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研究成果の概要（和文）：本研究の目的は、日本におけるポピュリズムとフェイクニュースをモデル化し、実証的に検証するための理論的枠組みを確立することである。4つの定量的研究を実施することで、学際的な理論的枠組みを確立することに成功した。研究1は、コロナ禍におけるフェイクニュース対策に焦点を当てたものである。研究2は、日本における陰謀論的信念を検証した。研究3は、日本の難民政策がニュースメディアによって支持されているかどうかを調べた。研究4は、「フェイクニュース」が日本のニュースメディアでどのように扱われてきたかについて、定量的な時系列を作成した。研究結果は、学術雑誌に4本の論文として掲載され、書籍の1章として収録された。

## 研究成果の学術的意義や社会的意義

This research empirically demonstrated the characteristics of populism and fake news in Japan in the digital age using an original multidisciplinary framework. It covered topics from the COVID-19 infodemic, conspiracy theories, to media depictions of controversial topics like fake news and refugees.

研究成果の概要（英文）：The aim of this research was to establish a theoretical framework to model and examine populism and fake news in Japan. Overall, the project objectives were achieved. A multidisciplinary theoretical framework was established together with 4 quantitative studies. Study 1 focused on how to counter of fake news (infodemic) during the COVID-19 pandemic. Study 2 evaluated the extent of conspiracy theory beliefs in Japan. Study 3 examined whether Japan's strict refugee policy was supported or criticised by Japanese news media. Study 4 developed a quantitative chronicle of how the term 'fake news' had been depicted in Japanese news media. The findings of the 4 studies were published in 4 peer-reviewed academic journal articles and 1 chapter in an edited book.

研究分野：社会学関連

キーワード：fake news conspiracy theory populism infodemic health literacy news framing disinformation

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## 様式 C-19、F-19-1 (共通)

### 1. 研究開始当初の背景

The main scientific question of this research was to find out empirically whether Japan was immune to the resurgence of populism, which had caused much social and political turmoil in many developed democracies around the world in the past decade. This question was motivated by the rapid rise of fake news and populism in many countries since 2016, which was referred to as the beginning of the post-truth era. In 2016, the influence of online fake news on the outcomes of the UK Brexit referendum and the US presidential election caught the world by surprise. In the post-truth era, people place more value on the emotional aspects of information than on its truthfulness. Many scholars argue that one of the main causes of this phenomenon is the widespread of fake news on social media. Deceptive and demagogic information that spread freely online was exploited by populist leaders and allowed populism to re-emerge in many developed democracies, most saliently in the US. Populists believe that the ruling power should rest with the ‘good’ common people rather than the ‘evil’ elites. They challenge the legitimate authority of political, economic, and social establishments, as well as their ‘politically correct’ values, such as globalisation and multiculturalism. The rise of populism also led to a resurgence of nationalism and xenophobia posing severe challenges to the social, political, and economic stability in many developed democracies in the US as well as in Europe.

Studies from different fields, from social and political sciences to network and computer sciences, have investigated the causes and solutions to fake news and populism. Yet, since the main focus had been on the US and Europe, researchers have overlooked an important piece of the puzzle – the seemingly ‘missing of’ populism and radical political fake news in Japan. As there were only a handful of studies on this topic in both English and Japanese, whether Japan was really immune to this phenomenon remained an unanswered question. With this background in mind, in this research project, it was contended that by uncovering the characteristics of populist attitudes and beliefs in fake news in Japan, the finding would address the gap in the literature and increase the awareness of this global issue in Japan.

To achieve this goal, two research objectives were set. The first one was to develop a multidisciplinary theoretical framework based on social sciences, media studies, and psychology to link up internal, external, and psychological factors behind populist attitudes and beliefs in fake news. The second objective was to empirically examine the relations between these factors in the Japanese context based on the framework.

### 2. 研究の目的

The purpose of this research project was to establish a theoretical framework to model, and then empirically demonstrate, the relation between populism, fake news, and other internal, external, and psychological factors focusing on Japan.

The original project duration was 2 years (2020-2021), but due to delays caused by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, it was extended to 4 years (2020-2023). The initial aim was to publish the findings in 2 academic journal articles, but because of the extended time, 4 articles were published in total.

During the first two years of this project, the social and economic impacts brought about by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic significantly accelerated the rise of fake news and populism globally, including in Japan. Thus, taking these impacts into account, 4 studies were established based on the framework: 2 focusing on the public and 2 on the news media in Japan.

- Study 1 focused on the public. Its objective was to identify the importance of health literacy education by examining whether it can reduce beliefs in COVID-19-related misinformation and conspiracy theories from the perspective of media studies and social psychology.
- Study 2 focused on the public. Its objective was to find out the extent of conspiracy theory beliefs in Japan by examining why people choose to consume conspiratorial content based on a framework built upon theories in media studies and behavioural economics.
- Study 3 focused on the news media. Its objective was to examine whether Japan's strict immigration, specifically refugee, policy was supported by the Japanese news media. This study adopted the framing theory from media studies.
- Study 4 focused on the news media. Its objective was to establish a comprehensive understanding of the concept of 'fake news' in Japan by developing a quantitative chronicle of how the term 'fake news / フェイクニュース' had been framed by the Japanese news media based on theories in media studies.

### 3. 研究の方法

This research project adopted a quantitative approach.

- Study 1 and Study 2 adopted multivariate statistics methods to analyse public opinion collected from a questionnaire survey. The data were collected from an online questionnaire survey conducted in Japan. It was administered by Macromill (a professional survey company) in February 2021, amid the COVID-19 pandemic when more than half of the country was in a state of emergency. Survey respondents were recruited from the survey company's opt-in panel, which had more than one million registered members across Japan. Samples were selected based on a quota sampling of 1,448 adults (20–69) that approximated the age, gender, and geographic distribution of the 2019 national census.
- Study 3 and Study 4 adopted quantitative content analysis methods, such as semantic analysis and framing analysis. The data used were Japanese newspaper articles collected from the online archives of the main national Japanese newspapers, such as Asahi Shimbun, Yomiuri Shimbun, Mainichi Shimbun, and The Nikkei.

### 4. 研究成果

Study 1: The findings of this study 1 were published in 2022 in *Health Communication* – a peer-reviewed international academic journal under the title of 'Effects of Health Literacy in the Fight against the COVID-19 Infodemic: The Case of Japan.' It was also selected by the journal editors to include in an edited book entitled *Communication Research on Health Disparities and Coping Strategies in COVID-19 Related Crises* in 2024. Following is a summary of the study.

This study quantitatively examines whether health literacy can reduce belief in COVID-19 misinformation and conspiracy theories. Conducting path and cluster analyses on survey data collected from 1,488 adults in Japan in 2021, we found that while health literacy reduces people's belief about COVID-19 and vaccination misinformation, it has no direct effect on their belief in COVID-19 conspiracy theories. That said, the results also highlighted the importance of health literacy. It is found that even though high health literacy does not guarantee a low degree of conspiracy beliefs, low health literacy is associated with high susceptibility to both misinformation and conspiracy theories. Moreover, people who relied more on social media than mass media for COVID-19 news and reported on having been more severely affected by the pandemic were found to be more likely to have lower health literacy and higher belief in misinformation and conspiracy theories. Based on the findings, we discussed ways to enhance health literacy research and promotion in Japan.

Study 2: The findings of study 2 were published in a peer-reviewed international academic journal *Telematics and Informatics Reports* under the title of 'Put Money Where Their Mouth Is? Willingness to Pay for Online Conspiracy Theory Content' in 2024. The main finding of the study is summarised as follows.

Many studies have examined why people believe in conspiracy theories, yet less is known about why people choose to consume conspiratorial content. This study addresses this gap by examining people's willingness to pay for online conspiracy theory content. Grounded in uses and gratifications theory and the willingness to pay concept, it employs a survey experiment fielded in Japan (n = 1,448) that asks respondents whether they would subscribe to a hypothetical online video channel with a randomly assigned conspiracy theory and a monthly subscription fee (0 to 1,000 JPY/~9 USD). Results show that while many respondents held varying degrees of belief in the conspiracy theories in question, few were willing to pay for the channel and cost was the main determining factor. The subscription rate would drop from 19% if the channel was free to 3–5% if it had a nonzero subscription fee (average 324 JPY/~3 USD). This study also finds that conspiracy mentality and media diet (the combination of using social media for news and avoiding mainstream media news) are consistent predictors of people's willingness to subscribe to and pay for online conspiracy theory content.

Study 3: The results of study 3 were published in the *Journal of Refugee Studies*—a peer-reviewed international academic journal in 2022 under the title of 'Japanese Newspaper Portrayals of Refugees—A Frame Analysis from 1985 to 2017.' The main finding of the study is summarised as follows.

Several studies of Western countries link negative media stereotyping of refugees to support for restrictive policies. However, less is known about Japan, an Asian country that has been widely criticised for its strict refugee policy. This study addresses this gap by exploring, first, trends in Japanese news media coverage of different refugee populations and second, whether left-leaning news outlets cover refugees differently than right-leaning ones. Using

quantitative deductive frame analysis of 3372 Japanese newspaper articles published between 1985 and 2017, we find that despite some consistency in the frequency with which certain frames appear, media coverage reflects contextual differences of specific refugee populations. The results also show that Japanese newspapers generally use sympathetic frames at higher frequencies than negative ones and left-leaning newspapers cover refugees more often and more sympathetically than right-leaning newspapers. The findings suggest that there may be no direct linkage between negative media coverage and strict policies in host countries with small and less publicly visible refugee populations, such as Japan.

Study 4: The findings of study 4 were published in the *Journal of Information and Communication Research*—a peer-reviewed academic journal in 2023 under the title of ‘News on Fake News: The Framing of Fake News in Japanese Newspapers, 2016-2021.’ Following is a summary of the study.

This study examines the framing of fake news in Japanese news media by constructing a quantitative chronicle of how it has been depicted in Japanese newspapers using an exploratory approach. Two frames were identified using semantic network analysis on 1,624 articles about fake news published in the four largest Japanese national newspapers from 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2021. The first frame depicts fake news mainly as an American political issue focusing on President Trump, the news media, and elections in the US. This frame was the main discourse in the articles published in 2016 and 2017. From 2018 onwards, the focus of the articles shifted to the second frame, which depicts fake news as a social problem that emerged from internet information. This frame provides readers with a more nuanced understanding of the fake news phenomenon not only in the US but also in Japan. These findings contribute to the effort in the development of critical media literacy education, particularly in Japan.

In summary, the findings of the 4 studies empirically show that fake news, in particular conspiracy theory, is closely associated with populist attitudes such as racism and conspiracy mentality as well as people’s media diet. While the Japanese news media did provide a fair view on controversial issues, such as the fake news problem and refugee policy, the influence of social media cannot be ignored. Moreover, the results show that media and health literacy education is still lagging behind in Japan. Moving forward, considering the significant changes in the social and media environment brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, further research is needed to address different information challenges in the post-COVID world. The findings of this research project can serve as a foundation for future work on this topic.

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〔産業財産権〕

〔その他〕

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6. 研究組織

氏名 (ローマ字氏名) (研究者番号)	所属研究機関・部局・職 (機関番号)	備考

7. 科研費を使用して開催した国際研究集会

〔国際研究集会〕 計0件

8. 本研究に関連して実施した国際共同研究の実施状況

共同研究相手国	相手方研究機関

カナダ	Toronto Metropolitan University			
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