

Fake News During COVID-19 Pandemic: An Overview from A Legal Perspective

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Abstract : Today, the whole world is facing a catastrophe called the novel coronavirus disease known as COVID-19. As of October 2021, it has been reported that more than 248 million cases and 5 million deaths have been recorded worldwide. In Malaysia, 2,466,663 cases were reported, with 28,876 deaths recorded on 30 October 2021. Unfortunately, the world is not only facing the COVID-19 pandemic but the COVID-19 infodemic as well, where fake news about COVID-19 disease is spreading faster and more widely than from the virus itself. The spread of fake news is amplified through various social media platforms, which is causing concern among the community. The uncertainty in understanding what fake news really is has caused difficulties and challenges in providing a solution to the hazards that it creates. This article discusses what constitutes fake news and examines the current legal framework put in place to combat fake news in Malaysia. Employing a doctrinal research methodology, this article thoroughly analyzes the relevant legal provisions under the Communications and Multimedia Act 1998, the Penal Code and the Emergency (Essential Powers) Ordinance (No.2) 2021, which came into force on 12 March 2021 as well as related case laws, for offenses and punishments with regards to fake news. The findings from the analysis indicate that there is still room for improvement in regulating fake news, in particular concerning COVID-19.

Keywords : fake news, legal perspective, covid 19, pandemic

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