Article

Distorted Korean Idol's Scandal, Deceitful Media, and The Role of Forensic Linguistics

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ABSTRACT

A celebrity's scandal can be an enthralling theme for the media to produce news, either factual or fabricated. This research primarily focuses on distorted content or media manipulation to report it. It explores the correlation between misleading news and the motives behind twisted reality. The method used in this research is a descriptive qualitative method through the lens of the forensic linguistics approach, supported by Villa's interpretative pragmatics (2010). The collected data were from selected sources of distorted media reporting, especially about a highly considered Korean singer's crime, known Seungri of Bigbang. His charge was not direct link with sexual abuse and systematic drugs, which is in fact unrevealed wealthy people committing them. Even nonconsensual disclosure of sexually-explicit videos was committed by other celebrities. Yet, the media fraudulently blended and misrepresented Seungri as the key figure of the scandal in a club named 'Burning Sun'. Society was misled to hate and blame him. This research shows that passive constructions, lexical references, and subject matters of the texts become linguistic evidence of fact distortion. Manipulating celebrity's scandal is driven by political goals, such as creating mistrust and bewildering larger audiences, especially in South Korea about proving the justice system as the actual culprits are withdrawn. This research is noteworthy since there are interwoven claims of the power of media to wriggle out of legal punishments after spreading distorted facts. Hence, it implies that pragmatics is applicable and efficacious to prove the case. It leads to defamation by media, correlated with forensic linguistics. To reveal the distorted facts by deceitful media, this study expectantly contributes in enhancing social awareness of the truth behind blatant public outrage and its social consequences.

1. INTRODUCTION

Digital media provides the speed of spreading information. Yet, deceptive information is a phenomenon that reaches wider audiences or readers. This dissemination not only misleads the public but also it is assumed as more emotionally receptive to specific messages and interactions in society, politics, economy, and culture (Carmi, 2020). Such fake news phenomenon has been soaring with the emergence of social media. Regarding this issue, intergovernmental policies and regulations necessarily heed the notion of "fake news" (Richter, 2018). In practice, how news is presented makes it notoriously difficult to differentiate fact, opinion, and value. Although Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 1966 states about freedom of speech, distorted news is more challenging to grasp legally. This is grounded by the development of media and technology in this digital modernism.

Fake news is considered the most widespread on social media on online platforms. It has no obstacles for people to share the news. Readers are guided to naturally trust the news's authenticity and believe the news stories' content is true (Simon & Nyitrai, 2021). As fake news

can trigger intervention or clash in society, media manipulation by distorting facts can be seen as a crime. Specifically, this manipulative news content possibly ruins a public figure's reputation, so mass hatred is addressed toward the suspected person without realizing the truth. In this regard, forensic linguistics contributes to analyzing the linguistic evidence of crimes in this specific case.

Various motivations behind fake news exist, economic, political, or might serve private interests. Correspondingly, the perception of media reporting to serve undistorted and non-tendentious representation of reality needs to be more attainable in the complexities of this information age. Prohibition to spread distorted facts, however, seems tolerated legally as it would be too vulnerably abused (Baade, 2019; Nagasako, 2020). A wide range of media manipulation covers global health issues, national presidential elections, and even attacks upon a public figure's private life. Media fabricates the truth, causing potential public harm or mass anxiety. Thus, with the contribution of forensic linguistics, some factors grounding the deceitful media to report a public figure's scandal can be elaborated in this recent research.

Consequently, this recent research aims to discuss media deception and distorted facts about a public figure's scandal, specifically a well-known Korean singer 'Seungri of Bigbang' in his private business, which is 'Burning Sun' (BS) club. This phenomenon is scrutinized by a forensic linguistic approach in an attempt to examine and identify the linguistic features based on Villa's interpretative pragmatics theory (2010). Moreover, this case is complicatedly constructed due to Seungri's worldwide fame as Korean celebrity, besides his real name is Lee Seung Hyun (LSH).

The surge of fake news triggers mass hatred towards Seungri since this criminal case involves elite individuals related to international business enterprises. These fakes news were spread through digital platforms, such as Twitter and Instagram. Then it comes to the term 'cancel culture', which means increasing criticism of withdrawing a public figure based on social justice perspectives indicating insurmountably problematic digital platforms (Ng, 2020). This occurred when the media conducted his misleading information about unacceptable behavior, portraying Seungri as the center of attention to condemn. Celebrity is one of the targeted groups vulnerable to moral panic,

shown in 'cancel culture' as public pressure (Clark, 2020).

A number of studies related to fake news in the context of their content have been soaring. The findings of previous research assist this recent research in correlating distorted media reporting and forensic linguistics. First of all, Mahyoob, Algaraady, & Alrahaili (2021) found that to determine untrustworthy texts, grammatical features help in the portrayal of unreliable articles. Secondly, related to legal standards, it seems harder to apply in distorted news, generally produced and shared by formal news agencies and outlets (Baade, 2019). In parallel, manipulated content and distorted truth are categorized as harmful, and identifying the wrongfulness of disinformation becomes a challenge for future international initiatives to consider the regulation of it (Nagasako, 2020). Thus, as the task of forensic linguistics is to provide the analysis of the linguistic evidence of crimes, manipulated news articles can be observed through this lens of study.

Thus, this recent research builds upon the three earlier findings related to media manipulation and forensic linguistics. Yet, this research attempts to utilize the novelty which extends the areas of information disorder causing social consequences. These can be realized in several circumstances. The first significant difference is seen in the topic of the phenomenon. The previous scholars select political propaganda such as presidential election (Mahyoob et al, 2021), government policy (Baade, 2019), and regulations (Nagasako, 2020), while this recent research chooses celebrity scandal or non-political actors. A celebrity is also considered to give influence on the general public. It can be depicted as the newness among similar studies. Secondly, the methodology applied in this research highlights qualitative analysis, yet Mahyoob et al (2021) use qualitative and quantitative analysis for processing data obtained randomly. While purposive sampling in this recent research has not been employed before since it concentrates on the significant representations of information disorder. Thirdly, Baade (2019) and Nagasako (2020) show no solid description from the linguistic approach, so this recent research applies Villa's pragmatics (2010) to provide an analytical tool in the lens of language investigation towards fake news. Considering these aspects, this recent research not only gains corresponding topics of interests about

fake news and forensic linguistics but also defines the distinctions to enrich the role of language study in fake news or media manipulation.

However, misleading content can occur as a form of epidemic crime. Without investigating the validity and reliability of the sources, headlines of news articles are modified to shock, horrify, or scare the readers outright (Simon & Nyitrai, 2021). This is in line with the recent research on observing the effect of fake news on society. Yet, both studies differ in the domain of health issues and organized crimes, drugs, sex, and gambling. In this viewpoint, this recent research aims to delineate media manipulations that trigger scaremongering. It arouses 'a credulous public' (Law, 2017).

The dissemination of false information requires the continuity and discrepancies of legal responses in varying contexts that all claim to share common global values of free speech and free media (Richter, 2018). With particular relevance to the current research, the scandal of a celebrity and a severe moral transgression involve the dimension of negative information and public sentiment (Karg, Lim, & Schnall, 2022). For the sake of text exploration, semantic and pragmatic analyses were blended to disclose the ideology of crime news that leaves a negative impression on audiences (Nawaz & Hussain, 2021). Typically, studies in forensic linguistics prove precise interpretation and further explanation about the language used in media reporting.

Hence, it can be assumed that most media manipulate and distort information if it is linked to a celebrity's scandal. It is palpably clear that this current research reveals the actual motives of misleading news distributed by selected online media such as 'South China Morning Post' (SCMP) and 'The Washington Post' (TWP). It is also considered as an intertwining context towards legal action after breaking ethical journalism. The power behind these media agencies is also delineated, as there seems to be an undesirable consequence of mainstream news coverage of distributing distorted facts (Tsfati, Boomgarden, Strömbäck, Vliegenthart, Damstra, & Lindgren, 2020).

In sum, this recent research points out three research questions, which are;

1. What linguistic features represent the distorted facts in Lee Seunghyun's scandal?

2. How do the selected media become deceitful in reporting this scandal?

3. Why is forensic linguistics required to elucidate this phenomena?

Conceptually, the interpretative pragmatic approach is useful for evaluating linguistic expression. This is in line with Zhanghong and Yanan (2020), figuring out that Chinese celebrities tend to show sincere apologies by employing pragmatics as the analysis tool. Therefore, it is significant for this research to conduct under the linguistic study as the objective of the research is to reveal and manifest the language expressions representing distorted facts and deceitful media through the combination of pragmatics and forensic linguistics.

II. METHODS

This recent research applies a qualitative descriptive approach because the object of the research is in the form of written texts. The data, which are the linguistic expressions such as words, phrases, and clauses, are collected based on the meaning addressing the scandal's target, Seungri or Lee Seung Hyun. The data were collected by searching the news headlines by the keywords of Seungri, and several news articles appeared. They were sorted out after reading them comprehensively to find out the meaning conveyed as the news content. Then, the sources of the texts were identified. They were from famous media agencies: South China Morning Post (SCMP) and The Washington Post (TWP). After that, two news articles were obtained due to the indication of meaning addressing Seungri as the crime's key figure. The first was entitled 'You raped her: Jung Joon-young and Seungri's texts about sharing sex videos' published on March 15, 2019 on https://www.scmp.com/. The second news was 'Sex scandals stain the clean-cut image of South Korea's K-pop' published on August 5, 2019 on https://www.washingtonpost.com/.

In the next stage, purposive sampling, the data are sorted by purposive sampling. It is aimed to a conceptually-driven approach (Ferrugia, 2019). There were 7 data collected for this research. Then, the data were identified by certain coding, such us giving them numbers such as (1), (2), (3). Then, the media outlets, South China Morning Post and The Washington Post were shortened into SCMP and TWP to relate the data sources. Finally, the data

were bold to highlight the particular word, phrase, and clause that refers to distorted facts.

In analyzing the data, firstly the data were identified based on the structural or grammatical system, including the lexical reference, for instance, the active, passive construction and the lexical choices. Then using the interpretative pragmatics of Villa's theory (2010), particular data were analyzed in order to interpret the context of expression. The data were investigated by fact-checking based on the official or originally trusted sources, for example, the Korean police conference in clarifying the scandal. Lastly, the data are analyzed further to figure out the underliying reasons based on linguistic forensics approach, especially the case that can provide evidence of probable defamation after the media distorted the facts.

Therefore, this research is included in the social scientific study as it aims to reveal fact distortion, deceitful media, and the reasons and social consequences of the disinformation phenomenon in society. Both data collection and data analysis have been described respectively to provide the answers to the three research questions.

III. RESULT

The selected linguistic features, such as lexical choices and passive constructions, prove there is misleading information in the texts. Media manipulating news related to a public figure's issue is perceived to gain more advantages, which could cause massive sentiment and ruin someone's identity in society. Therefore, forensic linguistics is required to combat the distribution of distorted truth. SCMP and TWP are considered major media outlets where readers automatically believe the reporting is published as factual news. Yet, the regulation of spreading false information is necessary to create and operate as this phenomenon triggers severe impacts such as national and global 'cancel culture' towards Seungri as the victim of media distortion. Hence the power behind mainstream media platforms is realized as the political motives and their ideological tendencies to influence social psychology.

Distorting Truths

Language is either explicitly conveyed or it can provide space for receivers to infer other meanings. Some linguistic indicators are found in the selected texts described by Villa's interpretative

pragmatic theory (2010). First, both the headline and the content by SCMP are deceiving.

(1) 'You raped her': Jung Joon-young and Seungri's texts about sharing sex videos (SCMP, 15/5/2019)

There are two linguistic expressions in data (1). From the structural view, 'You raped her' is constructed that Seungri conveyed this utterance after a sex video shared by Jung Joo-young (JJY). Since JJY and Seungri were posited to sending texts each other based on the second utterance. The position of Jung Joon-young appeared as the subject of the rape to the female victim who was merely referenced by the objective pronoun 'her'. This aligns with Villa (2010) about a reference point to interpret the context as the sphere of investigation. Readers were guided that Seungri was cherishing Jung Joo-young's immoral act. This is a baseless headline; in fact, Seungri was never involved in a chat and commented about the shared sex video. This was misleading information. As in July 10, 2019, there was an official statement of Police Chief Min Gap-ryong through the official Youtube platform (Thebluehousekr, 2019) that Seungri was never accused of rape, even the involvement of the group chat containing the shared sex video.

(2) Jung Joon-young's group chat includes discussions of rape, drugging women and having sex with women who are being filmed without their consent (SCMP, 15/5/2019).

(3) K-pop stars Seungri, Yong Jun-hyung and Choi Jong-hoon are also members of the chat group (SCMP, 15/5/2019).

The situation surrounding data (2) and (3) connect respectively. There was mentioned that it was not a private chat between only Jung Joon-young and Seungri. Yet, new information was added in (2) that Jung Joon-young owned group chats to discuss the crime. Villa (2010) claimed that exclusive attention is operated through communicative messages. Similarly, from the previous meaning in (2) about the group chat, other participants, such as Seungri and Choi Jong-hoon (CJH) were brought in (3) to ensure that they were members of the group chat. It was shown in the phrase 'also members'. This was aimed to lead the reader's perception that Seungri was also involved in the chat group where JJY did some illegal acts.

These two utterances were partially false since Supreme Court in September 24, 2020 affirmed

prison terms of merely JJY and CJH as the rapists, without Seungri. So, it was palpable that the truth of the real rapists was not enthralling without Seungri's name involvement. Media, through the language used in their article, successfully spread the untrustworthy information consumed and believed by the readers. Most readers would rely on the media reporting without doing further fact-checking (Simon & Nyitrai, 2021). Related to the incriminating chat room, it was another singer with the initial name 'Lee' but not Seungri. It was Lee Jong Hyun (LJH) from a band named CNBlue admitting his involvement. Seungri was charged with sharing obscene material for the business's promotional project, and it was not the footage of assaulting women.

(4) Seungri (real name Lee Seung-hyun) of K-pop act BigBang, Yong Jun-hyung of boy band Highlight, and Choi Jong-hoon of the act FT Island were reportedly also members of the chat room and famous female entertainers are allegedly among the victims (SCMP, 15/5/2019).

(5) Lee is under investigation for allegations of prostitution, drug abuse, and sharing footage of women filmed in sex acts without their consent (TWP, 05/08/2019).

The utterance in data (4) emphasized Seungri's involvement in the group chat for sharing videos of sexual assault. From data (3) to data (4), Seungri's name was located in the initial position in a sentence. This seemed obvious that Seungri was depicted as the center of this scandal, although he was not proven guilty as one of the rapists. There is a contextual projection as the aspect of disclosing the implied meaning in a text (Villa, 2010). This distorted information triggered public sentiment, as Karg, Lim, & Schnall (2022) stated about the negative evaluation of a celebrity's issue.

Moreover, based on the final trial, no victim was reported from Seungri's involvement. Seungri was in fact, involved in another group chat merely to discuss the club business, called 'Burning Scandal'. In reality, Seungri was alleged only of prostitution, especially to himself yet the prostitute told the judge that Seungri did not know her real identity. So, the lexical items in (5) 'drug abuse and sharing footage of women filmed in sex acts without their consent,' also highlighted additional crimes that he did not even allege, which were illegal acts to consume additive drugs and immoral

behavior. The real context was that he became the frontline to raise massive hatred even though he only owned 8% of the total sharing in the business. This means that it falsely demonstrated Seungri as the main suspect when he was free from the two mentioned allegations. Furthermore, the official police statement announced during the investigation on February 27, 2019, that Seungri's drug results were negative. In addition, there was never an accusation of sharing footage of women filmed in sex acts without the female's consent.

(6) Reports of sex crimes by Big Bang singer Lee Seung-hyun have ended her decade-long love for the band, she said. Lee has denied the allegations (TWP, 05/08/2019).

(7) Prosecutors allege that the club was a haven for date-rape drugs and offered illegal prostitution services for VIP customers (TWP, 05/08/2019).

The lexical items 'reports of sex crimes' in (6) refer that the suspect doing this illicit act was Seungri. The subject matter is related to the 'surrounding context' (Villa, 2010). Readers found a correlation between Seungri and sex crimes, although the convicted criminals were JJY, CJH, Kim In-cheol, Kwon Hyuk-jun, and an ex-Burning Sun employee, 'Heo'. On the other hand, prosecutors in (7) never processed allegations of drugging/sexual assault in BS Vip rooms. It was stated that the police investigation was closed on July 19, 2019 which proved no systematic drug distribution or sexual assault occurred in BP Vip rooms. Police Chief Min officially announced this on Blue House's YouTube channel (Thebluehousekr, 2019). Furthermore, Judge Shin pointed out that Seungri's main charge was the embezzlement of the BS funds. Hence it was a different context, but the language use in (6) and (7) was constructed to hide Seungri's case, which was not about sex crime and drug abuse.

In sum, from the linguistic features from (1) to (7), language use becomes indisputable evidence of the existence of distorted facts. Villa (2010) concludes that the theory of meaning in legal interpretation is correlated with the surrounding context. This is in line with Mahyoob, Algaraady, & Alrahaili (2021), stating the contribution of linguistic analysis for systematic nuances to detect disinformation in the news. The truth was not disclosed. Identifying linguistic characteristics is more effective and achieves reasonable and

promising outcomes to portray the existence of distorted facts. Passive constructions, lexical references, and subject matters become indubitable evidence to lead public's perception as they relate to 'emotionally driven language' (Damstra, Boomgaarden, Broda, Lindgren, Strömbäck, Tsfati, and Vliegenthart, 2021).

In this research, pragmatics observations aspire to the reconstruction of truth or facts. The manipulative features found in grammatical and lexical features can prove the fact distortion case. The distorted facts are considered in passive construction, lexical reference, and subject matter. These could answer the first research question, which is about the linguistic features representing the distorted facts of Seungri's case. This all occurred due to the language choice by the media. Kenzhekanova, Zhanabekova, and Konyrbekova (2015) discuss how mass media wield power in employing the language they choose in their texts. It seems that the media left out the fact-checking information and proper translation from official clarification. This can be using linguistic evidence in court (Shim, 2020), especially for emphasizing defamation after the media distorted the fact. Here, it is clear that Villa's pragmatically oriented approach (2010) is fundamental for this research to interpret various meanings linked to the surrounding contexts.

Deceitful Media

From the linguistic features, the media created distorted facts about Seungri's real allegations, which were not mentioned in the texts. The prostitution case was not directly connected to Seungri, it was Yoo In-seok (YIS) who arranged and provided funding for the prostitution mediation. There was no evidence that Seungri transferred some money related to prostitution to him as well. The prostitute called Ms. A who was convicted in her trial, clarified she worked under YIS's orders, yet police kept forcing her to say Seungri's name along with YIS. Hence it can be seen that the media outlets did not obey ethical journalism. SCMP and TWP broke the rule to do fact-checking as long as their articles were published to gain mass attention. This is in line with Baade, (2019) and Nagasako (2020) that spreading distorted information was covered by media due to irrelevant equation wording of two different languages.

This problem can be recognized as the need for more professional accuracy checking by SCMP and TWP, which did not examine the equal meanings in Korean language to English besides their baseless information. In parallel, Tsfati et al (2020) stated the causes and consequences of mainstream media disseminating fake news. Hence, both mainstream media served unreliably true information. Media distortions appear as the triggering factor to agitate emotions, anxieties, and resentments around specific topics (Carmi, 2020), including the sensitive issues like rape and drug abuse addressed to Seungri.

As a minor shareholder in BS club, Seungri was used by the media to make him as the front face of the scandal. On March 23, 2019, by being interviewed, he admitted that he had never attended a meeting for BS nor taken responsibility for internal management since he was busy with his schedule as a singer or performer. Further, he clarified that his name became the promotional strategy for BS. Seungri's business partner, YIS known as the CEO of Yuri Holdings pleaded guilty in January 2020 for all charges related to BS case. Thereby, it showed that disseminating false information has no general normative, institutional, or judicial framework that becomes the media practice to create public confusion or even hate campaigns towards particular individuals (Richter, 2018).

The ideological tendency of the media to serve the fastest and most enthralling information blurs the principles of accurate and objective journalism. The fabrication of information for deceptive purposes has been increasing in this modernized digital era (Nasu, 2021). It is supported by the mass appeal of mainstream media outlets for both upper- and middle- and working-class readers (McFadden, 2012). This means harmful influences may occur in broader sectors, such as democracy stability, political welfare, economy, and health policy. Here, Seungri's case represents how the media becomes deceitful in their potential agenda to hide the actual truth.

The Role of Forensic Linguistics in Untrustworthy News

The impacts of distributing distorted facts can be severe as the public is led to be in extreme sentiment and anxiety. There was a mass report to Seungri's social account as the following act after the misleading information. Then, Instagram took action to ban the account due to violations. Many

people consumed the distorted facts as they believed him as rapist, pimp, or drug abuser. Regarding these alarming impacts, media distortions successfully stir emotions, anxieties, and resentments around specific topics (Carmi, 2020). As an ordinary Korean citizen, the media ruined Lee Seung-hyun's identity after spreading fabricated news.

It comes to the term known as 'cancel culture' among social media users. The notion of 'cancel culture' has since committed into journalistic shorthand wielded as a tool for silencing marginalized people (Clark, 2020). Hence it is noteworthy to create regulations for distributing distorted facts along with enhancing the ethics code of journalism. Based on the Society of Professional Journalists, ethical codes of journalism involve unbiased news, the accuracy of news, and news free from prejudices. In addition, the ideology of crime news itself triggers negative impressions (Nawaaz & Hussain, 2021). Hence the approach of forensic linguistics delineates the correlation of media manipulation on distorted facts and legal regulations since it is to examine the impact of sociocultural factors, especially in a public figure's scandal.

The political motives of the media seek to grab the opportunity to profit from the chaotic and crisis situation (Kim, Xiong, Lee, and Han, 2021). It can be caused by a celebrity. It follows the damage that the media cause is most widespread on every aspect of life. In this case, the drag of the current discussed figure, Seungri, aims to violate his rights by defending against misleading information about him. His identity as an ordinary citizen, Lee Seung-hyun, apart from his previous image and occupation as a Korean singer is also severely impacted.

Most Korean society even addresses their resentment to Seungri, although his charges did not involve sexual footage without consent, sex crime, or even drug abuse. Similarly, such fake news possibly causes irredeemable harm, such as threatening, scare-mongering, and causing psychological distress (Simon & Nyitrai, 2021). Name-clearing towards this misleading news seems unattainable for him. In fact, his charges cover his involvement as a minor shareholder in the business of Burning Sun Clubs, such as embezzlement, violation of the food sanitation act, habitual gambling, violation of the foreign exchange transaction act, prostitution, distributing obscene material, and co-principal of aggravated assault.

Consequently, forensic linguistics in this current research contributes to improve media literacy or fact-checking, suggesting legal regulation for giving sanctions towards deceitful media and the distorted facts they distribute in their articles. The demand for legal action is not purposed merely for defending a particular figure or group but also for combating intentionally deceptive information to disseminate publicly. However, this recent research provided an important contribution to raising awareness of the power of truth so that the public would not be naively misled into massive anxiety, resentment, and social psychological distress.

Furthermore, Sousa-silva (2022) succeeds in mapping linguistic features as evidence of fake news through the lens of forensic linguistics. The findings were obtained by comparing English and Portuguese fake news. This utilizes the newness of the results of this recent research. Specifically, the findings in this research are elucidated from English news, although the actual information was from Korean. Concerning the implication of language study, news articles containing distorted facts become obvious examples of collaborating academic approaches in combatting fake news in this digital era. The answer to why forensic linguistics is required in this problem attempts the interpretation of legal disposition in spreading distorted facts. This can be realized as the supporting reason to actualize a legal rule, specifically an international law, about fabricated facts.

In conclusion, forensic linguistics assists in detecting and investigating widely circulated distorted facts. It can be regarded as the contribution of a linguistic approach to certain social problems like distorted facts, fake news, or deceitful media. As the previous research focused on the cases of politics (Baade, 1019; Nagasako, 2020; Mahyoob, Algaraady, & Alrahaili, 2021) and health (Simon and Nyitrai, 2022;), the results of this research illustrate the development that pervades the scandal of a public figure, especially a well-known celebrity triggering mass hatred and blatant resentment. Defamation appeared as a new notion after this disinformation phenomenon occurred, which can be considered as the most significant novelty of this recent research compared with the previous findings.

Indeed, it evinces that information disorder has taken control of broader scope in this highly sophisticated digital era, not merely covering

political actors or government policy. This is prone to cause internal conflict among citizens of a country that becomes a vulnerable spot for democratic instability. It mitigates the research gaps with the prior scholars in the interrelated topic of discussion. This can hint at deeper striking problems provoking national instability, even international conflicts. It reflects the growing concerns about malicious acts or fact distortion and its potentially coercive effects on society (Nasu, 2021). Hence, Seungri's distorted fact is considered as one of the warning phenomena that can trigger threatening impacts in all aspects of life, including law, economy, health, education, and even national stability.

IV. CONCLUSION

This research has discussed and clarified the issue of distorted facts by media, specifically about a Korean celebrity scandal. Based on the linguistic analysis, such as passive constructions, lexical references, subject matters, and the surrounding contexts indisputably prove the indication of fact distortion. Through Villa's interpretative pragmatics (2010), this research is considered to reveal the linguistic analysis related to distorted facts by media. It is expected to contribute to providing evidence through the lens of forensic linguistics.

Media manipulated the truth and posited Seungri as the constructed main suspect of the scandal. The misleading information causes socio-psychological change, as Kim et al (2020) highlight

fake news as the supporting source for people's opinions. Legal regulations are perhaps prone to be violated. Media use their rights of freedom of expression yet lack ethical and professional journalism qualities. Political motives and ideological tendencies ground the dissemination of distorted facts by media. Thus, the role of forensic linguistics is to shed light on distorted facts and manipulative media by providing language analysis as evidence. The impact can be seen that Seungri's previous identity as a well-known celebrity has been ruined. Even this phenomenon affects his personal life besides as an entertainer in Korea. All the distorted facts can be evidence of defamation for misleading media reports.

This recent research turns the spotlight on the role of a pragmatic approach in forensic linguistics to scrutinize distorted facts by deceitful media. Hence, it also aims to enhance social awareness of the truth behind blatant public outrage and its social consequences. It means an international legal rule is urgently necessary the combat the disinformation by the media. Regarding the limitation of this research, it merely concentrates on media texts applying a purposive sampling strategy of a celebrity's scandal. There is a need for future research to apply an ethnographic approach to disinformation cases. It would help observe the obstacles to accuracy and transparency for media outlets through the language used on their news articles. The power of truth should be the solid base of news value to halt distorted facts.

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