

## HW 1

### GOING VIRAL: PART I

**SUMMARY:** The article written by Matt Reynolds points out that how fake news can easily be made go viral. He mentions about Adele Worrall who has never even met Alfie or his family, with the help of Facebook many like her support Alfie in his battle for life. The article gives a brief explanation of how Facebook has helped a lot of people to stay constantly connected about the story of Alfie Evans but at the same time there have been a lot of fake news which can throw people off from the actual reality. It also points out that Facebook tweaked its algorithm and that is the reason the story broke out so vastly and gained recognition. It also mentions how the local public reacted to this and how everyone tried to help in their own way. Matt also says that Adele had never heard about Alfie, it was in fact she saw her cousin post about it. The official page for Alfie got around 600k members and that one of the posts had over 17k comments, which was very much growing at an exponential rate. The reason being is that Alfie's story is very emotional, and people easily react to it and start sharing it thinking that sharing would help in some way and that they are helping him in some way.

1. What do you consider some of the positive effects of the viral social media involvement in the Alfie Evans case?

One of the most positive effects having social media as a platform for this case is that the amount of attention it got from all over the world. Great personalities from all over the world tweeted about it and tried to spread as much as awareness about Alfie. If there were no social media involvement in this most of the people wouldn't even come to know about the condition of Alfie. His father Thomas Evans constantly kept the supporters updated by posting about his son's condition on the official Facebook page. With the help of the social media platform the supporters even began petition for Alfie to be transferred to Rome for his treatment, there were several fund raisers as well for Alfie's treatment. With the help of such involvement of the social media it made some positive impacts to Alfie Evans case.

2. What do you consider some of the negative effects of the viral social media involvement in the Alfie Evans case?

With positive impacts for the social media, there is always negative impacts as well. Even though the popularity of the case increased, people who didn't even know the whole story started to give their thoughts about it, and started posting about it, and this indeed started various rumors and fake news. The suggestion to use cannabis oil and that the hospital might be keeping Alfie in intensive care just so that they can harvest his organs are exactly some of the rumors and fake news which was being spread with the help of social media. Even without knowing the side effects it might have, they just started suggesting random stuff. One more negative impact it caused was the day-to-day operations of hospital because of the protests which were being conducted by the people. Even know Alfie's life was on the line, there were others also who needed the help of the hospital. Sam Carson just went outside for a break and just because of the protestors she had to beg her way into the hospital again.

3. The Facebook news-feed algorithm tweak is being credited (blamed?) for the Alfie Evans case going so viral. Do you think Facebook could have anticipated this effect?

Facebook has been tweaking a lot of their algorithms in the past years, this even has been in the news, Facebook collects an enormous amount of data from its users. A very good explanation is given in the Netflix series named "The Social Dilemma". And yes, Facebook is responsible in some way for making the story go viral, just by tweaking some parts of the algorithm that enables how the post feed should be shown to the user it gave a

helping had for the story to go viral. I think that Facebook could have easily anticipated that this specific story will be going viral, by seeing the number of shares the post is getting. Each day the number of comments and likes of the post were increasing, Facebook could have had just rolled back the tweak after seeing the amount of attention (internationally) this specific story was getting.

4. Do you have any thoughts on how this might have been handled differently? [ no right or wrong answers here, I just want to hear your thoughts]

I think that this case could have been kept a little private for Alfie's family, the unwanted attention that his family received even after Alfie passed away was a bit too much. Even though the support his family received from his supporters did help them a lot, but one's privacy should always be respected. Facebook could have tried to maintain the fake news and rumors that were being spread so fast. Tweaking of the algorithm played a big part in the story breaking out so fast. One thing that was sad was that Tomas Evans was not even allowed a bed besides his own son, and furthermore that he was not given a proper bed at all. I think that the hospital should have at least given proper care for the parents as well.

## **GOING VIRAL: PART II**

1. Mary Jo Laupp has been nicknamed the "TikTok Grandma", In your own words, describe her role in the TikTok/K-Pop fan response to the Tulsa rally.

MaryJo Laupp in her video says to all her viewers that they should register for the rally event and not show up at all. Clearly it seems that she is not a trump supporter, and she wants the rally to go as a big failure. Since she has a lot of fans following, she is trying to tell all her fan followers to try and reserve as many spots as possible, in this way it can cut down the footfall of the rally. In other words, she is even trying to hoard the seats so that the people who want to register cannot register for the rally. Her video even reached around 2 million people which is too much to fill up an event with 19k seats. In addition to this, this even led to other tiktokers to post the same content which motivated more people to register for it and not show up. With such great hold on social media, it is possible to spread the news at a massive rate.

2. In your own words, explain why the author feels that the first part -- "TikTokers and K-pop fans lead Trump to overestimate his crowd" -- is true to some degree.

In the recent years TikTok and K-Pop has grown very much, and many people over the world enjoy the content posted on TikTok and there are many K-Pop fans growing. Since trump had estimated over 1 million registrations, it is obvious that he might have seen his rally being promoted on TikTok, now a days all the interaction is done on social media. Since there was too much buzz about it on social media, many people did register for the rally just because they were told by some random person on TikTok. The example being of MaryJo Laupp, Abigail Reed and many more teenagers like them, TikTok has a huge community, and all of the content creators support each other, this said it is very easily possible to make everyone sign up for the rally. This made the trump organization to overestimate their crowd.

3. In your own words, explain why the author feels that the second part -- "TikTokers and K-pop fans are the reason fewer than 6,200 people showed up to the event." -- is probably false.

According to the author it had nothing to do with the TikTik creators or any other HR stuff, but the people did not want to attend the rally. There could have been a couple of reason such as the people might not have wanted to come because the covid cases were increasing drastically and they just didn't want to risk it by coming into an event which has over million registrations. The trump organization didn't even make proper arrangements to address all 1 million people whereas only 19k seats where there. The real story is that the campaign just wants a huge crowd to show up and nothing more than that.

4. In your own words, describe two other explanations that the author puts forth for why so few of the "expected" attendees showed up.

Author points out 2 other explanations that why there were so few people showed up to the rally, first one that they didn't not even keep the count of the RSVP's of the event and that they just wanted many people to come to the event and in the event without having a proper count they just overestimated the crowd that a million people will be attending but in reality only a few thousand showed up. The other reason being is the rise of covid cases, who would want to go to an event with over a million people in a pandemic. These were the reason which led to only a few people showing up in the rally.