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# Fake experts fuelling online scams, misinformation

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**PETALING JAYA:** Fake experts flooding social media are fuelling scams and misinformation, posing a growing threat to Malaysians as fraudsters exploit trust and technology to deceive the public.

Universiti Malaya Centre of Research for Cybersecurity and Network forensic expert Prof Dr Ainuddin Wahid Abdul Wahab said the scale of the problem is escalating rapidly, particularly in areas involving financial and medical advice.

"Many Malaysians are being misled by false financial and medical advice.

"It's like a busy market full of individuals selling 'magic water' – the loudest voice often attracts the most attention, even when it is lying."

He added that scammers are leveraging advanced technologies, including deepfake videos, to lend credibility to their schemes.

"We have seen manipulated videos of prominent figures, including Tan Sri Tony Fernandes, being used to trick individuals into fake investment schemes."

## Increasingly difficult for public to discern genuine advice from schemes: Academic

"From my work in digital forensics, I see scammers becoming more sophisticated, using AI to make their messages appear real.

"The biggest danger is the erosion of trust. When everyone claims to be an expert, it becomes difficult for the public to distinguish between genuine advice and scams that could ruin their lives or health."

On proposals to verify credentials online, Ainuddin Wahid said while such measures could offer some protection, they are not foolproof.

"Verification adds a layer of protection, but it is not a perfect fix."

"Think of it like a lock on your front door: it stops casual thieves, but a professional burglar with the right tools could still break in.

"Scammers could exploit old verified accounts or use stolen identities to bypass the system."

He also said visible verification badges could create a false sense of security.

"Individuals tend to lower their

guard when they see an official symbol, making them more susceptible if the verification process is not completely secure."

He said large-scale identity or qualification checks also come with significant risks, particularly in terms of privacy and cybersecurity.

"The biggest concerns are privacy loss and the potential to become a target for hackers."

"If a social media platform stores a centralised database of identity numbers or professional licences, it becomes a honey pot for cybercriminals.

"A single data breach could trigger massive identity theft."

Ainuddin Wahid said stricter verification requirements could discourage genuine experts from sharing knowledge online.

"Many professionals may avoid contributing if they have to reveal sensitive information or deal with excessive bureaucracy.

"This could leave the digital space dominated by (people) who

operate without accountability."

He added that another unintended consequence is tighter controls may drive misinformation into harder-to-monitor spaces.

"This is like closing a noisy public park; the crowd does not disappear, it simply moves into basements where authorities cannot see them.

"Investment *gurus* and other scammers are increasingly shifting from public Facebook pages to private Telegram or WhatsApp groups.

"In these hidden spaces, messages are locked, making it difficult for forensic experts to track dangerous advice. Lies could spread rapidly without correction."

He said instead of attempting to regulate every online interaction, the focus should be on equipping Malaysians to protect themselves.

"Programmes that teach Malaysians to 'stop, look and check' before accepting online advice are critical.

"Tools such as browser extensions could flag known scam patterns, while technologies such as blockchain could enable individuals to verify identities without submitting personal data to a central authority."