, and the
1147 third tier non-influential users engaging with the content. Second, the community uses organized messaging strategies
1148 to achieve maximum popularization of the movement in social media. This is done through taglines generated by
1149 community leaders instructing users to copy-paste certain textual messages in the tweets and post them at a certain
1150 time, hashtags revolving around conspiracy theories around the event, and regular disciplining of community users
1151 who in some way do not adhere to the instructions imposed by the community leaders. Finally, we also find that among
1152 these leaders also exists a small set of dedicated users or *perpetuators* in the community, who sustain the movement
1153 through thick and thin over time, through constant dogmatic messaging around the event.

1154 For the community to stay alive, and in the news, it is also essential to enforce an adherence to the dogma within the
1155 community and enable a systematic crushing of the non-believer. Ergo, this dogma must be repeated to the outside
1156 world and any commentator who calls out the conspiracy theories must be personally attacked. This is very akin to
1157 the defence of religious dogma, where those who reject it both from within, and from outside, must be aggressively
1158 taken down as heretics. So while there is some messaging about the actor's birthday, films, and social work, the core
1159 work of the community is to keep the community in place. Here, the analogy to cults is seen in the way that the things
1160 that sustain a community, above all, need to be kept in place. So while it has been repeatedly reported by investigative
1161 agencies that the actor had committed suicide, with corroborations from other sources such as the hospital post-mortem
1162 report, the community doggedly rejects all of these. If anything, each event of an official report on the incident only
1163 further strengthens the resolve of the community to dig, since it offers another piece of evidence of discrimination or
1164 hurt against the community. Thus, as with cults that benefit from being attacked from the outside, the SSR community
1165 turns inward further with it.

1166 The SSR community, unique as it is, does share characteristics with other groups that spread misinformation or
1167 extreme speech, such as political hate speech groups. Instead of being driven by a common ideology however, this
1168 community shows a shared sense of fraternity based on its belief. This belief leads to the community's continual
1169 targeting of Bollywood, including the systematic marking down of film ratings on platforms like IMDB. Recently, the
1170 community is also seen to get involved in collective messaging around other issues, indicative of its weaponization.
1171 This is important particularly because it highlights the possibility of building a community around one idea, throwing a
1172 series of concepts as the driver of discontent, and then incorporating new issues as extensions of that discontent.

1173 While there is clear evidence of systematic manipulation by key players in the community, there are members of
1174 the SSR community who are genuinely convinced of the conspiracy theories and who broadly agree with a number of
1175 threads that emerge from it. They exist not only on Twitter, but on other social media platforms as well. There also
1176 exists a constant churn in the community, with significant internal differences over leadership and direction. It will be
1177 interesting to systematically analyze how this community evolves over time, and if the evolution could be modeled.
1178 Additionally, we intend to analyze similar communities across multiple events and platforms, and find out if they share
1179 common characteristics.

1180 7 ETHICS STATEMENT

1181 This paper is a preliminary step towards identifying coordinated messaging in dogma communities. We present a
1182 measurement study to provide evidences of hierarchical network influence of users in such communities, and the
1183 coordinated messaging methods that they use to sustain the movement. This could further inform platform policies for
1184 regulating malicious/dogmatic communities of practice. However, this work must be viewed as a prototype, and is not
1185

1197 ready for deployment on platforms. We understand that the measurements provided in this paper might vary across
 1198 events, and further sophisticated methods need to be devised to make causal claims, if any. While we pinpoint Twitter
 1199 accounts as part of our analyses of the major movers of the discourse, all these accounts are publicly available, and
 1200 the overwhelming majority of non-influencer accounts involved in the SSR case mask their real identities and names.
 1201 The influencer accounts that are highlighted by name are all major figures on social media in India and we feel it is
 1202 important to highlight their role in the issues we see unfolding, and the remaining work is aggregate reporting on
 1203 Twitter activity.
 1204

1206

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