Factors Associated with Trust in Social Media Information: An Analysis of Psychosocial and Demographic Correlates

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Abstract

The credibility of information on major social media platforms like Facebook, X, and YouTube is a significant public concern. This study investigated factors associated with U.S. adults' trust in information from these platforms. Specifically, it examined the association of users' views on misinformation restriction and their satisfaction with news experiences on trust, while controlling for demographic factors. This cross-sectional study utilized data from the Pew Research Center's American Trends Panel (ATP). The final analytic sample consisted of 1,258 U.S. adults who use social media for news. A multivariable linear regression model was employed to assess the associations between the independent variables and trust. The analysis revealed that support for misinformation restriction ($p = .001$) and higher user satisfaction ($p < .001$) were both strongly and positively associated with trust. The model also identified significant demographic associations. Trust was significantly lower among older age cohorts compared to adults 18-29 and those with some college education ($p = .016$). Conversely, trust was significantly higher among women ($p = .003$), Asian/Asian American participants ($p < .001$), and individuals who were divorced ($p = .034$) or never married ($p = .001$). These findings show that user satisfaction and support for misinformation restriction are the main predictors of trust, but certain demographic differences also matter. Trust in social media information is not uniform; it varies by age, gender, education, race, and marital status. Therefore, strategies to build trust should improve platform governance and news experience, while tailoring public health messages to address the specific trust patterns within demographic groups.

Keywords: Trust in Information, Misinformation, Satisfaction, Social Media

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Introduction

The advent of social media platforms has totally changed the manner of disseminating information and how it is consumed. Platforms such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and YouTube have become primary sources of information for many individuals worldwide. However, the credibility and trustworthiness of the information disseminated through these platforms have been a subject of concern and debate (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). While misinformation is a challenge across the social media landscape, this study focuses on three platforms with distinct user bases and content formats: Facebook, Twitter/X, and YouTube. These platforms have historically been significant sources of news and information. For instance, according to the Pew Research Center, about a third of U.S. adults (30%) report getting news on Facebook, and a similar proportion (26%) get news from YouTube (Stocking et al., 2020). In contrast, 12% of U.S. adults regularly get news from X (formerly Twitter), though a majority of its users (59%) utilize the platform for news consumption (Stocking et al., 2020). It is

crucial, however, to situate these platforms within the evolving landscape of social media. The media environment is increasingly dominated by video-based content, driven by platforms like TikTok and Instagram, which have experienced a surge in popularity for their short-form video formats (Mosby, 2025; Rzhevkina, 2023). This trend corresponds with a relative decline in user engagement on more text-centric platforms like Facebook and Twitter/X. This broader shift in user attention toward visually-driven content is a critical contextual factor for understanding how information—and misinformation—is consumed and shared today. Although a full analysis of newer, video-centric platforms is beyond the scope of the current study, acknowledging their influence is vital for framing our research rationale. By focusing on Facebook, Twitter/X, and YouTube, this study examines platforms that have been central to news dissemination over the past decade. Their ongoing, albeit changing, role provides a critical opportunity to analyze misinformation dynamics on established networks as they adapt to a new media paradigm.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

While extensive research has been conducted on misinformation and user satisfaction separately, there is a gap in understanding how these factors interact to influence trust in social media information. This study addresses this gap by examining the combined association of views on misinformation restriction and user satisfaction on trust in social media platforms. Considering both factors simultaneously allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics at play in the digital information ecosystem.

Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: Is support for restricting false information online associated with users' trust in the information provided on social media platforms?

H1: Support for restricting false information online is positively associated with users' trust in the information provided on social media platforms.

RQ2: Is satisfaction with getting news on social media platforms associated with users' trust in the information provided on these platforms?

H2: Satisfaction with getting news on social media platforms is positively associated with trust in the information provided on these platforms.

This study contributes to understanding factors influencing trust in social media information. Its findings hold implications for strategies to combat misinformation, enhance user satisfaction, and foster trust in social media platforms.

Literature Review

The Role of Misinformation in Trust

Misinformation, defined as false or inaccurate information, especially when intended to deceive, is a growing concern in the digital information landscape (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017; Muhammed & Mathew, 2022; Murphy et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2019). In this study, we specifically investigated participants' views on misinformation restriction as a factor influencing trust in social media information. Social media platforms have become fertile ground for the spread of misinformation, often leading to public confusion and mistrust (Lazer et al., 2018; Brashier & Fazio, 2020). Misinformation can have far-reaching effects, influencing people's perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors and potentially leading to significant societal consequences (Lewandowsky et al., 2017; Vosoughi et al., 2018). Previous research has indicated that misinformation and its effects can influence individuals' perceptions and behaviors linked

to information consumption on social media (Blank & Lutz, 2017). Similarly, exposure to false news significantly reduces individuals' trust in the media (Pennycook & Rand, 2020).

The Role of Satisfaction in Trust

Satisfaction with social media platforms is a significant determinant of user engagement and continued use of a platform. User satisfaction on social media platforms is influenced by various factors, including the accuracy of information (Kim & Lee, 2019). Misinformation can significantly reduce user satisfaction, related to decreased trust in the platform (Luo et al., 2022; Boneh et al., 2019). Satisfaction can also be a predictor of trust in social media platforms (Tandoc et al., 2018).

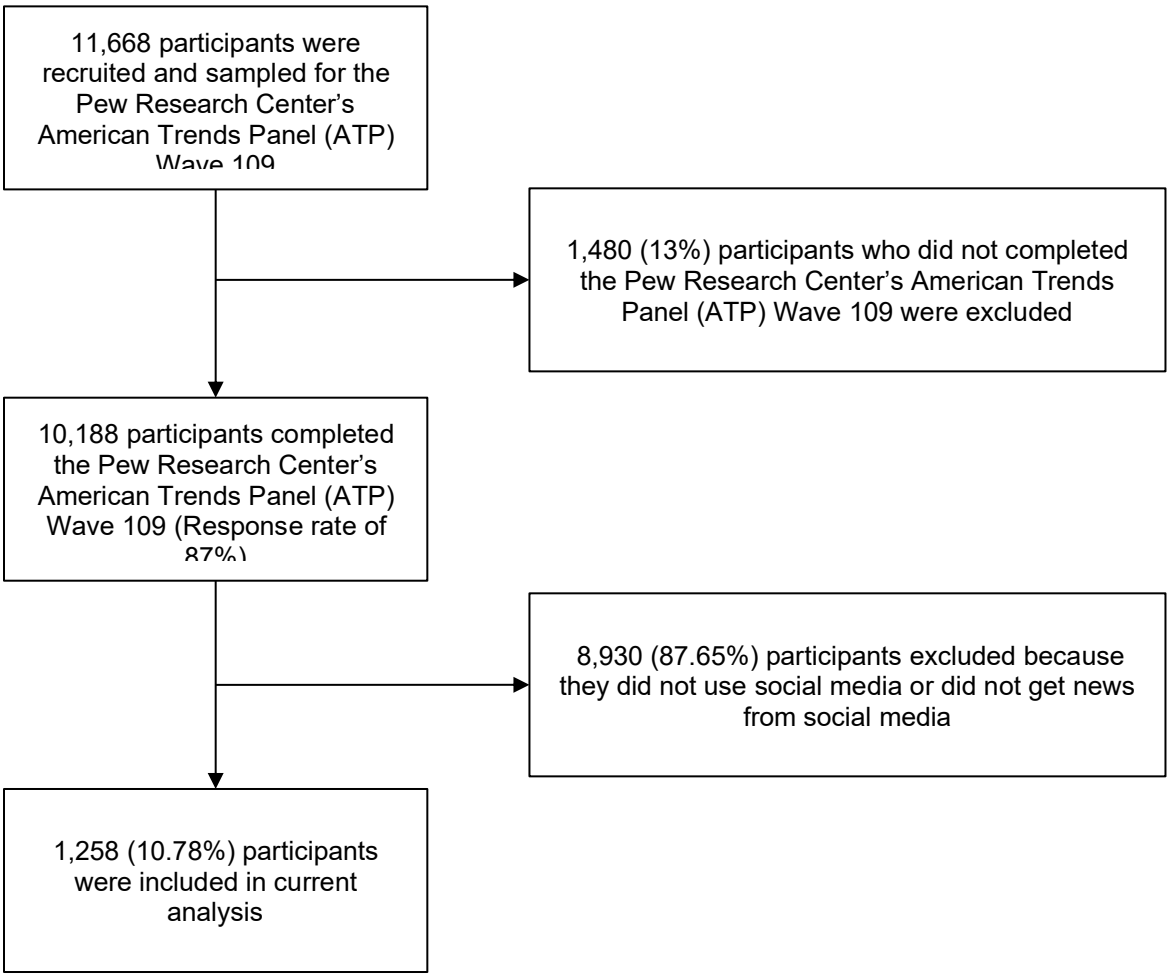
Trust in the Information Provided on Social Media Platforms

Trust in information is a critical factor that influences the effectiveness of communication and the acceptance of the communicated message. Due to the lack of traditional gatekeeping mechanisms, users often must rely on factors such as the credibility of the source, the quality of the content, and endorsement by others to influence their trust in the information provided on social media platforms (Wiedmann & von Mettenheim, 2020; Prike et al., 2024).

Demographic Factors on Trust

The selection of demographic covariates such as sex, education level, race, ethnicity, and marital status in our study examining trust in social media information is grounded in both theoretical considerations and empirical evidence from previous research. Age, for instance, has been identified as a factor influencing how individuals interact with and perceive online information, with older adults sometimes exhibiting different patterns of trust and susceptibility to misinformation compared to younger cohorts (Bailey & Leon, 2019). Similarly, individuals with higher education levels may be more likely to critically evaluate information, which can influence trust (Guess et al., 2020). Gender differences have also been observed in social media use patterns and trust in online information (Hopp et al., 2020). Crucially, cultural backgrounds and lived experiences, often correlated with race and ethnicity, can profoundly shape perceptions of media credibility. Research consistently documents a trust gap, wherein racial and ethnic minorities—particularly Black and Hispanic Americans—report substantially lower levels of trust in media compared to White Americans (Silver et al., 2025). This disparity is often attributed to perceptions of historically negative or insensitive coverage and a lack of authentic community representation in mainstream reporting, which fosters a baseline of skepticism. While less commonly studied in direct relation to information trust, marital status is included as it represents a key social context where trust is actively negotiated and frequently challenged by social media use. An extensive body of literature demonstrates that behaviors facilitated by social media platforms are linked to increased marital conflict, jealousy, partner monitoring, and infidelity—all of which represent a fundamental erosion of interpersonal trust. The ways in which individuals navigate these platform-driven trust dynamics within their intimate relationships may therefore relate to their broader trust in the social media environment (Obi & Ezennwanne, 2023). By including these demographic covariates, we aim to control for potential confounding factors and more precisely isolate the associations of views on misinformation restriction and user satisfaction with trust in social media information.

Figure 1 *Study Participants selection process*



Materials and Methods

Data sources

The Pew Research Center's American Trends Panel (ATP) is a nationally representative online survey panel comprising over 10,000 randomly selected adults across the U.S. The American Trends Panel Wave 109 dataset was utilized for this study, and the panel topic was linked to new digital platforms and gender identity (Pew Research Center, 2022). All analyses incorporated the survey weights provided by the Pew Research Center to ensure the national representativeness of the findings. Figure 1 explains the data selection process. For the purpose of this study, 'social media platforms' or 'social media' specifically refers to Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and YouTube, as these were the platforms from which participants' trust and satisfaction data were collected by the Pew Research Center.

Participants and Procedures

The Pew Research Center's American Trends Panel (ATP) Wave 109 dataset was selected for its comprehensive U.S. demographic coverage and alignment with the study's focus on digital platforms and gender identity. The survey's target

population comprised noninstitutionalized individuals aged 18 and older residing in the U.S., including Alaska and Hawaii. All active panel members were invited to participate in this wave. This particular wave, conducted in May 2022, provided timely and relevant data on social media usage, attitudes towards misinformation, and trust in online information sources, aligning closely with the research objectives of this study. A total of 10,188 panelists responded out of 11,668 who were sampled, for a response rate of 87%. The final analytic sample for this study consisted of 1,258 participants. This subset was determined by the Pew Research Center's survey design, which utilized branching logic. Key questions, such as those regarding satisfaction with news obtained from social media, were only presented to participants who reported using social media for news consumption. Consequently, individuals who indicated they did not use social media at all, or did not use it to get news, were not directed to these questions and were therefore excluded from the final analysis.

Measures

Dependent Variables

Trust in the information provided on social media platforms

Trust in the information provided on social media platforms was measured by asking participants: 'How much do you trust the information you get from social media sites, such as Facebook, Twitter or YouTube?' Participants rated their level of trust on a five-point Likert scale: '1 - A great deal', '2 - A fair amount', '3 - Some', '4 - A little', and '5 - No trust at all'.

Independent Variables

Satisfaction with social media information

Satisfaction with social media information was assessed by asking participants about their experiences getting news on specific platforms: 'How satisfied are you with your experience getting news on Twitter?', 'How satisfied are you with your experience getting news on Facebook?', and 'How satisfied are you with your experience getting news on YouTube? Response options were provided on a five-point scale: 'Very satisfied', 'Somewhat satisfied', 'Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied', 'Somewhat dissatisfied', and 'Very dissatisfied'.

Views on Misinformation Restriction

Participants were asked to choose between two statements reflecting their view on misinformation management: '1 – Technology companies should take steps to restrict FALSE information online, even if it limits people from freely publishing or accessing information', or '2 – People's freedom to publish and access information should be protected, even if it means FALSE information can also be published'. This variable is referred to as 'Views on Misinformation Restriction' in subsequent analyses and discussions.

Demographic variables

Participants reported on their age (18-29, 30-49, 50-64, 65+), sex (male, female, in some other way), race/ethnicity (White, American Indian or Native Alaskan, Asian or Asian American, Hispanic or Latino/a/x, other), education level (college graduate, some college, H.S graduate or less), and marital status (married, living with a partner, divorced, separated, widowed, never been married).

Statistical Analysis

SAS statistical software (version 9.4; SAS Institute Inc., Cary, NC, USA) was used for

Table 1.
Demographics Descriptive Statistics of Participants in the Pew Research Center's American Trends Panel (N=1,258)

Variable	Study Population	
	N	%
Age (year)		
18-29	258	20.51
30-49	548	43.56
50-64	322	25.60
65+	124	9.86
Refused	6	0.48
Sex		
Male	654	51.99
Female	588	46.74
In some other way	13	1.03
Refused	3	0.24
Race/Ethnicity		
White	925	73.53
American Indian or Native Alaskan	103	8.19
Asian or Asian American	77	6.12
Black or African American	55	4.37
Hispanic or Latino/a/x	78	6.20
Other	20	1.59
Education Level		
College graduate	778	61.84
Some College	314	24.96
H.S. graduate or less	163	12.96
Refused	3	0.24
Marital Status		
Married	652	51.83
Living with a partner	143	11.37
Divorced	96	7.63
Separated	27	2.15
Widowed	29	2.31
Never been married	309	24.56
Refused	2	0.16
Total	1,258	

all analyses related to the Pew Research Center's American Trends Panel (ATP) dataset. Initially, the characteristics of the final dataset sample were assessed and are presented using weighted frequencies (percentages) or means (standard deviations). Subsequently, chi-square tests were conducted to examine the relationships between the study variables. Additionally, the associations between trust in information from social media platform and views on misinformation, and satisfaction with

information on social media were explored using multivariable linear regression analysis. All the statistical tests were two-sided, with a p-value of 0.05 set as the threshold for statistical significance.

The selection of control variables (age, gender, education level, race/ethnicity, and marital status) was based on their potential influence on trust in social media information, as suggested by previous research (Chou et al., 2009; Pew Research Center, 2021; Osborne & Waters, 2002). Prior to regression analysis, model assumptions were rigorously checked. Linearity was verified using scatterplots to ensure a linear relationship between the dependent variable and independent variables. The Durbin-Watson test was performed to check for autocorrelation in the residuals, confirming independence (Hair et al., 2010). Homoscedasticity was assessed through examination of residual plots to ensure constant variance of residuals, residual plots showed no clear pattern, indicating homoscedasticity. Normality was evaluated using Q-Q plots of residuals, Q-Q plots showed no substantial deviations from normality (O'Brien, 2007). Multicollinearity was checked by calculating Variance Inflation Factors (VIFs) for all predictors (Ecker et al., 2022). Effect sizes were calculated using Cohen's d for continuous variables and odds ratios for categorical variables to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationships between variables.

Results

Descriptive statistics

The demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1. The sample was predominantly White (73.53%) and college-educated (61.84%), with a slight majority being male (51.99%). The largest age cohort was 30-49 years (43.56%), and over half of the participants were married (51.83%).

Statistics of the main variables for participants in the Pew Research Center's American Trends Panel

In Table 2, U.S. residents' trust in information from social media sites is notably low. A small fraction of respondents reported high levels of trust ("a great deal" or "a fair amount"), while the vast majority expressed limited trust ("some" or "a little") or no trust at all (15.90%). This distribution indicates a general skepticism toward social media information. Regarding views on misinformation, a clear majority (63.59%) believe that technology companies should take steps to restrict false information, even at the cost of some freedoms, whereas 35.61% prioritized protecting freedom of information. Satisfaction with getting news from social media was mixed; a large portion felt neutral (38.55%) or somewhat satisfied (36.41%), with fewer expressing strong dissatisfaction. The chi-square test indicated significant differences in all variables ($p < .001$). These results highlight a pervasive lack of trust and satisfaction with social media as a source of news, alongside divided opinions on how to handle misinformation.

Multivariable Linear Regression Analysis of Misinformation and Satisfaction on Trust in Information from Social Media Platforms for U.S. populations.

The results of the multivariable linear regression analysis are presented in Table 3. The overall model was statistically significant, explaining a substantive portion of the variance in trust in social media information. As hypothesized, both main independent variables were significantly associated with trust. Greater support for restricting false information online was positively associated with increased trust in social media information ($B = 0.1$, $p = .001$).

Table 2

Statistics of Main Variables from Participants in the Pew Research Center's American Trends Panel (N=1,258)

Variable	Study Population	
	N	%
How much do you trust the information you get from social media sites, such as Facebook, Twitter or YouTube?		
A great deal	18	1.43
A fair amount	115	9.14
Some	466	37.04
A little	454	36.09
No trust at all	200	15.90
Refused	5	0.40
Misinformation (Which comes closer to your own view - even if neither is exactly right?)		
Technology companies should take steps to restrict FALSE information online, even if it limits people from freely publishing or accessing information	800	63.59
People's freedom to publish and access information should be protected, even if it means FALSE information can also be published	448	35.61
Refused	10	0.79
Satisfaction on Social Media (How satisfied are you with your experience getting news on the following sites or apps?)*		
Very satisfied	103	8.19
Somewhat satisfied	458	36.41
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	485	38.55
Somewhat dissatisfied	153	12.16
Very dissatisfied	57	4.53
Refused	2	0.16
Total	1,258	100

Note. [a]Missing values: 8,930; For Views on Misinformation Restriction, a positive estimate indicates that support for restricting false information is associated with higher trust in social media information

Similarly, higher satisfaction with social media experiences was a strong predictor of greater trust (B = 0.3, p <.001). Several demographic control variables also revealed significant associations. Compared to the reference group of 18-29 year-olds, all older age cohorts demonstrated significantly lower trust: 30-49 year-olds (B = -0.1, p =.007), 50-64 year-olds (B = -0.1, p =.005), and those 65 and older (B = -0.2, p <.001). Regarding gender, female participants reported significantly higher trust than male participants (B = 0.1, p =.003). The findings for education were nuanced; compared to

Table 3

Multivariable Linear Regression Analysis of Factors Influencing Trust in Social Media Information (n=1,258)

Effect	**B**	**β**	SE	**95%** CI	***p***
(Intercept)	1.4		0.1	[1.3, 1.6]	
Views on Misinformation Restriction					
Restrict Info (vs. Protect Freedom)	0.1	0.1	0.0	[0.0, 0.2]	.001**
Satisfaction on Social Media	0.3	0.3	0.0	[0.2, 0.3]	<.001***
Age (Ref: 18-29)					
30-49	-0.1	-0.1	0.0	[-0.2, -0.0]	.007**
50-64	-0.1	-0.1	0.0	[-0.2, -0.0]	.005**
65+	-0.2	-0.1	0.1	[-0.3, -0.1]	<.001***
Gender (Ref: Male)					
Female	0.1	0.0	0.0	[0.0, 0.1]	.003**
In some other way	0.1	0.0	0.2	[-0.2, 0.4]	.507
Education (Ref: H.S. graduate or less)					
College graduate	-0.1	0.0	0.0	[-0.1, 0.0]	.101
Some college	-0.1	-0.1	0.0	[-0.2, -0.0]	.016*
Race (Ref: White)					
American Indian or Native Alaskan	0.0	0.0	0.0	[0.0, 0.1]	.317
Asian or Asian American	0.2	0.1	0.1	[0.1, 0.4]	<.001***
Black or African American	0.1	0.0	0.1	[-0.1, 0.2]	.472
Hispanic or Latino/a/x	0.1	0.0	0.1	[0.0, 0.2]	.160
Others	0.1	0.0	0.1	[0.0, 0.3]	.065

Effect	B	β	SE	95% CI	*p*
Marital Status (Ref: Married)					
Living with a partner	0.0	0.0	0.1	[-0.1, 0.1]	.895
Divorced	0.1	0.0	0.0	[0.0, 0.2]	.034*
Separated	0.0	0.0	0.1	[-0.2, 0.2]	.810
Widowed	0.1	0.0	0.1	[-0.0, 0.2]	.128
Never been married	0.1	0.1	0.0	[0.1, 0.2]	.001**

$R^2 = 0.10$, $F(18, 1239) = 24.91$, $p < .001$

Note. Variable coding for the regression analysis was as follows: The dependent variable, Trust in Social Media, was reverse-coded from the original scale so that higher values indicate greater trust (1 = No trust at all, 5 = A great deal). The independent variable, Views on Misinformation Restriction, was coded as a binary variable where 0 = Protect Freedom and 1 = Restrict Info. The independent variable, Satisfaction on Social Media, was treated as a continuous variable based on a 5-point scale (Very dissatisfied to Very satisfied) and reverse-coded so that higher values indicate greater satisfaction.
B = unstandardized regression coefficient; β = standardized regression coefficient; SE = standard error; CI = confidence interval. *p <.05, **p <.01, ***p <.001

those with a high school degree or less, participants with 'Some college' education had significantly lower trust (B = -0.1, p =.016), while college graduates showed no significant difference. Among racial groups, Asian participants showed significantly higher trust compared to White participants (B = 0.2, p <.001). Furthermore, marital status was a significant factor, with divorced (B = 0.1, p =.034) and never-married individuals (B = 0.1, p =.001) reporting higher trust than married individuals. Other racial categories and marital statuses were not significantly associated with trust in this model.

Discussion

This study investigated the association of misinformation and user satisfaction on trust in information provided by social media platforms (specifically Facebook, X, and YouTube) among U.S. adults, utilizing data from the American Trends Panel of the Pew Research Center. The findings indicate significant associations between support for misinformation restriction, satisfaction with social media experiences, and trust in social media information. The analysis also revealed a complex and significant role for demographic characteristics, adding considerable nuance to the understanding of trust in the digital age.

Misinformation Restriction and Trust

One of the key findings is the significant positive association between support for misinformation restriction and trust in social media information ($p < .001$). This suggests that individuals who support the restriction of false information online tend to have higher trust in the information disseminated through social media platforms. This finding aligns with prior research demonstrating that perceived platform accountability and proactive misinformation management are crucial determinants of user trust (Prike et al., 2024; Warner-Søderholm et al., 2018). Recent research has shown that community-based fact-checking systems that provide contextual information significantly increase trust in fact-checking interventions, with users perceiving such systems as more trustworthy than simple warning labels (Kozyreva et al., 2023; Shin et al., 2025).

Several interrelated mechanisms may explain this association. From a platform governance perspective, users who desire content moderation may view platforms that implement such policies as more responsible and credible, which in turn is linked to higher trust (Adeeb & Mirhoseini, 2023). This support for restriction may also be indicative of higher media literacy, where users with stronger critical evaluation skills are better equipped to appreciate platforms' efforts to combat false information (Guess et al., 2020). Finally, an emotional dimension may be at play; users who support restrictions may feel more protected from the negative emotional responses often elicited by misinformation, fostering a more positive and trusting attitude toward the platform ecosystem (Cabero-Almenara et al., 2023; Ecker et al., 2022; Luo et al., 2022).

User Satisfaction and Trust

The positive relationship between satisfaction with social media experiences and trust in social media information ($p < .001$) highlights the critical role of user experience in shaping trust. Higher levels of satisfaction with how news and information are presented on social media platforms contribute to greater trust in the information provided. These findings align with studies emphasizing the importance of user experience and platform design in fostering trust (Zhang & Tang, 2023; Kim & Lee, 2019; Alhabash & Ma, 2017).

This relationship supports the "user experience satisfaction" model, which suggests that positive experiences with a platform's content and features lead to increased trust in the platform overall (Jha & Verma, 2024a; Troshani et al., 2020). When users find social media platforms reliable, intuitive, and user-friendly, they are more likely to trust the content they consume (Jha & Verma, 2024b). Research on review platforms has similarly demonstrated that user satisfaction has a direct and positive relationship with platform trust, with satisfaction serving as a critical psychological bridge between platform features and user trust.

The strong association between satisfaction and trust observed in our study suggests that platform design choices—including interface usability, content recommendation algorithms, and information presentation—play a substantial role in shaping user perceptions of information credibility. This finding has important implications for platform developers and suggests that improving overall user experience can be an effective strategy for enhancing trust in social media information.

Our findings indicate that, compared to adults aged 18-29, all older age cohorts reported significantly lower trust in social media information. This finding aligns with research suggesting that older adults often exhibit greater skepticism toward online information compared to younger, digitally-

native cohorts (Bailey & Leon, 2019). Furthermore, female participants reported significantly higher trust than their male counterparts, a finding consistent with some prior studies on gender differences in social media use and trust (Hopp et al., 2020). The results for race and ethnicity were particularly nuanced. Asian or Asian American participants reported significantly higher trust in social media information compared to White participants. This finding is noteworthy and warrants further investigation into cultural factors, platform use patterns, and information-seeking behaviors that might explain this association. In contrast to some research documenting lower trust in traditional media among racial and ethnic minorities (Silver et al., 2025), most racial and ethnic categories in our study—including Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino/a/x, American Indian or Native Alaskan, and other racial groups—showed no significant differences from White participants when controlling for views on misinformation and user satisfaction. This pattern suggests that platform-specific trust dynamics may differ from trust in legacy media institutions, and that experiential factors related to platform governance and user satisfaction may attenuate direct racial and ethnic disparities in social media information trust.

Our analysis also revealed a complex, non-linear association with education level. Compared to individuals with a high school education or less, those with "Some college" reported significantly lower trust, while college graduates showed no significant difference. This finding complicates the simple assumption that higher education is uniformly associated with higher trust and may suggest that individuals in the process of higher education develop heightened critical evaluation skills that lead to greater skepticism (Guess et al., 2020; Trixa & Kaspar, 2024). Additionally, divorced and never-married individuals reported significantly higher trust than their married counterparts. While this association is novel and warrants further research, it may reflect differences in social media use patterns, information-seeking behaviors, or social connectedness across marital status groups. Some research has documented that social media use is frequently associated with marital conflict and jealousy (Obi & Ezennwanne, 2023); it is plausible that married individuals' experiences with these negative relational dynamics contribute to greater skepticism toward information originating from these platforms.

Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results. Firstly, the cross-sectional nature of the data means we can only identify associations, not establish causal relationships between the variables. Longitudinal studies are needed to explore the temporal dynamics of these relationships. Secondly, our analysis was limited to a specific subset of the original sample (1,258 participants) who reported getting news from social media. This limits the generalizability of our findings to the broader U.S. population, as the results may not represent individuals who do not use social media or use it for purposes other than news consumption. The self-reported nature of the data introduces the potential for response biases, including social desirability bias and recall bias. Additionally, a limitation lies in the binary nature of our 'Views on Misinformation Restriction' variable, which simplifies a complex issue. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that the study findings could vary depending on the specific social media platform examined and the particular topic or information context discussed. Despite these limitations, this study provides valuable

insights into the factors associated with trust in social media information.

Conclusion

This study confirms that U.S. adults' trust in information on major social media platforms is significantly associated with their views on content moderation and their overall satisfaction with the platform experience, with these psychosocial factors emerging as the strongest predictors of trust. Additionally, demographic factors showed selective but meaningful associations: older adults reported consistently lower trust across all age cohorts compared to younger adults, women reported higher trust than men, Asian or Asian American participants reported higher trust compared to White participants and divorced and never-married individuals reported higher trust than married participants. However, most racial and ethnic categories and several marital status groups showed no significant associations with trust in the adjusted model. These findings challenge a monolithic view of the social media audience and suggest that effective trust-building strategies must prioritize platform governance and user experience while recognizing selective demographic variation. To disseminate credible information, particularly in public health contexts, practitioners should focus on enhancing platform transparency and user satisfaction while developing tailored approaches for specific demographic groups where distinct trust patterns were identified.

Implications for Health Behavior Research

The findings reveal a complex interplay between views on misinformation restriction, user satisfaction, and trust in social media information. Researchers should:

Develop and test interventions that jointly address misinformation and user satisfaction to improve trust in health content.

Examine how different forms of health misinformation (e.g., vaccine, diet, mental health) influence trust across content domains.

Investigate how demographic factors (e.g., education, gender, race) indirectly shape trust, focusing on mediating or moderating relationships in health communication.

Informing Theory Building and Practice

Findings can refine existing theories of online trust and information seeking:

Integrate misinformation perception and user satisfaction into models of online information credibility and health behavior.

Assess how satisfaction-driven trust impacts engagement with and adherence to health messages.

Filling Gaps and Future Directions

Conduct longitudinal research to analyze how trust evolves in response to health events or platform policy changes.

Examine how health literacy and digital literacy moderate the impact of misinformation and satisfaction on trust.

Methodological Considerations

Researchers should use mixed methods to explore qualitative aspects of trust and misinformation appraisal and develop precise and context-specific measures of misinformation perception, user satisfaction, and trust.

Discussion Questions

1. Our study reveals a significant positive association between support for

misinformation restriction and trust in social media information. Given the pervasive nature of misinformation in digital spaces, how can social media platforms and health communicators effectively balance the need for information dissemination with the imperative to maintain user trust?

2. What innovative strategies could be implemented to combat misinformation while simultaneously fostering a trustworthy information environment?

Conflict of interest statement

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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Ethics approval and informed consent statements: This study is based on publicly available secondary data obtained from the Pew Research Center. As the data are de-identified and publicly accessible, this research is classified as non-human subjects research and does not require institutional review board (IRB) approval. Since the data were collected and anonymized by Pew Research Center, informed consent from participants was obtained at the time of data collection by the original researchers. Pew Research Center bears no responsibility for the analyses or interpretations of the data presented here. The opinions expressed herein, including any implications for policy, are those of the author and not of Pew Research Center.

Data availability statement: The dataset is available at https://www.pewresearch.org/dataset/american-trends-panel-wave-109/

Code availability: The code that was used for this study is available upon request from the corresponding author.

Authors' contributions: Concept and design (Sunghyun Chung - SC); acquisition of data (Sunghyun Chung); analysis and interpretation of the data (Sunghyun Chung); drafting of the manuscript (Sunghyun Chung); critical revision of important intellectual content (Sunghyun Chung, Adam E. Barry); administrative, technical, or logistic support (Sunghyun Chung); and supervision (Adam E. Barry)

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