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Identifying Suspected Inauthentic Accounts Involving Anti-japanese Sentiment in Malaysian Facebook: a Fimi Perspective

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Abstract

This study explores the existence of suspected inauthentic accounts and their behavioural characteristics in Facebook comments following a statement by Japan's Prime Minister, Sanae Takaichi, on Taiwan, which escalated China–Japan tensions. Despite increased concerns regarding Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI), there is a lack of empirical study analysing how suspected inauthentic accounts operate within the Malaysian social media landscape. The study examines comments from selected Malaysian news posts published between 7 November 2025 and 31 December 2025. Focusing on user engagement, data were collected using an exploratory qualitative approach with keyword-based sampling, combining an Instant Data Scraper tool and manual extraction. Additional tools, including Archive.today, HIVE AI, and Google Lens, were used to support data verification and analysis, while the Disinformation Analysis and Response Measures (DISARM) framework guided the analysis of behavioural and account-level indicators. Around 30 accounts were identified for further analysis based on observable indicators. The data found several recurring suspicious patterns, including newly created accounts, underdeveloped profiles, restricted social networks, the use of non-personal or AI-generated images, and repetitive appearances across multiple posts with similar narratives. While these accounts reflect characteristics related to potential inauthenticity, there is insufficient evidence of strong coordination or systematic amplification. Nevertheless, the accounts consistently convey strong anti-Japanese sentiment, indicating that narrative reinforcement may occur through a blend of ambiguous and potentially inauthentic users. Overall, the study highlights the challenges of identifying inauthentic activity and the role of user engagement in shaping global online discourse.

Keywords: Fimi; Inauthentic Accounts; Antijapanese-Japanese Sentiment; Malaysia; Facebook