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|  | Does Disinformation Influence Election Outcomes? |
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|  | Walker, Jared  American Politics  8/29/22 |

Does Disinformation Influence Election Outcomes?

To get a sense of the literature, I collected data from Google Scholar on peer-reviewed articles with “disinformation” in the title, 1980-present. The query and data collection process was done programmatically with R, aka data scraping. The query was set to return only articles, not patents or citations. Data scraping is an imperfect process. The less the pieces of information being sought, the more efficient the process becomes. As you can see in the chart below, my query sought information for multiple variables. As you can also see, m y has 27% missingess (see [Disinformation Tables.xlsm](https://usbe-my.sharepoint.com/:x:/g/personal/jared_walker_schools_utah_gov/EdZ0MGwbwnpIiB9cKKP0lLwBVpA7sBw3YNtp3lDoMN30Aw?e=JLzONj)). The design presented here accounts for that fact by seeking two pieces of information—citations and article title. This should produce complete information

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| Chart, bar chart  Description automatically generated |
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Description automatically generatedOver the last six years, researchers have shown an increasing interest in disinformation—what it is, the risk it poses to democratic institutions, and how to manage the problem. “Disinformation” is one of a constellation of terms including “fake news,” “misinformation,” “propaganda,” etc. which some scholars are referring to as “problematic information” (Freelon and Wells, 2020). As a burgeoning body of literature, there is little consensus on a conceptual framework for studying disinformation. But there is broad agreement on the definition of “disinformation.” According to the European Union’s High Level Expert Group on Fake News and Online Disinformation, “Disinformation . . . includes all forms of false, inaccurate, or misleading information designed, presented, and promoted to intentionally cause public harm or for proﬁt” (High Level Expert Group, 2018, p. 3). There are three critical components: 1) deception, 2) potential for harm, and 3) an intent to harm. Other deceptive messages which lack the potential and intent to harm constitute *misinformation* (Freelon and Wells, 2020)

After collecting data from Google Scholar, I used a function in R to get a frequency count of each word in the titles of articles I collected. Table 1 can be interpreted as a list of the most common themes in the disinformation literature.

A superior analysis would be to map a semantic network based article titles (Vale Cunha, et.al. 2020). As a body of literature, disinformation research is getting to know itself. Just in the last four years, six systematic literature reviews on disinformation have been published. Another five develop taxonomies for the study of disinformation.

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| Table 1: Most Common Words in Article Titles   |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | **Rank** | **Word** | **Frequency** | | 1 | *disinformation* | 2329 | | 2 | *fake news* | 212 | | 3 | *COVID-19* | 173 | | 4 | *information* | 167 | | 5 | *social media* | 164 | | 6 | *misinformation* | 152 | | 7 | *campaign(s)* | 120 | | 8 | *Russian* | 113 | | 9 | *election(s)* | 91 | | 10 | *propaganda* | 81 | | 11 | *twitter* | 62 | | 12 | *democracy* | 55 | | 13 | *pandemic* | 55 | | 14 | *2016* | 51 | | 15 | *research* | 35 | |

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