

# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LAW MANAGEMENT & HUMANITIES

[ISSN 2581-5369]

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Volume 8 | Issue 2

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2025

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# Regulating Digital Misinformation: A Comparative Legal Analysis of Civil Liability for Online Rumors in Jordan and Across Jurisdictions

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## ABSTRACT

*The rapidity with which rumors can be disseminated through social media poses serious legal challenges, particularly in civil liability. This paper analyzes critically the legal framework for civil liability for spreading rumors in Jordan, noting that there is no specific law to address misinformation in cyberspace. It is contrasted with those in the European Union, the UK, the US, and selected Arab states, and serious gaps in Jordan's legal approach are identified.*

*The research indicates that Jordan relies principally on generic principles of tort and criminal sanctions in Cybercrime Law No. 27 of 2015 but lacks a specific system to compensate victims of online misinformation. Whereas in the EU and UK social media companies are held responsible for regulating offensive content, in Jordan social media companies are not held responsible for failing to regulate false information. Jordan's law is also not effective in addressing originators and disseminators of rumors, and hence no one can be held accountable.*

*Through comparative legal analysis, this research proposes legislative reforms to strengthen Jordan's legal framework by clearly defining civil liability for misinformation, making platforms accountable, and establishing schemes for compensation for victims. This research adds to ongoing discourse on how to balance free speech and regulating misinformation and provides policy guidelines for an improved legal strategy for combating digital rumors.*

**Keywords:** *Digital disinformation, social media hearsay, civil responsibility, legal framework of Jordan, law of tort, accountability of the platform, legal reforms.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The circulation of rumors has been a persistent social factor that has throughout the past influenced the understanding of the people, served private interests, and sometimes disrupted

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social, economic, and political orders. The advent of digital technology has further exacerbated this issue to an unprecedented extent, social networks becoming the predominant vehicle through which unverified information rapidly spreads extensively. Such networks allow real-time information to be communicated to large groups, transcending physical and temporal limits, but often lack effective mechanisms to ensure the reliability and authenticity of the information conveyed (Riva, 2020). This problem therefore presents pressing legal issues surrounding civil liability for the dissemination of misinformation, particularly issues of attribution of responsibility, the evidence complexities surrounding the identification of the source of the rumors, and the legal repercussions of such dissemination more generally (Narciso, 2022).

The imposition of civil liability for the dissemination of rumors via social media raises crucial issues both doctrine and in practice. At the core of this argument lies the legal basis upon which liability arises, that is to say, whether it falls under the jurisdiction of tortious or contractual liability. It further raises the issue regarding the causality link between the illicit act and the resultant damage, particularly where the damages are non-material in nature, such as reputational damage or violations of the right to privacy. The lack of a particular legislative framework for this in Jordan's law further complicates things, since resort to the general principles of civil liability can fall short in addressing the complexities introduced by the use of virtual platforms. This is added to by the multi-faceted nature of the spreading of the rumor through multiple actors—the originator, amplifier, and passive participant—colluding to the spreading of the misinformation in multiple forms (Wachter et al., 2024).

In addressing challenges thus raised, this research will evaluate in a critical manner the legal framework that responds to civil liability in regard to social media spreading rumors. Specifically, it examines whether or not the overall principles of civil liability apply to this new challenge, identifies the elements that comprise liability, and distinguishes between contractual and tort liability in this case. Furthermore, it evaluates the adequacy of the prevailing legal framework within Jordan, examines the relevant judicial interpretations, and identifies legislative loopholes that can hinder the protection of individuals and entities from the damages that emanate from the dissemination of misinformation (Preussner & Aschauer, 2022). With this aim in view, the research aims to propose legislative reforms that will enhance legal protection mechanisms and encourage a stronger regulatory framework to tackle digital misinformation.

Underlying this research lies the core research question: To what extent does the legal framework currently governing Jordan effectively control civil liability for the spreading of

rumors via social media, and upon what legal basis does the liability rest? This overarching research question gives rise to a series of secondary ones: How does the law define a "rumor" and what juridical character does it have? Which principles govern the liability civilly? Which are the minimum to prove liability? Are the legislative measures currently taken sufficient to address these issues, or does the need lie elsewhere in the promulgation of specific laws? How can the legal framework governing Jordan be upgraded to further protect from the harmful consequences of misinformation?

This study employs an analytic legal approach to tackle these issues based on analysis of the statute law, case law from the courts, and doctrine to explain the principles underlying civil liability under such situations (Andriani et al., 2025). The study also employs a comparative legal approach based on international legislative models to find best practices that can be employed to mold future legal evolution within Jordan .

This study confines itself to the law of civil liability regarding the dissemination of rumour via social media within the Jordanian legal framework, supported where possible by comparative legal references. It discusses only civil liability but does not cover criminal liability where differentiation between the two legal frameworks is crucial to maintain analytic specificity.

The significance of this research emanates from the fact that it addresses a sophisticated and emerging legal issue. The international proliferation of rumors using the internet presents formidable challenges to current legal frameworks, requiring an intricate analysis of the principles of liability and how they are to be applied to new sets of facts (Budiman et al., 2025). The fact that the proliferation of the rumors occurs online makes it even more difficult to take measures to manage the situation, particularly to trace the source and allocate legal responsibility. Against this backdrop, this research endeavors to seal legislative loopholes through the presentation of a critical analysis of the current legal framework, advancing legal reform initiatives, and seeking to reconcile the freedom of speech right with the need to safeguard the rights of individuals and institutions.

## **(A) Literature review**

### **a. Definition of Rumors: Linguistic and Legal Perspectives**

Rumors are a widespread social phenomenon that determine the opinion and behavior of the population. Linguistically, the word "shā'a" (شاع) means to circulate or spread unchecked, describing the basic nature of a rumor—it spreads unconfirmed information (Humaida, 2022). This can be observed in other languages. An English "rumor" is information that rapidly spreads without firm evidence to support its authenticity. The French word "rumeur" has an additional

connotation of ill will, the probable intention behind the circulation of the rumor (Kwao et al., 2025).

Sociology and the study of the media define rumour as "unsubstantiated information that people transmit to influence the opinion of the public, sometimes because there are no other sources to refer to or simply to manipulate". The rumour does not necessarily include outright lies but can be distortions or embellishments of fact to promote certain agendas.

Legally, rumours are typically considered unverified information that has the potential to be harmful, and are thus subject to civil or criminal liability under various legal structures. The European Union classifies rumours under fake news and disinformation that can be subject to legal consequences, like civil and criminal liability (Sherstoboeva, 2024). However, legal responses to rumours are quite different under both the Arab legal system and the Western legal system.

Arab legal frameworks are punitive and strict. The Cybercrime Law No. 27 of 2015 in Jordan makes the publication of false information that has the capability to create disturbance to the public order or to the national security an offence. Saudi Arabia classifies rumours as cybercrimes if they are likely to create social or economic instability, punishable through imprisonment for a maximum period of five years or fines to a maximum 3 million Saudi riyals. The UAE 2021 Anti-Rumor Law defines a rumour specifically as false information that has an impact upon social or economic stability, punishable through fines to a maximum 200,000 AED and imprisonment to a maximum two-year duration (Alshawabkeh & Shiyab, 2022; Maghaireh, 2024). The laws are based upon the Arab legal understanding that rumours are threats to the national security and to the stability of the public.

Compared to the Western legal systems that are more liability based on the platform rather than the actor's prosecution, the European Union's Digital Services Act 2022 makes the digital platforms liable to remove false information that threatens democracy or national security. There is no federal law that bans rumour in the US. The rumour problem is instead governed through defamation laws and consumer protection laws that allow the victim to bring civil action rather than using criminal sanctions (Husovec, 2023). The legal systems are distinct from the Arab system that criminalises rumour. The social media websites are made more accountable to police and control false information.

The lack of a specific legal definition of rumors in the majority of the Arab states makes the enforcement unbalanced. With social media accelerating the spread of fabricated information, there is a need to define fabricated information and misunderstanding precisely. The future legal

reforms within the Arab states must balance the control of fabricated information with freedom of speech. Emulating the same control mechanisms through the use of the digital model used in the West, the legal framework within the Arab states can devise an effective and balanced system to address the issue of rumors in the digital age.

### **b. Civil Liability to Spread Rumor**

The rise of social media has generated legal concerns about civil responsibility for the dissemination of rumours, with legal models polarised along the divide of sanctioning individuals and the online platforms themselves. This has created strong dichotomies between the Arab model and the Western model in the area of responsibility. Most legal systems base civil liability on harm, requiring proof that a rumor caused tangible damage. However, in digital spaces, proving harm is exceptionally difficult, as content spreads rapidly, making it unclear whether liability falls on the originator or those who amplify the rumor (AL-Enizi & Ghandour, 2025).

Jordan does not particularly deal with civil liability for rumors. The Cybercrime Law No. 27 of 2015 criminalizes malicious false information but lacks victim compensation provisions, causing the courts to lack a specific framework to impose liability. Saudi Arabia and the UAE both consider the dissemination of rumors to be a cybercrime punishable by harsh penalties, including imprisonment and fines, giving the victim stronger legal recourse to claim damages (Khan et al., 2022).

Western legal models shift the responsibility to the platforms. The EU Digital Services Act of 2022 obligates social media to remove fake information or face severe penalties, targeting corporate accountability instead of prosecuting the individuals.

The US prefers free speech to direct control. Section 230 within the Communications Decency Act shields the platforms from liability regarding the users' generated content. However, states such as California have legislated to require the platforms to suppress the spread of misinformation, especially where there are electoral interference issues and issues regarding public health risks (Nyberg, 2003).

A major challenge is social media algorithms, which prioritize engagement over accuracy, amplifying sensational rumors over factual news. Studies show false information spreads 70% faster than verified news (Arora et al., 2019). In response, some European countries require AI-based content moderation, yet most Arab legal systems have yet to adopt similar measures, leaving misinformation unchecked (Buçaj & Idrizaj, 2025)

Arab and Western legal frameworks are fundamentally different. Arab laws target individuals,

viewing rumors as a menace to the stability of the country, but Western laws manage the platforms, focusing on free speech and corporate responsibility (Almahfali & Avery, 2023).

Arab legal frameworks need to adapt to the digital age. Criminal penalties are insufficient to deal with the magnitude of online disinformation. Future legal reforms need to ensure platform accountability, create open legal pathways for the victims, and include AI-powered monitoring to suppress rumour amplification at the source.

### **c. Legal Approaches to Dealing With Rumours Online**

The advent of social media has changed the dynamics of information circulation, making the platforms both a source of the proliferation of misinformation and a means to control it. The pace at which misinformation spreads has compelled governments to implement new legal frameworks to control digital misinformation but the strategies used are quite diverse. Some governments criminalize the people who propagate rumors, whereas other governments blame the platforms for moderating the information (Rowbottom, 2012).

Regulation of online rumors is a tall order because it is difficult to determine sources and intention. Laws that are crafted to fit the printing press and broadcasting are typically behind the times regarding real-time social media usage. This gap is filled through the enactment of certain laws that tackle cyber-disinformation through AI-facilitated identification mechanisms and moderation algorithms to suppress the spread of falsehoods (Van Niekerk, 2024).

Arab governments have taken strict regulations to curb the spread of information that causes public disorder, threatens national security, and undermines economic stability. The governments have instituted centralized monitoring mechanisms to track and counter fake information, issuing official corrections where appropriate. Legislation has imposed severe punishments, such as imprisonment and fines, upon individuals who propagate fake information that can lead to panic or societal destabilization. Some legal frameworks include real-time monitoring of viral information to enable the government to intervene early enough to curb the spread of miscommunication (Saddik et al., 2020).

Western legal structures promote the self-regulation of online platforms rather than the direct control of the government. Fact-checking tools, moderation principles, and warning signs on misleading posts are employed by tech giants such as Meta, Twitter, and YouTube to suppress disinformation. Western laws prefer revealing the handling of the information instead of criminalizing the users. However, critics assert that the platforms are sluggish to intervene, allowing the information to propagate to a large degree before correction strategies are implemented (Ahmad & Zamri, 2024).

A new pattern within Western and Arab legal frameworks is the use of AI tools to tackle digital disinformation. Governments and social media platforms are applying machine learning algorithms to mark manipulated information, assess credibility, and lower the prominence of unverified reports. The technique has the potential but has raised freedom of speech issues, censorship, and AI moderation bias concerns (Solaiman et al., 2024). Despite these events, there has not yet been a global legal framework to address social media rumors. Laws are currently emerging to address emerging threats such as deepfakes, extensive disinformation operations, and the exploitation of social media to promote political or financial agendas. It will be essential to collaborate globally to establish consistent regulations that balance information authenticity and free speech protection. This will have to be accomplished through the cooperation of governments, tech industries, and legal frameworks to generate laws that are effective in managing disinformation but that preserve digital rights (Bezerra & Florêncio, 2023). As misinformation becomes increasingly sophisticated, legal frameworks need to evolve quickly. The future will likely be one where rumour control relies upon some blend of legal enforcement, platform responsibility, and sophisticated tech tools. No one measure will be one-size-fits-all, but laws need to be flexible enough to be adapted to new types of online deception to protect the truth without overly constraining the freedom to communicate (AlAfnan, 2025).

## **II. METHOD**

This study applies an analytical legal method to examine the legal framework governing the liability for the propagation of rumors through social media. It provides an extensive analysis of the applicable law, examines judicial cases, and compares the legal framework within Jordan to selected Arab and Western nations. This study will address legal gaps that can hinder the effective management of online rumors by drawing upon the latest scholarly literature within the area of civil law that determines legal challenges and legislative issues within the subject matter and provides recommendations based on international best legal practices (ALsheyab, 2025)

### **(A) Legal Framework for the Study of Civil Liability**

The legal framework is crucial in considering how civil liability is handled in connection with social media rumors. For Jordan, this research takes into account the Jordanian Penal Code, Cybercrime Law No. 27 of 2015, the Personal Data Protection Law, and other pertinent legal instruments that control civil liability for disseminating false news and media misinformation. (Eldakak et al., 2024).



### **(B) Methods Used in Analyzing Laws on Rumors**

This study applies an analytical legal framework to examine laws are enough to apparatus online issues and investigates recent court judgments in regulating digital rumors (Li et al., 2024).

Apart from this, comparative legal analysis is conducted to contrast Jordanian law with comparable legislation in Arab states and Western states and to indicate differences in how legal systems provide for liability for spreading rumors. Dissemination of false information is criminalized in most Arab states and is typically punishable with legal measures for individuals. Western legal systems, however, manage information online through companies and websites being held accountable for handling misinformation. This research will assess how effective such measures are and whether or not international best practice can be integrated into law in Jordan.

Besides, the research takes into account using new technologies to monitor and manage rumors. It examines whether and how advanced digital technologies can detect misinformation in advance and whether social networking sites have legal responsibilities in using algorithmic analysis to prevent extensive spreading of misinformation. The research will assess whether or not Jordanian laws should be revised to cover legal issues related to such technologies (Awaishah et al., 2024).

### **(C) Spatial and Temporal Scope of the Study**

This study focuses on the analysis of the law of Jordan as the principal case study with comparative analysis based on chosen Arab and Western legal frameworks. The reason for choosing Jordan was that there are no specific legal provisions addressing the liability of individuals or online sites for the propagation of rumours. This void invites an analysis of the effectiveness of current laws and the prospect of new legal frameworks to protect individuals and society from the harmful effects of misinformation (OKIBE, 2024).

Temporally, the time from 2015 to 2024 has been addressed because the years witnessed crucial legal developments on the regulation of online gossip. Over the last few years, legal challenges intensified with the emergence of social media, prompting the enactment of new laws within the different jurisdictions. For example, within the US, some states such as California came up with legislative proposals that require digital platforms to monitor false news-related information, particularly within the electoral context and the healthcare sector (Cheong et al., 2024). The use of this time frame offers a wide understanding of how legal frameworks evolved and whether some solutions can be made applicable to the legal system within Jordan.

Proposed legal reforms will necessarily affect the laws. This research investigates

systematically relevant laws and comparative legal experience to suggest legal reforms to enhance civil protection against the harm caused by the circulation of rumour. It also assesses the feasibility of applying AI and big data analysis to spot misinformation to further bolster legal frameworks to address this issue. On the basis of these findings, the research will shape legislative proposals that will balance the protection of individuals from harm through rumour with the protection of freedom of expression. It also advocates for the establishment of legal frameworks that will mandate social media to play an active role to counteract misinformation. It also advocates for legal reforms to establish specific regulatory bodies that will manage digital content and sanction individuals and social media that engage in rumour-spreading. These proposals are aligned with modern civil law strategies that will match the evolution of digital media control (Spezzano, 2021).

### **III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The fast pace of online rumour circulation via social networks has created legal challenges, particularly civil liability. The legal framework within Jordan relies on penalties under the Cybercrime Law No. 27 of 2015 and the Penal Code but lacks civil damages provisions to offer compensation to the victim for reputational damages, economic damages, and emotional damages.

This study compares the law of the UK, EU, Germany, France, and the US to identify three issues: the absence of a specific legal framework, the application of tort principles, and the absence of liability for the originator and the republisher. It suggests legislative reforms to harmonize the law of Jordan with international best practice.

#### **(A) Lack of a Specialized Legal Framework for Civil Liability for Digital Rumors**

Jordan lacks a specific legal framework for civil liability for online rumours. The laws criminally penalize but provide no specific civil remedies. The Cybercrime Law No. 27 of 2015 sanctions the publication of false information but does not provide the right to claim damages. The courts are left to rely on common principles of tort law that are not enough to cover the peculiar issues of online misinformation such as establishing causation, quantifying damages, and holding the platforms responsible.

In comparison, other nations have established specific legal frameworks. The Online Safety Bill under the United Kingdom compels social networks to remove false information, enabling victims to claim civil damages (Clifton, 2024). The European Union's Digital Services Act (2022) holds the platforms accountable if they fail to block misinformation (Müller & Kettemann, 2024). There are no such provisions under the law of Jordan to enable the victims

to seek redress.

In response to this, Jordan should:

- Make social networks remove false information, such as the EU does.
- Grant civil compensation to the victims on the British model.
- Hold individuals and social media companies responsible for the creation and dissemination of misinformation.

### **(B) Overreliance on General Principles of Civil Liability**

Jordanian courts use the common law of tort to deal with digital misinformation cases, but this is not enough. Establishing causation between a rumour and injury is challenging where the information is widely distributed. The law of Jordan is also not specific regarding reputational and emotional damages, thus making the compensation unreliable. Social media sites also bear no legal obligation to help the victim by revealing the source of the rumour.

Other legal frameworks offer greater protection. France and Germany place partial liability on the platforms with proactive misinformation mitigation (Akuetteh et al., 2024). The Information Technology Laws in India require the removal of the content within a given time frame to minimize harm (Saha & Mukhopadhyay, 2024). The lack of imposition of platform accountability or definite compensation guidelines by Jordan leaves the victims with poor legal standing.

To improve Jordan's legal framework, the law should:

- Define precise criteria for the identification of harm done through online rumor.
- Make the platforms offer information regarding users where there is misinformation such as Germany.
- Make the platforms liable for not deleting false information within a reasonable time.

### **(C) Failure to Establish Clear Liability for Rumor Starters and Republishes**

Jordanian law does not create civil liability for initiators or transmitters of digital rumours. This omission leaves the perpetrators free to evade accountability despite the fact that they cause real harm through misinformation. Courts struggle to place liability on the republishers where the false information spreads widely and anonymously.

Other nations place the blame both on the originators and the republishers. Germany's NetzDG Law sanctions the individuals intentionally posting fake information (Yas et al., 2022). France and the UK both place liability on the individuals and the platforms to ensure greater

enforcement. The United States gives broad immunity to the platforms under Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act that limits legal action on the republishers (Neudert, 2024).

in order to strengthen accountability:

- Hold persons liable for the production or circulation of false information.
- Hold the republishers responsible if they intentionally distribute misinformation.
- Make the platforms limit the spread of unverified information, such as France and Germany.

#### **(D) Implications for Legal Stakeholders**

- Jordanian lawmakers must devise a specific legal framework for civil liability for digital disinformation cases. The law will need to put the liability on the platforms and the individuals to enable the victims to recover damages. The EU and the UK models are good to emulate.
- Courts essential develop uniform legal principles for digital rumour cases that encompass specific causation criteria, reputational harm, and damages. Judicial training must encompass comparative legal approaches to enhance the formation of judgments.
- Lawyers essential adapt to digital law challenges, leveraging platform liability, consumer protection laws, and defamation statutes to strengthen civil claims. Strategic litigation can set precedents for civil liability in misinformation cases.
- Regulators should impose moderation rules to have social networks monitor and purge misinformation. Sanctions for violations, like in the system utilized in the EU, can motivate greater responsibility from the platforms.
- Ongoing legal research and policy reviews need to focus on the economic and social impacts of online disinformation to inform future legislative updates.

## **IV. CONCLUSION**

Rapid spreading of misinformation through online platforms has raised social and legal concerns. This study has critically examined the regime of civil liability against online rumors in Jordan and compared it with international legal responses. The study has revealed that there is no specialized legal framework in Jordan to impose civil liability against social media platforms, social media users, or republishers for spreading misinformation. Applying general principles of tort and Cybercrime Law No. 27 of 2015 has proved to be insufficient to tackle online misinformation, particularly in compensation to victims. Analyses with legal regimes in the European Union, United Kingdom, United States, and selected countries in the region

emphasize the need for a more structured and balanced approach with platform responsibility, legal recourse to victims, and effective means to combat digital misinformation.

To offer a solid and effective legal approach, Jordan must institute legal reforms that balance preservation of freedom of expression and prevention against harm from misinformation. It must, as recommended by the report, align the legal framework with international best practice to be a more effective, stronger, and transparent strategy against digital misinformation.

As suggested by results from this study, the following are recommended to enhance legal provisions for civil responsibility for online misinformation in Jordan:

- **Enact a Specialized Law against Digital Misinformation:** Jordan can pass specific legislation that clearly defines civil responsibility for misinformation and provides clear legal redress for victims.
- **Social media platforms should be required to screen and remove misinformation in legislation,** such as in the EU's Digital Services Act, and be held accountable for failure to do so.
- **Legal Definition of Rumors and Misinformation:** Legal standards have to offer clear definitions to define harmful misinformation and free speech.
- **Compensation to Victims:** Reputational, economic, and emotional harm caused by online disinformation has to be covered under civil legislation with financial compensation.
- **Reposters and Originators Regulation:** Originators and reposters who release and circulate intentionally falsified content should be held liable and reposters who circulate it negligently should be held to limited liability.
- **Courts and regulators have to be armed with digital law and disinformation case training** to be able to render consistent and knowledgeable legal rulings.
- **Use of AI and Digital Technologies:** AI-based content moderation and misinformation detection would be necessary to halt the spread of misinformation, while at the same time maintaining free speech.
- **Public Awareness and Education:** The government can collaborate with internet platforms to educate and inform internet users about disinformation and encourage responsible use of the internet.

Since online misinformation has a dynamic nature, future research should explore:

- **Applications of Artificial Intelligence in Misinformation Detection:** Investigating how AI can be utilized to identify, mark, and cut off the stream of misinformation and minimize risks from censorship.
- **Comparative Regulation of Platforms:** Exploring how social media accountability varies across countries and how effective various regulation models have proved to be.
- **Psychological and Social Impacts of Misinformation Online:** Studies into how misinformation shapes public opinion, action, and social trust in legal and government institutions.
- **Global Trends in Digital Content Regulation:** Exploring international agreements and legal instruments to inform regulation of online disinformation in Jordan.
- **Financial Consequences of Digital Misinformation:** Quantifying economic impacts to inform business, media, and economic decision-making by individuals.

Effectiveness of Fact-Checking Initiatives: Assessment of whether fact-checking has been effective in curbing misinformation and how it can be applied to legal processes. Addressing these points will give future studies a firm legal and policy basis for managing misinformation without undermining basic rights and freedoms.

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