



PART 3

Read the text below and answer questions 27–40.

COMBATTING MISINFORMATION IN THE POST-TRUTH ERA

The contemporary “post-truth” diagnosis is often misunderstood as a claim that facts have vanished. A more precise account is epistemological: evidence still exists, but its authority is frequently subordinated to identity, affiliation, and affect. In this environment, beliefs are not merely propositions to be evaluated; they become badges of belonging, signalling loyalty to a group and hostility to rivals. Correction is therefore socially costly. To accept a counter-claim can feel like betrayal, while to repeat a contested narrative can function as a performance of solidarity. The crisis, in other words, is not a drought of information but a shift in what information is allowed to mean within contested moral communities.

That shift is intensified by the attention economy, which treats human focus as a scarce commodity to be captured, measured, and monetised. Online platforms optimise for engagement-based ranking because engagement is legible: outrage, fear, and moral condemnation produce clicks, comments, and shares more reliably than nuance. The result is a systematic bias toward emotionally charged content, including misleading content, because it travels quickly through social networks and keeps users inside the platform’s loop. In such systems, “what is true” competes against “what is arousing,” and the latter often wins not because audiences hate truth, but because the architecture rewards whatever sustains attention. The epistemic consequence is that the public sphere becomes less like a deliberative forum and more like a stimulus environment designed to maximise arousal.

Within that environment, a useful analytical distinction is drawn between misinformation and disinformation. Misinformation refers to false or misleading claims circulated without an intention to deceive: a mistaken interpretation, an outdated statistic, or a rumour repeated in good faith. Disinformation is strategic: it is produced or disseminated with an intention to mislead, often to gain political power, profit, or destabilisation. The ethical and regulatory challenge is that intent is difficult to prove. Coordinated campaigns can hide behind layers of plausible deniability, and ordinary users may amplify a narrative for identity reasons rather than because they have been consciously recruited. Consequently, responses that focus solely on content accuracy can miss the organisational dynamics of disinformation, where the harm lies not only in a single claim but in the deliberate orchestration of repetition, amplification, and distrust.

Even when falsehoods are identified, correction does not operate like erasing a whiteboard. Cognitive research indicates that people can retain the implications of a



debunked story because the mind seeks coherence, not simply accuracy. This persistence is sometimes described as the continued influence effect: once an explanation has been encoded, later refutation may fail to remove its causal role in memory. Corrections can even backfire psychologically when they threaten identity or when they repeat the false claim so often that familiarity is mistaken for truth. What appears irrational from a purely evidential standpoint can be predictable from a cognitive standpoint: humans are narrative processors operating under time pressure, emotional load, and social incentives, so the mere presence of a correction does not guarantee that the original inference disappears.

For that reason, some interventions emphasise prevention rather than repair. One promising approach is prebunking, often grounded in inoculation theory. Instead of chasing each new falsehood, prebunking teaches people the recurring tactics of manipulation—emotive framing, false dilemmas, scapegoating, cherry-picked evidence—before they encounter specific claims. The goal is to cultivate “cognitive antibodies”: a readiness to recognise persuasion tricks and pause before sharing. This does not make individuals perfectly rational, but it can raise the friction of deception by shifting attention from the claim’s surface content to the method by which it is made plausible. In effect, it treats misinformation as a pattern-recognition problem rather than an endless list of propositions to be refuted.

Trust, however, is the medium through which any intervention must travel. In polarised contexts, audiences may discount corrections from distant institutions, especially when those institutions are associated with elites or with a rival identity. Here, local messengers—doctors, teachers, religious leaders, or community organisers—can become crucial, not because they possess superior facts, but because they are embedded in relationships of reciprocity. Their credibility is relational rather than purely epistemic. Yet the passage’s point is not that local communication is universally superior; rather, it is that trust is situated, and the same message can be persuasive or rejected depending on who delivers it, in what tone, and within what history of perceived respect.

Alongside psychological and social strategies, there are architectural strategies aimed at changing the conditions of spread. Platforms can add friction to sharing: prompts that ask users to read before reposting, delays on forwarding, or warnings when content is rapidly reposted across networks. Labels and fact-checking notices may help some users, but they can also be ignored, interpreted as censorship, or weaponised as proof of persecution. A more general strategy is to limit virality rather than to chase deletion, because the harm of falsehood is often proportional to its reach and speed. By slowing dissemination, platforms create time for reflection, counter-speech, and



contextualisation, reducing the chance that the first misleading narrative becomes entrenched as the default interpretation.

Finally, any serious approach requires research and governance, yet research is constrained by a basic asymmetry: the most relevant platform data is often inaccessible to independent scholars. Without sufficient data, it is difficult to evaluate which interventions work, for whom, and under what conditions. Moreover, focusing on removing a single claim is insufficient, because the post-truth environment is not a catalogue of isolated errors; it is a system of incentives and identities that reproduces misleading narratives in new forms. If one falsehood is removed, another can take its place, or the removed content can become a martyr story that deepens distrust. Effective governance therefore targets systems: transparency on ranking mechanisms, accountability for coordinated manipulation, and support for media literacy and local trust infrastructures, rather than the illusion that deleting one sentence will restore public understanding.

Questions 27–30

Select the correct answer.

27 What is the passage’s main point about the “post-truth” concern?

- A** Evidence has become impossible to verify in modern societies.
- B** Public debate is now driven mainly by deliberate deception rather than facts.
- C** People may organise opinions around identity and emotion, making correction socially costly.
- D** False information persists mainly because governments control media narratives.

28 According to the passage, why does misleading content spread so readily online?

- A** Platforms mainly promote posts that are carefully fact-checked.
- B** Emotionally engaging content attracts attention and can be amplified by engagement-driven systems.
- C** Messaging apps prevent rapid sharing and therefore slow down rumours.
- D** Most users share information only after consulting official sources.

29 Why does the passage suggest disinformation is particularly hard to tackle?

- A** It usually results from accidental mistakes rather than planning.
- B** It can be stopped simply by publishing more factual information.
- C** It spreads only through traditional media, which can be regulated easily.
- D** Proving intent is difficult, and responses may need to disrupt coordinated campaigns.

30 What does the passage suggest about fact-checking labels?



- A** They may help, but can also be ignored or interpreted as censorship.
- B** They reliably change beliefs as long as they are used frequently.
- C** They are effective mainly because they remove disputed content automatically.
- D** They work only when combined with banning users who share misinformation.

Questions 31–35

Complete the table below. Choose **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** from the text for each answer.

Misinformation responses

Level	Method or condition	Effect / Comment
Cognitive	Corrections	Original implications may remain through the 31
	32	Recurring manipulation tactics taught before specific claims are encountered
Social	33	May be more persuasive where distant institutions are distrusted
Platform design	Sharing friction	Prompts, forwarding delays and warnings slow dissemination
	Limiting 34	Reduces reach and speed without requiring deletion
Research and governance	Platform 35	Often inaccessible to independent scholars, limiting evaluation
	System-level governance	Includes ranking transparency, accountability and support for media literacy

Questions 36–40

Choose **TRUE** if the statement agrees with the information given in the text, choose **FALSE** if the statement contradicts the information, or choose **NOT GIVEN** if there is no information on this.



36 The passage suggests that engagement-based algorithms can amplify emotionally charged false content.

37 The passage suggests it is usually straightforward to determine whether a false claim was shared with an intent to deceive.

38 The passage states that local community leaders receive formal training before correcting false beliefs.

39 The passage suggests that slowing forwarding or adding prompts before sharing can reduce the reach of false claims.

40 The passage suggests that removing a single false claim is sufficient to improve public understanding overall.

Answer Key

27. C

28. B

29. D

30. A

31. continued influence effect

32. prebunking

33. local messengers

34. virality

35. data

36. TRUE

37. FALSE

38. NOT GIVEN

39. TRUE

40. FALSE