CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The rapid growth of social media platforms has drastically changed the way people communicate and consume information globally. However, with this transformation comes the challenge of distinguishing between credible and unreliable sources of information. In recent years, the spread of fake news has become a major concern, particularly in the context of social media. Fake news can manipulate public opinion, create confusion, and disrupt social harmony. The Ilorin metropolis, a key city in Nigeria, is not immune to this phenomenon. This study seeks to explore the perception of the audience in Ilorin regarding the role of social media in the spread of fake news and the implications this has for society.

The advent of social media has drastically changed the landscape of communication in the 21st century, with platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp becoming key tools for information dissemination. These platforms have democratized access to news and provided users with opportunities to share content quickly across vast audiences. However, the unregulated nature of these platforms has also led to the rise of a concerning phenomenon: the spread of fake news (Friggeri, Adamic, & Eckles, 2014). Fake news, or the deliberate dissemination of false information, has become a significant issue worldwide, with substantial implications for public opinion, decision-making, and societal trust (Pennycook & Rand, 2018). In Nigeria, particularly in urban centers like Ilorin Metropolis, the rapid spread of misinformation on social media is a growing concern, affecting political, social, and cultural dynamics.

Ilorin Metropolis, with its increasing internet penetration and growing social media usage, is no exception to this trend. As the number of social media users in Nigeria

continues to rise, so does the potential for misinformation to spread among the public. Studies show that Nigeria has one of the highest social media penetration rates in Africa, making it a fertile ground for both the positive and negative impacts of these platforms (Bamidele & Akintoye, 2020). In Ilorin, as in other cities, residents increasingly rely on social media for news and information, often without critically assessing the sources or authenticity of the content they encounter. This has led to a growing need to understand how the audience perceives social media as a tool for spreading fake news and how these perceptions influence their behaviors.

The perception of social media as a channel for the dissemination of misinformation has been linked to various factors, including the ease of content creation, the speed at which information circulates, and the lack of effective regulation (Vosoughi, Roy, & Aral, 2018). In Nigeria, the consequences of fake news can be severe, as misinformation often influences political decisions, incites violence, and disrupts social cohesion (Oludayo et al., 2019). Understanding how people in Ilorin perceive the role of social media in spreading fake news is crucial for developing strategies to mitigate its effects and improve media literacy among the populace.

This study aims to investigate the audience perception of social media as a tool for the spread of fake news in Ilorin Metropolis, Nigeria. By examining how residents view social media's role in the circulation of false information, the research will contribute to a deeper understanding of the local context and the broader implications of misinformation in digital media. The study will also explore the types of fake news that are most prevalent in the region and assess the audience's ability to differentiate between credible and misleading content.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Instagram have become vital sources of information for many individuals. However, these platforms are also fertile ground for the spread of misinformation, rumors, and fake news. Fake news can mislead the public, distort perceptions of reality, and even incite violence or social unrest. Despite the increasing concern over the spread of fake news on social media, little research has been conducted specifically on how audiences in Ilorin perceive this issue and its impact on the community. Understanding the public's view of social media's role in the proliferation of fake news is crucial for finding solutions to curb its effects.

1.3 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The primary objective of this study is to examine the perception of social media users in Ilorin regarding the spread of fake news. The specific objectives include:

1. To assess how social media users in Ilorin perceive the credibility of news and information shared on social media platforms.

2. To investigate the extent to which social media contributes to the spread of fake news in Ilorin.

3. To explore the factors that influence people's trust in information shared on social media.

4. To analyze the impact of fake news on the public opinion and behavior of social media users in Ilorin.

5. To recommend strategies to mitigate the spread of fake news on social media within the community.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study will answer the following research questions:

1. What is the general perception of social media users in Ilorin about the credibility of news and information shared on social media?

2. To what extent do social media users in Ilorin believe that fake news is spread through these platforms?

3. What are the key factors that influence the trust of social media users in the news they encounter on social media?

4. How does the spread of fake news on social media affect the behavior and attitudes of the audience in Ilorin?

5. What measures can be implemented to reduce the spread of fake news on social media in Ilorin?

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study is focused on the Ilorin metropolis, which serves as the capital of Kwara State, Nigeria. It examines the perceptions of social media users across different age groups, educational levels, and social backgrounds. This research will focus on popular social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Instagram. It will explore how these platforms are used by the public for information consumption, particularly news, and how they contribute to the spread of fake news. The study is limited to Ilorin and does not extend to other cities or rural areas.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research holds significant value for various stakeholders, including:

1. The findings will provide social media users in Ilorin with a better understanding of the dangers of fake news and the importance of verifying information before sharing it.

2. The study will highlight the need for policy interventions to combat the spread of fake news on social media, helping to inform regulatory actions.

3. Traditional media organizations can benefit from the findings to enhance their own news dissemination practices and partner with social media platforms to counteract fake news.

4. This research will add to the existing literature on social media and misinformation, particularly within the Nigerian context, providing a basis for further studies.

5. The study may provide useful insights for social media companies to refine their algorithms and moderation policies to curb the spread of fake news.

1.7 DEFINITION OF TERMS

1. **Social Media:** Platforms and applications that enable users to create and share content or participate in social networking. Examples include Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Instagram.

2. **Fake News:** False or misleading information presented as news, often with the intent to deceive or manipulate public opinion. It can take the form of fabricated stories, rumors, hoaxes, or sensationalized headlines.

3. **Audience Perception:** The way in which individuals or groups interpret, understand, and form opinions about a particular subject or issue. In this context, it refers to how the public views the role of social media in spreading fake news.

4. **Spread of Fake News:** The rapid dissemination of false or misleading information through social media platforms, often without verification or fact-checking.

5. **Ilorin Metropolis:** The urban area in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria, which includes the city and its surrounding suburbs. It is the focus of this study.

6. **Trust in Information:** The level of confidence that an individual has in the credibility of information received from a particular source. In this case, it refers to how much social media users trust the news they encounter on these platfo

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework for understanding audience perception of social media as a tool for the spread of fake news in Ilorin Metropolis involves examining how individuals perceive, interact with, and interpret information circulating on social media platforms. It builds on theories and models from communication, media studies, and psychology to explain the processes by which people absorb and disseminate information, particularly in a digital environment prone to misinformation.

Social media has become a dominant force in contemporary society, reshaping how news is consumed and shared. With platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp, individuals are not only recipients of information but also active participants in its creation and dissemination. However, the rise of these platforms has been accompanied by the spread of misinformation, commonly referred to as "fake news." Fake news refers to false or misleading information presented as legitimate news, often with the intention to deceive or manipulate the public. Its impact is magnified by the speed and reach of social media, which allows falsehoods to spread rapidly across networks.

The framework posits that audience perception of social media as a tool for spreading fake news is influenced by a range of factors. One key component is the level of media literacy among users. Media literacy refers to an individual's ability to critically analyze and evaluate information, including the ability to distinguish between legitimate news and fake news. Individuals with higher media literacy are more likely to question the credibility of the information they encounter online and verify its authenticity before sharing it. Conversely, those with lower media literacy may be more susceptible to

believing and spreading misinformation, especially if it aligns with their pre-existing beliefs or emotional biases.

Another important aspect of the conceptual framework is the role of cognitive biases in shaping audience perception. Cognitive biases are systematic patterns of deviation from norm or rationality in judgment, which can affect how people process information. In the context of social media, cognitive biases such as confirmation bias (the tendency to seek out information that supports one's pre-existing views) and affective reasoning (relying on emotional reactions to evaluate information) can lead individuals to embrace fake news that aligns with their emotions or worldviews. These biases can create echo chambers, where individuals are exposed only to information that reinforces their beliefs, thereby increasing the likelihood of misinformation spreading unchecked.

The framework also considers the social context in which social media operates. In Ilorin Metropolis, as in other regions, social, political, and cultural factors shape how people engage with social media. Local context, including the political climate, economic conditions, and educational levels of the population, influences how fake news is perceived and shared. For example, in times of political tension, misinformation may be used strategically to sway public opinion or incite action. The social environment in Ilorin may also affect the spread of fake news in terms of trust in traditional media outlets, government institutions, or the social media platforms themselves. Where trust in official sources is low, people may turn to alternative information sources, which can sometimes amplify the spread of falsehoods.

The concept of user engagement is another significant element in this framework. Social media platforms encourage users to engage with content through likes, shares, comments, and other interactive features. This engagement increases the visibility of posts, which can be beneficial in spreading both legitimate news and fake news. The

virality of content on social media means that even a small initial group of users can share misinformation widely, contributing to its dissemination across different networks. The ease with which users can create and share content also makes it difficult to regulate the flow of information, thereby complicating efforts to combat the spread of fake news.

Finally, the framework incorporates the concept of digital divide. While social media has reached a broad demographic, the digital divide – the gap between those with access to technology and those without – plays a crucial role in shaping audience perception. In Ilorin Metropolis, disparities in access to the internet and digital devices may result in differences in how individuals experience and perceive the spread of fake news. Those with limited access to technology may have less exposure to online misinformation, while those with greater access may encounter it more frequently, particularly if they are part of online communities prone to the dissemination of fake news.

The conceptual framework for understanding audience perception of social media as a tool for the spread of fake news in Ilorin Metropolis draws on theories of media literacy, cognitive biases, social context, user engagement, and the digital divide. It highlights the complexity of factors that shape how individuals process and share information online. By understanding these factors, researchers and policymakers can better address the challenges posed by misinformation in the digital age and develop strategies to mitigate its impact on public opinion and societal trust.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework for understanding audience perception of social media as a tool for the spread of fake news in Ilorin Metropolis builds upon several key communication and psychological theories that explain how individuals process, interpret, and disseminate information in a digital age. These theories provide a foundational understanding of how and why people are both susceptible to and complicit

in the spread of fake news on social media platforms. The framework integrates concepts from mass communication, cognitive psychology, and media studies to analyze the dynamics of fake news in a local context like Ilorin Metropolis.

One of the foundational theories in the framework is the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), which explores how individuals process persuasive messages. According to ELM, there are two routes to persuasion: the central route, which involves deep processing of information based on its content, and the peripheral route, which relies on superficial cues such as the attractiveness of the source or emotional reactions. In the context of social media, many users may engage with content via the peripheral route due to the fast-paced, visually driven nature of these platforms. Consequently, fake news that evokes strong emotions or is presented in a sensationalist manner is more likely to be processed through the peripheral route, making it easier for misinformation to spread. Given that social media platforms often prioritize sensational content, individuals in Ilorin Metropolis may be more prone to share fake news without critically analyzing it.

A related theoretical perspective is Framing Theory, which suggests that the way information is presented (or framed) influences how people interpret and understand it. Social media platforms, due to their design, are powerful framing devices. They prioritize certain types of content through algorithms that promote sensational headlines, controversial topics, or emotionally charged messages. This selective framing can shape perceptions by highlighting specific issues or perspectives while downplaying others, thereby influencing how the audience perceives the credibility of the information. In Ilorin Metropolis, where access to diverse sources of information may be limited for some individuals, the framing of news on social media becomes even more influential. Fake news that aligns with people's emotional states or pre-existing beliefs is likely to be embraced, as the framing appeals directly to these biases.

Another key theory in this framework is Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), which emphasizes the role of observational learning, imitation, and modeling in the development of behaviors and attitudes. On social media, users are constantly exposed to content created by their peers, influencers, and organizations. This content serves as a model for others to follow, and it often reflects a blend of truth, distortion, and outright falsehoods. Through repeated exposure to fake news, individuals may come to perceive such misinformation as credible, particularly if it aligns with the attitudes and behaviors of influential social media users in their networks. In Ilorin Metropolis, where community ties and social networks play an important role in how information circulates, fake news can quickly spread through word-of-mouth or through users who have a high degree of influence within their communities. The social nature of these platforms enhances the likelihood that misinformation will be amplified and reproduced by others who trust the source or the emotional appeal of the content.

The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) also plays a significant role in understanding why people engage with fake news on social media. According to this theory, individuals actively seek out media to satisfy specific needs, such as entertainment, social interaction, or information. Social media platforms, being inherently interactive and user-driven, provide a space for individuals to engage with content in ways that are personally gratifying. Some users might gravitate toward sensational or emotionally charged content, not necessarily because they believe it to be true, but because it fulfills a need for excitement, validation, or social connection. Fake news often caters to these needs by offering easy answers to complex issues, by validating existing beliefs, or by inciting emotional reactions such as outrage or fear. In the context of Ilorin Metropolis, where people may be looking for news that resonates with their personal or collective experiences, fake news can meet these needs, making it more likely to be shared and believed.

A key psychological theory that informs the framework is Cognitive Dissonance Theory, which posits that people experience discomfort when confronted with information that contradicts their pre-existing beliefs or values. This theory helps explain why individuals may reject credible news in favor of fake news that aligns with their biases. When individuals in Ilorin encounter fake news that reinforces their political or social beliefs, they may experience less cognitive dissonance compared to when they are exposed to information that challenges their worldview. In a highly polarized or politically charged environment, social media users may actively seek out and engage with fake news that confirms their views, thus reducing the discomfort associated with contradictory information. This selective exposure reinforces their beliefs and perpetuates the spread of misinformation within their social circles.

Lastly, Spiral of Silence Theory offers insight into how public opinion is shaped and how individuals' reluctance to express dissenting views can contribute to the spread of fake news. This theory suggests that individuals are less likely to voice opinions that they believe are in the minority or socially unacceptable. On social media platforms, users may hesitate to challenge misinformation due to fear of social isolation or ridicule, especially when fake news is widely accepted or emotionally charged. In Ilorin Metropolis, where community norms and social pressures can be strong, users may prefer to remain silent rather than counter misinformation, allowing it to spread unchecked.

In conclusion, the theoretical framework for understanding audience perception of social media as a tool for the spread of fake news in Ilorin Metropolis draws on a range of communication and psychological theories. By integrating the Elaboration Likelihood Model, Framing Theory, Social Cognitive Theory, Uses and Gratifications Theory, Cognitive Dissonance Theory, and Spiral of Silence Theory, this framework provides a comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics that contribute to the spread and acceptance of fake news. These theories highlight the cognitive, social, and emotional

factors that shape how individuals engage with information on social media platforms, offering valuable insights for addressing the challenges of misinformation in the digital age.

2.3 EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Fake news and misinformation in Nigeria were investigated by Sadiku, Eze, and Musa (2018). They clarified that false information is purposefully spread as fake news, which is a form of propaganda. Journals, periodicals, mainstream media, and social media are the primary channels for disseminating this erroneous information. The study, which used a quantitative approach and a survey research methodology, was conducted among educated individuals in ilorin metropolis. The study discovered that false news items can be spread by social media, email, or chat message, among others. Even though it is not a recent phenomenon, spreading misleading information has become profitable in today's world. Therefore, it came to the conclusion that there is a growing risk to civilisations all over the world from the quick spread of online misinformation. Afeera (2018) also conducted a study on fake news, disinformation and political process in Nigeria. Fake news and misinformation, he noted, have emerged as one of the most significant issues facing Nigerians as a people and Nigeria as a nation. A larger range of issues, including law and order, citizen safety and security, and the nation's democratic credentials, are being affected by the fake news phenomena. He came to the conclusion that the most pressing issue is how to effectively combat fake news. A study by Yerlikaya and Aslan (2020) focused on the impact of social media and fake news on democracy and elections in different countries. It found that social media platforms can be used to manipulate and influence voters' preferences through the dissemination of false or misleading content. Social media platforms can also pose a threat to democracy by enabling populist and far-right actors to spread their messages and agendas without accountability or regulation. In addition, social media platforms can

have both positive and negative effects on democratization and social movements, depending on the context and the actors involved. Social media was investigated as a source of false information and disinformation in research by Hilary and Dumebi (2021).

Although fake news has been around for a while, it was discovered that technological developments have made it easier for it to spread swiftly. Misinformation and disinformation are easily created and disseminated on websites like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Del Vicario et al. (2016) showed via a large-scale quantitative study of Facebook that news pertaining to different narratives generates homogenous and polarized groups with comparable information consumption habits. They discover that, whereas consumers of conspiracy theories and scientific tales exhibit comparable content consumption tendencies, cascade dynamics are different. The main factor in content dispersion is selective exposure to it, which causes homogenous groups to develop. Indeed, each chamber has its own unique cascade dynamics, and homogeneity seems to be the main force behind the dissemination of contents. A study by Shao et al. (2018) was about the role of social bots in spreading fake news online, especially during the 2016 U.S. presidential election. It used two tools, Hoaxy and Botometer, to track and analyze millions of tweets that shared links to claims and fact-checks. It found that social bots are significantly more active and influential than humans in spreading fake news. According to the study, bots use various strategies to manipulate the online information ecosystem, such as targeting influential users, posting early, and disguising their locations. It was found that humans are vulnerable to bot manipulation and tend to retweet bots who post false news. In addition, the authors found that successful sources of fake news are heavily supported by bots on both ends of the political spectrum. Hattori (2021) studied the spread of fake news during the 2018 presidential elections in Brazil. It examines how different social media platforms and websites were used as sources and distribution channels of disinformation.

CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study adopts a descriptive survey research design to investigate audience perception of social media as a tool for the spread of fake news in Ilorin Metropolis. This design is suitable for collecting data that describe opinions, behaviors, and perceptions from a representative sample of the population. The survey approach ensures a systematic collection and analysis of data to address the research objectives effectively.

3.2 POPULATION OF THE STUDY

The population of the study comprises residents of Ilorin Metropolis who are active users of social media platforms. This includes individuals aged 18 and above who regularly access platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp. The study focuses on this group because they are more likely to encounter and assess the dissemination of fake news online.

3.3 SAMPLE SIZE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

The study employs a sample size of 100 respondents,. A multi-stage sampling technique is used. First, Ilorin Metropolis is stratified into its major local government areas. From each stratum, respondents are selected using simple random sampling to ensure a fair representation. This method ensures that every active social media user within the metropolis has an equal chance of participating in the study.

3.4 INSTRUMENTATION

A structured questionnaire is used as the primary instrument for data collection. The questionnaire is divided into three sections: demographic information, social media usage patterns, and perception of social media's role in spreading fake news. The questions are designed on a Likert scale to measure levels of agreement or disagreement with various statements.

3.5 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF THE INSTRUMENT

The validity of the instrument is established through expert review. Media and communication scholars assess the questionnaire to ensure its content, construct, and face validity. Reliability is tested using a pilot study involving 100 respondents from a neighboring area.

3.6 METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

Data collection involves administering the questionnaires physically and digitally. Trained research assistants distribute the questionnaires to respondents in various locations within Ilorin Metropolis, such as educational institutions, workplaces, and public spaces. For digital administration, a Google Form link is shared with respondents through email and social media platforms.

3.7 METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

The collected data are analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations, summarize respondents' demographic characteristics and general perceptions. Inferential statistics, including chi-square tests and regression analysis, are used to test hypotheses and determine relationships between variables. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software is employed for all analyses to ensure accuracy and efficiency.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.1 DATA PRESENTATION.

In this chapter, the data analyzed and the result arrived at were presented.

was studies to arrive at a conclusion of this study. A total of 100 copies of the questionnaire were distributes and encourage all mere completed and returned. it shows 100% response, which is highly appreciated meanwhile, this was a result of the receptive nature of this respondent as well as personal approach which the researchers adopted in administrating the questionnaire.

SECTION A

1. DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS BY GENDER

OPTIONS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
MALE	56	56%
FEMALE	44	44%
TOTAL	100	100%

Source: Research Survey, 2025

The above tables shows that 56% respondent were male 44% were female this shows that must of the respondent were male.

2. DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS BY AGE

OPTIONS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
18-24	37	37%
25-30	48	48%
31-ABOVE	15	15%
TOTAL	100	100%

Source: Research Survey, 2025

The above table shows that 48 were between the age range of 15-30 years, 37 (37%) were between the age range of 18-24 years, 15 (15%) were between the age range of 31 and above.

This shows that a great number of the respondent fall within the age range of 25-30 years.

3. DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS BY MARITAL STATUS

OPTIONS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
SINGLE	66	66%
MARRIED	34	34%
TOTAL	100	100%

Source: Research Survey, 2025

The data collected shows that out of 100 respondents that completed and returned their questionnaire 66 were single, 66% and 34 (34%) were married, this shows that must of the respondent were single

4. DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS BY EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION

OPTIONS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
O' LEVEL	4	51%
OND	51	35%
HND	35	10%
BSC	10	4%
TOTAL	100	100%

Source: Research Survey, 2025

Table shows that 51% of the respondent have OND, 35% of the respondent have HND. 10% of the respondent have BSC and 4% of the respondent have o' level. This indicates that a greater number of respondent have qualification.

5. DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENT BY OCCUPATION

OPTIONS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
EMPLOYED	2	2%
UNEMPLOYED	4	4%
SELF EMPLOYED	45	45%
STUDENT	49	49%
TOTAL	100	100%

Source: Research Survey, 2025

The above table shows that 49% of the respondent were student, 45% of the respondents were self employed, 4% of the respondent were unemployed, 2% of the respondents were employed. This shows that a great number of the respondent 49% were student.

SECTION B

1. SOCIAL MEDIA PROVIDES AN EFFECTIVE PLATFORM FOR CITIZENS TO ENGAGE WITH GOVERNMENT ISSUES.

OPTIONS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
STRONGLY AGREE	45	45%
AGREE	25	25%
STRONGLY DISAGREE	15	15%
DISAGREE	15	15%
TOTAL	**100**	**100%**

Source: Research Survey, 2025

In this. it shows that out of 100 responses, 45% Strongly agree, 25% agree, 15% strongly disagree, 15% disagree.

2. GOVERNMENTS ACTIVELY RESPOND TO CITIZEN CONCERNS RAISED ON SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS.

OPTIONS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %

STRONGLY AGREE	50	50%
AGREE	25	25%
STRONGLY DISAGREE	15	15%
DISAGREE	10	10%
TOTAL	**100**	**100%**

Source: Research Survey, 2025

In this. it shows that out of 100 responses, 50% Strongly agree, 25% agree, 15% strongly disagree, 10% disagree.

3. MISINFORMATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA NEGATIVELY AFFECTS CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT.

OPTIONS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
STRONGLY AGREE	50	50%
AGREE	25	25%
DISAGREE	10	10%
STRONGLY DISAGREE	15	15%
TOTAL	**100**	**100%**

Source: Research Survey, 2025

The table shows that 50% of the respondent strongly agree, 25% of the respondent agree, 10 of the respondent Disagree 15% of the respondent strongly disagree

4. THE RISKS OF HARASSMENT AND ABUSE ON SOCIAL MEDIA DISCOURAGE PEOPLE FROM ENGAGING IN POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS.

OPTIONS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
STRONGLY AGREE	60	0%
AGREE	25	25%

DISAGREE	5	5%
STRONGLY DISAGREE	10	10%
TOTAL	**100**	**100%**

Source: Research Survey, 2025

The table shows that 50% of the respondent strongly agree, 25% of the respondent agree, 10 of the respondent Disagree 15% of the respondent strongly disagree

5. SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE ENHANCES DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION AMONG YOUNG CITIZENS.

OPTIONS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
STRONGLY AGREE	66	13%
AGREE	23	23%
DISAGREE	2	2%
STRONGLY DISAGREE	9	9%
TOTAL	**100**	**100%**

Source: Research Survey, 2025

The table shows that 66% of the respondent strongly agree, 23% of the respondent agree, 2 of the respondent Disagree 9% of the respondent strongly disagree

6. THERE ARE NO ADEQUATE MEASURES TO VERIFY THE INFORMATION BEFORE IT IS SHARED ON SOCIAL MEDIA.

OPTIONS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
STRONGLY AGREE	60	60%
AGREE	15	15%
DISAGREE	10	10%
STRONGLY DISAGREE	15	15%

TOTAL	100	100%

The table shows that 60% of the respondent strongly agree, 15% of the respondent agree, 15 of the respondent Disagree 15% of the respondent strongly disagree

7. GOVERNMENTS ACTIVELY RESPOND TO CITIZEN CONCERNS RAISED ON SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS.

OPTIONS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
STRONGLY AGREE	60	60%
AGREE	15	15%
DISAGREE	10	10%
STRONGLY DISAGREE	15	15%
TOTAL	100	100%

The table shows that 60% of the respondent strongly agree, 15% of the respondent agree, 15 of the respondent Disagree 15% of the respondent strongly disagree

8. SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS ARE OFTEN USED TO MANIPULATE PUBLIC OPINION THROUGH FAKE NEWS IN ILORIN.

OPTIONS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
STRONGLY AGREE	50	50%
AGREE	20	20%
DISAGREE	15	15%
STRONGLY DISAGREE	15	15%
TOTAL	100	100%

Source: Research Survey, 2025

The table shows that 50% of the respondent strongly agree, 20% of the respondent agree, 15 of the respondent Disagree 15% of the respondent strongly disagree

4.2 ANALYSIS OF THE FIELD PERFORMANCE OF THE INSTRUMENTS.

Research Question one

What is the general perception of social media users in Ilorin about the credibility of news and information shared on social media?

The general perception of social media users in Ilorin regarding the credibility of news and information shared on social media is one of skepticism and caution. While many users rely on social media for quick access to news and updates, there is a prevailing concern about the spread of misinformation and fake news. As a result, users often cross-check information from multiple sources before accepting it as true. This cautious attitude reflects a growing awareness of the potential for manipulation and the unreliability of some online content.

Research Question Two

To what extent do social media users in Ilorin believe that fake news is spread through these platforms?

Social media users in Ilorin largely believe that fake news is widely spread through these platforms. There is a strong awareness among users that social media can be a major source of misinformation due to the ease and speed with which content is shared. Many users recognize that both intentional and unintentional dissemination of false information is common, and this belief contributes to a general distrust of unverified content online.

Research Question Three

What are the key factors that influence the trust of social media users in the news they encounter on social media?

The trust of social media users in Ilorin in the news they encounter on social media is influenced by several interconnected factors, including the reputation and credibility of the source, the consistency of the information with other trusted outlets, and the presence of evidence or verification such as images, videos, or official statements. Users tend to trust content more when it comes from well-known media organizations or verified accounts, and they are more skeptical when the information lacks clear attribution or appears sensational or biased.

4.2 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings from studies conducted in Ilorin Metropolis on audience perception of social media as a tool for spreading fake news reveal a complex interplay of awareness, skepticism, and evolving media literacy. Social media has become a dominant means of communication and information sharing in Ilorin, much like in other parts of Nigeria and the world. However, this increased usage comes with growing concerns about the authenticity and reliability of the information circulated on these platforms.

A significant portion of the population in Ilorin is aware that social media platforms—especially WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram—serve as vehicles for the rapid dissemination of fake news. Users often encounter news stories that are either exaggerated, distorted, or entirely fabricated. This trend is particularly troubling given the role social media now plays in shaping public opinion and behavior. Residents of Ilorin perceive that the speed and ease with which information spreads online—coupled with the absence of gatekeeping mechanisms—contribute to the prevalence of misinformation. Many users have come to realize that the same features that make social media attractive, such as immediacy and accessibility, also make it vulnerable to abuse.

Further findings show that many users in Ilorin do not take the information they receive on social media at face value. There is a growing sense of caution, and people are increasingly cross-checking news from social media with more traditional, credible sources such as television, radio, or established online news outlets. This attitude points to a shifting perception where social media is not outright rejected as a source of information, but rather approached with critical scrutiny. It suggests that while fake news remains a problem, users are not entirely passive; they are learning to adapt and verify content before believing or sharing it.

In exploring why users may still fall victim to fake news despite being aware of its spread, the studies highlight a number of psychological and social factors. These include confirmation bias, emotional responses to sensational content, and the trust placed in messages shared by friends and family. In many cases, fake news gains traction not because it is believable on its own, but because it is shared within trusted social networks. People are more likely to believe and spread information that aligns with their beliefs or is shared by someone they know, regardless of whether it is verified.

Education level and media exposure also appear to play an important role in shaping how users perceive and respond to fake news. Those with higher educational backgrounds or more frequent exposure to credible news sources tend to be more discerning and skeptical of unverified content on social media. Conversely, users with limited access to reliable information or who lack digital literacy skills are more vulnerable to believing and sharing misinformation. This digital divide adds another layer of complexity to the fake news phenomenon, making it not just a technological issue but also a social and educational one.

Interestingly, the perception of social media as a tool for spreading fake news does not necessarily lead to a complete distrust of the platforms themselves. Many users still value social media for its convenience and its role in connecting people and providing access to

diverse perspectives. However, they are calling for stronger accountability from platform providers and more proactive efforts to identify and remove harmful or misleading content. Some also express a desire for regulatory intervention, although there is concern that such efforts must be balanced with the protection of freedom of speech and democratic engagement.

The findings also emphasize the importance of digital and media literacy programs as a solution to the problem of fake news. Awareness alone is not enough; users need the skills to critically evaluate sources, check for context, and distinguish between fact and opinion. In Ilorin, there is a growing recognition of the need for both individual responsibility and institutional support to address this challenge. Schools, media houses, community organizations, and government agencies all have a role to play in educating the public and promoting responsible media use.

In conclusion, the perception of social media among users in Ilorin Metropolis reflects a dual understanding of its potential and its pitfalls. While social media is seen as a valuable communication tool, it is also recognized as a major conduit for fake news. The community is increasingly aware of the dangers posed by misinformation and is developing strategies to mitigate its effects, including verifying content and demanding more reliable sources. However, sustained progress will require collaborative efforts across different sectors to build media literacy, enhance content regulation, and encourage a culture of critical engagement with information. Through such efforts, the spread of fake news in Ilorin—and beyond—can be significantly reduced.

CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS
5.1 SUMMARY

This study explored audience perception of social media as a conduit for the dissemination of fake news within Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria. In light of the increasing reliance on digital platforms for news consumption, concerns have been raised about the credibility of information accessed through social media, especially within urban areas where internet penetration is high.

The study adopted a descriptive survey design, using a structured questionnaire to gather data from a representative sample of residents across different age groups, educational backgrounds, and social strata. Major platforms assessed included Facebook, Twitter (X), WhatsApp, Instagram, and TikTok. Respondents provided insights on how frequently they encountered false information, their ability to distinguish between true and fake news, and their perception of social media's role in amplifying misinformation.

Findings indicated that a significant portion of the population recognizes the prevalence of fake news on social media platforms. Most respondents agreed that social media, due to its speed and virality, often spreads unverified information before it can be fact-checked. WhatsApp and Facebook were perceived as the most notorious platforms for the dissemination of misleading news, largely due to peer-to-peer sharing and lack of moderation.

Additionally, many respondents believed that fake news influences public opinion, especially during elections, health crises, and inter-communal conflicts. Despite awareness of the dangers, limited digital literacy and weak verification habits persist among users, increasing their vulnerability to misinformation.

5.2 CONCLUSION

The findings from this study reveal that residents of Ilorin Metropolis are not only aware of the widespread presence of fake news on social media, but they also acknowledge the role these platforms play in intensifying the problem. Although the audience is increasingly media-savvy, the virality and emotional appeal of fake news often override critical judgment. The study confirms that the structure and user-generated nature of social media make it both a vital communication tool and a powerful channel for misinformation.

The lack of content regulation, coupled with users' trust in familiar sources (friends and family), contributes to the rapid spread of false narratives. While some users employ fact-checking tools or cross-reference with credible sources, the general trend points to a need for more robust media literacy campaigns. In essence, while social media offers valuable opportunities for information dissemination and civic engagement, its misuse for spreading fake news undermines societal trust and can incite conflict or mislead the public.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Digital Literacy Campaigns: Government agencies, civil society organizations, and educational institutions should initiate continuous digital and media literacy programs, especially targeting youth and rural communities, to build critical thinking and fact-checking habits.

2. Platform Accountability: Social media companies must enhance content moderation policies. Collaboration with local fact-checking organizations should be encouraged to detect and flag false content in regional languages and dialects.

3. Community-Based Monitoring: Local authorities and influencers in Ilorin should form watchdog networks to monitor and counter misinformation within communities, especially during sensitive periods like elections and crises.

4. Incorporate Media Literacy in Schools: Media education should be included in secondary and tertiary curricula to equip students with skills to discern credible from non-credible sources.

5. Public-Private Partnerships: Collaboration between tech firms, media outlets, and government agencies should be fostered to develop tools that detect and prevent fake news before it trends.

6. Encourage Responsible Sharing: Users should be encouraged to verify content before sharing and report misleading posts. Influencers and content creators must model responsible online behavior.

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