

**EFFECT OF FAKE NEWS ON PUBLIC
OPINION FORMATION AMONG
RESIDENT OF ILORIN WEST LOCAL
GOVERNMENT AREA, KWARA STATE**

BY

**ARO MARY SEMILORE
ND/23/MAC/PT/0258**

**BEING A RESEACH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE
DEPARTMENT OF MASS COMMUNICATION, INSTITUTE OF
INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY,
KWARA STATE POLYTECHNIC, ILORIN.**

**IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE AWARD OF NATIONAL DIPLOMA (ND) IN
MASS COMMUNICATION**

JULY, 2025

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this research work has been read and approved by DEPARTMENT OF MASS COMMUNICATION, KWARA STATE POLYTECHNIC, ILORIN as having satisfied part of the requirement for the award of National Diploma (ND) in Mass Communication.

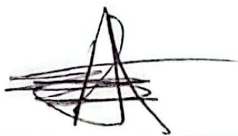


MALLAM LAWAL KEWULERE.

(Project supervisor)

25-07-25

DATE



MR. OLUFADI B.A

(Project coordinator)

25-07-25

DATE



MR. OLOHUNGBEBE F.T.

(Head of Department)

25-7-25

DATE

DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to God Almighty, the source of wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. Your guidance and grace have seen me through the ups and downs of this academic journey, I thank You for the gift of life, the gift of learning, and the gift of perseverance. Your love and grace have sustained me, and your presence has been my comfort and peace.

This project is a testament to your faithfulness and your goodness. May it be a reflection of your glory and a tribute to your greatness.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

All praises, adoration and glorification are due to Almighty God the most gracious, the most beneficent, the most merciful.

Thanks to our parents that make this ND programme a successful one through their prayers and encouragement, may Almighty God bless them abundantly.

We give glory to Almighty God, who has given us the knowledge, wisdom and understanding, and has made it possible for us to complete our ND programme in this Institution, Kwara State Polytechnic, Ilorin.

We express our sincere gratitude to our supervisor **MALLAM LAWAL KEWULERE** for his understanding despite his busy and tight official schedule he found this research work worthy of supervision.

I appreciate the effort of my amiable HOD **MR. OLOHUNGBEBE F.T.** for their great support towards this programme.

We appreciate the effort of our amiable project coordinator **MR. OLUFADI B.A** and other lecturers in the Department of Mass Communication for their great support towards this programme.

My appreciation goes to my parents **MR and MRS ARO.** May God Almighty bless you all and live long to reap the fruit of your labour, (Amen).

My gratitude go to my friend, who have been a constant source of comfort, motivation, and laughter, I thank you for your unshakable commitment and cooperation. Your presence has made this journey more enjoyable and memorable.

To my fellow researchers who generously shared their time, insights, and experiences, I thank you for your trust and willingness to contribute to this study. Your voices have enriched this project, and I am grateful for your participation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page	i
Certification	ii
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgments	iv
Table of Contents	v
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	
1.1 Background to the study	1-3
1.2 Statement of the Problem	3-5
1.3 Objectives of the Study	5
1.4 Research Questions	6
1.5 Significance of the study	6-7
1.6 Scope of the study	7
1.7 Operational Definition of Terms	7-8
Reference	
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	
2.1 Conceptual review	10-24
2.2 Theoretical Framework	25-28
2.3 Review of related studies	28-30
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	
3.1 Research Design	31
3.2 Population of the study	32
3.3 Sample size and sampling technique	32
3.4 Instrumentation	32
3.5 Method of administration of the instrument	33

3.6	Method of Data Analysis	33
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS		
4.1	Introduction	34-36
4.1	Data presentation and analysis	36-43
4.2	Analysis of research Question	43-45
4.3	Discussion of findings	45-47
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS		
5.1	Summary	48-49
5.2	Conclusion	49-50
5.3	Recommendations	50
	References	51-53

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION:

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The proliferation of information in the digital age has revolutionized the way individuals access news and form opinions. However, alongside the benefits of instant information dissemination, the rise of fake news has become a growing concern globally. Fake news refers to deliberately false or misleading information presented as genuine news, often spread through various online platforms. This phenomenon has profound implications for public opinion formation, influencing the perceptions and beliefs of individuals and communities. This study delves into the specific context of Ilorin West Local Government in Kwara State, Nigeria, to explore the impact of fake news on public opinion formation among its residents. Public opinion plays a pivotal role in democratic societies, serving as a cornerstone for informed decision-making and policy formulation. It reflects the collective attitudes, beliefs, and sentiments of a community, shaping the social and political landscape. In the Nigerian context, where democracy is relatively nascent, understanding the dynamics of public opinion is crucial for fostering a participatory and informed citizenry. However, the pervasiveness of fake news threatens the integrity of public opinion by introducing misinformation and distorting the narratives that guide decision-makers.

The advent of the internet and social media platforms has transformed the traditional news landscape. Individuals now have unprecedented access to a vast array of information, enabling them to engage with news stories from diverse sources. While this democratization of information has the potential to empower citizens, it also opens the door to the rapid spread of misinformation. The speed at which news circulates online, coupled with the ease of content sharing, amplifies the impact of fake news on public opinion formation.

Fake news is not confined to a specific region or demographic; rather, it is a global phenomenon with far-reaching consequences. Studies have shown that misinformation spreads faster and more extensively than accurate information on social media platforms (Vosoughi et al., 2018). The global nature of this issue necessitates localized investigations to understand how fake news uniquely affects communities, taking into account cultural, social, and political nuances. Nigeria, like many other countries, grapples with the challenges posed by fake news. The diverse socio-cultural landscape, coupled with widespread internet access, creates an environment where misinformation can flourish. The impact of fake news in Nigeria goes beyond individual beliefs; it can incite violence, influence elections, and erode trust in institutions. A study by Allwell (2019) highlighted the role of fake news in exacerbating ethno-religious tensions in Nigeria, underscoring the urgency of addressing this issue.

Social media platforms serve as primary conduits for the dissemination of fake news. With millions of Nigerians active on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp, these digital spaces become breeding grounds for the rapid spread of misinformation. The interactive nature of social media further complicates the situation, as users often engage with and share content without rigorous fact-checking.

The impact of fake news extends beyond the realm of politics; it permeates social interactions and community dynamics. Falsehoods propagated through fake news can contribute to the spread of rumors, fueling fear and mistrust among community members. Additionally, the manipulation of information can exacerbate existing social tensions, as seen in instances where fake news has contributed to communal conflicts in Nigeria (Allwell, 2019).

Addressing the challenges posed by fake news requires a multifaceted approach, with media literacy playing a central role. Enhancing the ability of individuals to critically evaluate information, discern credible sources, and verify news stories is essential for

cultivating a resilient public opinion. Research indicates that individuals with higher levels of media literacy are better equipped to navigate the complexities of the digital information landscape (Pennycook & Rand, 2018).

The prevalence of fake news undermines the trust traditionally placed in news sources. Mainstream media outlets, which serve as crucial conduits for information in society, face skepticism as individuals grapple with the challenge of distinguishing between credible and misleading sources. This erosion of trust in reputable news organizations can have profound consequences for the democratic process, as citizens may question the legitimacy of information provided by established media (Gottfried & Shearer, 2016).

Fake news does not only influence political perceptions but also has social implications within communities. The spread of false information can contribute to the propagation of rumors, fostering fear and mistrust among community members. In the context of Ilorin West Local Government, where social cohesion is integral, the impact of fake news on interpersonal relationships, community dynamics, and overall social harmony becomes a critical concern.

1.2 Statement Of The Research Problem

The proliferation of fake news has become a significant concern globally, affecting various aspects of society, including public opinion formation. In the context of Ilorin West Local Government of Kwara State, Nigeria, the impact of fake news on residents' opinions merits careful examination. Despite the prevalence of fake news in the digital age, there remains a dearth of empirical research investigating its specific effects on public opinion in this region. This knowledge gap is particularly troubling given the potential ramifications on political, social, and cultural dynamics within the community. With the increasing reliance on online platforms and social media for news consumption, residents of Ilorin West may be particularly susceptible to misinformation and disinformation campaigns, which can skew their perceptions and beliefs. Furthermore,

the influence of fake news on public opinion could have far-reaching consequences, including the erosion of trust in traditional media, polarization of communities, and even threats to social cohesion. Therefore, it is imperative to conduct a comprehensive study that assesses the extent to which fake news shapes public opinion among residents of Ilorin West Local Government, providing insights into the mechanisms through which misinformation spreads and its implications for societal discourse and decision-making.

The residents of Ilorin West Local Government Area are exposed to a plethora of information sources, including social media platforms, traditional news outlets, and community networks. However, amidst this abundance of information, distinguishing between credible and false content can be challenging, particularly in the absence of robust fact-checking mechanisms and media literacy programs. As a result, individuals may unwittingly consume and propagate fake news, leading to the formation of opinions based on inaccurate or misleading information (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). The implications of such misinformation extend beyond individual beliefs to broader societal attitudes and behaviors, influencing perceptions of political leaders, public policies, and social issues (Bovet & Makse, 2019). In the context of Ilorin West, where communal ties and local identities are significant factors in shaping public opinion, the spread of fake news has the potential to exacerbate existing tensions and deepen social divisions.

Moreover, the influence of fake news on public opinion formation in Ilorin West is exacerbated by the prevalence of socio-political rumors and propaganda. In a region marked by diverse ethnic, religious, and socio-economic demographics, rumors and misinformation can serve as potent tools for manipulating public sentiment and garnering political support (Oluyemi & Adebayo, 2018). The circulation of false narratives, whether through word-of-mouth or digital channels, can distort the reality of local issues and events, leading to misinformed interpretations and reactions among residents. Additionally, the lack of accountability in the dissemination of fake news contributes to

its persistence and amplification, perpetuating misinformation cycles that are difficult to counteract (Lewandowsky et al., 2012).

In light of these challenges, there is an urgent need to investigate the specific mechanisms through which fake news influences public opinion formation among the residents of Ilorin West. By understanding the dynamics of information consumption, interpretation, and dissemination within this locality, policymakers, community leaders, and media practitioners can develop targeted interventions to combat the spread of misinformation and promote a more informed public discourse. This study aims to address this gap in the literature by examining the impact of fake news on public opinion formation in Ilorin West, Kwara State, Nigeria, thereby contributing to our understanding of the broader implications of misinformation in contemporary societies.

1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study:

Aim

The aim of this study is to investigate the effect of fake news on public opinion formation among residents of Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria.

Objectives:

1. To assess the levels of exposure to fake news among residents of Ilorin West Local Government.
2. To examine the perceptions and beliefs formed by residents in response to fake news in Ilorin west local government.
3. To analyze the behavioral impact of fake news on public opinion in Ilorin West.
4. To identify potential strategies for mitigating the influence of fake news and promoting media literacy among residents of Ilorin west local government of Kwara State.

1.4 Research Questions:

1. What is the extent of exposure to fake news among residents of Ilorin West Local Government?
2. How do residents perceive and form beliefs in response to fake news in Ilorin West Local Government of Kwara State?
3. In what ways does fake news influence the behavioral aspects of public opinion in Ilorin West?
4. What strategies can be implemented to mitigate the impact of fake news and enhance media literacy among residents of Ilorin west Local government of Kwara State?

1.5 Significance of the study

Public opinion serves as the foundation for democratic governance, influencing policy decisions and shaping the direction of a society. The study aims to shed light on how fake news, with its potential to distort perceptions, may compromise the authenticity of public opinion within Ilorin West. By identifying the factors that contribute to the formation of opinions influenced by misinformation, the research seeks to contribute to efforts aimed at preserving the integrity of public discourse.

The findings of this study have the potential to inform targeted policy interventions to mitigate the impact of fake news in Ilorin West. Understanding the specific challenges faced by this community will enable policymakers to design context-specific strategies for media literacy, information verification, and counteracting the spread of misinformation. These interventions can contribute to creating a more informed and resilient public, safeguarding the democratic process.

The research adds to the academic discourse on fake news and public opinion by providing a nuanced understanding of the dynamics within a specific community. The localized nature of the study contributes depth to existing literature, allowing for a more

comprehensive understanding of the complexities surrounding misinformation's impact on public opinion.

1.6 Scope of the study

The scope of the study focus on the impact of fake news on public opinion formation among residents in Ilorin West Local Government, Kwara State, Nigeria, encompasses several dimensions that are essential for a comprehensive understanding of the issue. Defining the scope involves outlining the specific aspects, variables, and boundaries within which the research will be conducted. The following sections delineate the key components of the study's scope.

1.7 Definition of Terms:

Effect: Effect refers to the change or outcome that results from a specific action, event, or cause.

Fake News:

Fake news refers to deliberately fabricated or misleading information presented as genuine news. This misinformation is often disseminated through various media channels, including online platforms, with the intent to deceive or manipulate public opinion.

Public Opinion:

Public opinion represents the collective attitudes, beliefs, and sentiments of a group of individuals within a society or community. It is the expression of what the public thinks about various issues, events, or policies

Opinion Formation:

Opinion formation is the process by which individuals develop their views, beliefs, and attitudes toward specific subjects.

REFERENCES

- Allcott, H., & Gentzkow, M. (2017). Social media and fake news in the 2016 election. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 31(2), 211-236.
- Allwell, J. (2019). The role of fake news in exacerbating ethno-religious tensions in Nigeria. *African Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 19(1), 45-65.
- Bovet, A., & Makse, H. A. (2019). Influence of fake news in Twitter during the 2016 US presidential election. *Nature Communications*, 10(1), 1-14.
- Gottfried, J., & Shearer, E. (2016). News use across social media platforms 2016. Pew Research Center.
- Lewandowsky, S., Ecker, U. K. H., & Cook, J. (2012). Misinformation and its correction: Continued influence and successful debiasing. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 13(3), 106-131.
- Oluyemi, A., & Adebayo, K. (2018). Socio-political implications of fake news dissemination in Nigeria. *Journal of Media and Politics*, 10(2), 127-145.
- Pennycook, G., & Rand, D. G. (2018). The implied truth effect: Attaching warnings to a subset of fake news stories increases perceived accuracy of stories without warnings. *Management Science*, 66(11), 4944-4957.
- Vosoughi, S., Roy, D., & Aral, S. (2018). The spread of true and false news online. *Science*, 359(6380), 1146-1151.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter which is the review of related literature, the conceptual framework which will be carried out because there are some fundamental and technical concepts that demand for clarifications in the way they are being used in the study. The theoretical framework will show the theories and models in line with the study, the empirical literature will contain a review of related studies related to the concept under study and the critique of literature will establish the gap and the limitations of the previous studies.

2.1 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1.1 Concept of Social media

The mass media used for the purpose of social interaction is called social media. More aptly, social media can be defined as: "Activities that integrate technology, social interaction, and content creation, microblogs, and more." (Charles Wankel, 2010: 242).

For any media to be interactive, it needs to co-exist with some sort of communication techniques, for which social media is not an exception. In order to twirl communication into an interactive dialogue, the social media turns to be one of the most successful applications of Satmass Media (Suman K Kasturi, 2013:183) (a word coined by Dr. Suman K Kasturi to indicate the mass media that work in conjunction with the satellite communications).

As of now, there is no single renowned definition of social media. However, of the many definitions that exist, it can be said that social media is the set of web-based broadcast technologies that enable the democratization of content, giving people the ability to emerge from consumers of content to publishers. With the ability to achieve massive scalability in real time, the social media technologies allow people to connect with each other to produce or re-produce value through online conversation and collaboration (Peter R Scott & J. Mike Jacka, 2011: 5).

In the genesis, social media was limited to fundamental tools and websites used mainly by professors of technology and computer geeks. Over a period of time, social media changed into a behemoth that is changing the way how people connect and converse with corporations, governments, traditional media, and each other. The monopoly of the message held by the traditional media lost its reins with the advent of social media due to the domineering facts of social media over the traditional media.

Davis, J. L. (2012) posited that in case of the traditional media, the communication was merely monologue or, at the most a restricted two-way tête-à-tête. Without using any interactive means, through the traditional media, the individuals used to share information or ideas about an organization. Such a communication was established mainly through one-to-one communication either in person or on the phone; either through the mail or via e-mail.

With the progression of time from mid to late 90s, slowly the conventional and traditional media started getting replaced by the social media. Various forms of social media like Internet forums, personal websites, advanced bulletin board systems and online chat ensured that the individual's voice reached to the mass audience. Many organizations still housed in monologue mode but started reckoning the need to adapt the new media in general and social media, specifically.

As the time passed, today, social media such as Facebook, Friendster, Wikipedia, Whatsapp, dating sites, Craigslist, recipe sharing sites (e.g. allrecipes.com), YouTube, and Instagram have rapidly turned to be the way of how people communicate with each other. Over the past one decade, it has transformed the way people and organizations communicate. This has become a reality with the ubiquitous spreading of broadband internet in every nook and corner of the societies.

According to Boyd and Ellison (2007), the multimedia compatibility of the social media like easy uploading of audio-video content, text and images, another dimension of

immediate global access has been added to the social media, thereby causing a great threat to the prevailing traditional and conventional media. Social media paved a way for every individual to become a publisher of his ideas and views. The social media not only brought advantages, but also equal number of threats along with its inception.

Forms of Social Media

As this overview of common forms of social media demonstrates, some are used primarily for recreation or personal connections, others for work or professional reasons, but most allow leeway for both. As this overview of common forms of social media demonstrates, some are used primarily for recreation or personal connections, others for work or professional reasons, but most allow leeway for both.

According to Manning, J. (2014.) In K. Harvey (Ed.), Encyclopedia of social media and politics, some social media are used primarily for recreation or personal connections, others for work or professional reasons, but most allow leeway for both.

Various forms of social media as given by Wright, Kevin B., & Webb, Lynne M. (2015) are as follow:

- **Email**

Probably the most common form of social media used in everyday life, email (short for electronic mail) involves users logging into an account in order to send and receive messages to other users. Anyone who sends or receives an email must have an account. Many options for free email accounts are available via the World Wide Web, but many times internet service providers will also offer free email accounts with service packages or employers will offer email addresses to their employees.

- **Texters.**

Similar to email, a texter is a two-way communication channel that allows individuals to quickly send a message to another person or a group of people. Although media portrayals often make it look as if texting is a particularly youthful behavior, people of all ages have adapted to texting. Still, younger individuals tend to text more often and

usually do so at a faster speed. As texting technology has improved, it is easier to text photos or to copy and paste links into texters in order to share them with others. Texters often make use of emoticons, the use of keyboard characters to make pictures such as a smiley face (e.g., :-P), a practice that is also common with email.

- **Blogs**

The word blog is derived from the word weblog. A blog is a webpage where an individual or group can share information or ideas with a large group of people via the internet. It is not uncommon for a person to start a blog and then never update it again. Some of the most successful blogs are updated on a regular basis so the followers of the blog can know when to expect new entries. Blogs cover a wide range of topics, including political issues of all kinds. A common feature to blogs is a feedback forum where, after reading an entry, people can interact with both the blog author and others who have commented. Many traditional media outlets have adopted blog-like features online in order to entice readers to continue sticking with their news or entertainment offerings. For example, many newspaper stories end with the opportunity for readers to share their thoughts or comments about a current issue. These news stories especially when about hot or particularly partisan political issues can lead to serious debates. Because of the contentious nature many blogs and news outlets find, it is not uncommon for a user to be required to register in order to participate.

- **Message boards**

It is not uncommon for fans of television programs or other popular entertainment to frequent message boards that allow users to post messages that talk about a clearly defined subject. Message boards also prove popular with people seeking social support or advice, whether that is wounded warriors trying to make sense of life after war or someone facing breast cancer who wants to talk to someone else who has been through the experience. Advice is also offered through review sites such as Yelp that allow users to rate businesses such as restaurants.

- **Connection sites**

Online dating is another form of social media. Users approach online dating sites—some that require paid membership and others that are free of charge—and create a profile that tells who they are and what they seek in a relationship. Some may be skeptical about how honest some are about the information displayed in an online profile, but research shows that people are generally honest. The stigma placed upon online dating sites has continued to diminish as more people continue to use them in order to meet dating partners. In addition to dating, others may use connection sites to find friends or activity partners.

- **Social networking sites**

Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter, and other social networking sites are almost ubiquitous features in contemporary culture. Even those who choose not to create an online profile and participate will often hear from others information gained from such social platforms. A key distinguishing feature that makes a social networking site is the fellow list of users that one connects with, usually based upon friendship, family, work relationships, or even weak tie relationships. Initially social networking sites were great ways to meet new people, and although that is still a possibility many social networking sites now discourage people from adding connections they do not know. The public nature of information posted to social networking sites often allow a space for social or political viewpoints to be displayed, although research suggests much of this political activity reinforces pre-existing beliefs especially because people tend to be online friends with those that are most like them.

2.1.2 Defining Fake news

The post-truth era (as the value of truth has become less relevant from a sociopolitical point of view) has given rise to a series of collective and equivalent concepts, with overlapping and similar meanings that share an extensive semantic field. “Misinformation” and “disinformation” (Lazer, D.M.J. et al 2018), “fake news” (Gelfert, A. 2018) “post-truth” (McIntyre, L. 2019), “bullshit” (Frankfurt, H.G. 2005),

content is shared with false contextual information), imposter content (when genuine sources are impersonated with false, made-up sources), manipulated content (when genuine information or imagery is manipulated to deceive, as with a doctored photo) and fabricated content (new content is 100% false, designed to deceive and do harm) (Wikipedia, n.d).

2.1.3 Misinformation, Disinformation and Malformation

Central to the discourse of 'fake news' are three key concepts: misinformation, disinformation and mal-information. Information scientists have long debated the nature of information: what it is, where it comes from and the kinds of actions it affords humans. Information sharing behaviour is integral to humans, people value exchanging information even when it is true or false which are diffused via social networks, as misinformation and disinformation. Social media have made such diffusion easier and faster. According to Bell (2015) misinformation and disinformation are deliberate and intentional lie.

Zhou et al. (2004) in Fallis, connotes that 'while disinformation may realistically be inaccurate, it must not necessarily be inaccurate as long as it is misleading and defines meaning deviating from facts. Fallis argued that disinformation can portray meanings which could be ambiguous in the milieu of a particular condition.

Buckland (2021) added that, depending on the context, information is a thing, a process bounded by informativeness. According to him, misinformation and disinformation may also be things, processes, or knowledge, and therefore informative, by implying or revealing information which sometime tends to be accidental or deliberate depending on how the receiver interpret it in relation to fact.

On the other hand, mal-information is seen to be information that is premised on realism, but adopted either deliberately or otherwise to perpetrate damage on a person, organisation or country. A typical example is the publication of a report which unveils

sexual orientation of a person without public interest justification. It is however necessary to discern messages that are factual from those that are not, and those with little iota of truth) framed and published with the intension of demeaning rather than serve the public interest.

Misinformation, disinformation and mal-information are raw materials that form fake news, information sharing systems which are currently and mostly unregulated have altered with conventional information behaviour. Information published based on falsehood whether with little iota of facts can have devastating consequences on governments, people, businesses, information professionals, and user experience designers, as well as other groups. Misinformation is problematic largely because it can create confusion and mistrust among receivers, and can make information difficult to use.

2.1.4 Causes of Fake News

According to Godwin, S.R. (2013), below are the major causes of fake news in Nigeria and the world at large.

- **Relevance:** For media outlets, the ability to attract viewers to their websites is by publishing a story with false content which benefits advertisers and improves ratings.
- **Hostile government and civil actors** have also been implicated in generating and propagating fake news, particularly during elections (Wikipedia, n.d).
- **Money making:** JestinColer, former CEO of the fake media conglomerate Disinfomedia, said that his company employed 20 to 25 writers at a time and made \$10,000 to \$30,000 monthly from advertisements (Wikipedia, n.d). This is not far from fake Nigerian media outlet.
- **Poor regulation of the internet:** The internet was first made accessible for public use in the 1990s, its main purpose was for the seeking and accessing of information. As fake news was introduced to the internet, this made it difficult for some people to find truthful information.

The impact of fake news has become a worldwide phenomenon. Fake news is often spread through the use of fake news websites, which, in order to gain credibility, specialize in creating attention-grabbing news, which often impersonate well-known news sources (Wikipedia, n.d).

2.1.5 Social Media and Fake News

Brian Hughes, a professor of media studies at Queens College, City University of New York, writes that "it would be a mistake to pressure Facebook and Google into acting as censors" for news because, "we have already seen how much such an approach can backfire". He cites the example of Facebook's manipulation of its trending newsfeed to suppress conservative news. This, he says, only increases public distrust for the media, turning them to less credible news sources instead. Professor Hughes says we should consider the possibility of adopting the Fairness Doctrine for digital media. He says it should be possible for companies like Facebook to "individually program our news feeds for balance and accuracy" since they are already able to identify consumer niches (Adeleke, 2016).

Nicholas Lemann of the New Yorker argues for more government involvement as a way of solving this problem. He says that "it's facile and unhelpful to assume that government's role in journalism can be either nothing or absolute control for propaganda purposes". He proposes that the government invest more in the public media to give more room for press freedom and journalistic integrity. But I wonder how effective this will be if we try to adopt it to Nigeria, considering the country's political climate, one where the government is viewed as corrupt and untrustworthy.

We cannot eliminate fake news. As long as there are people willing to buy tabloids and read blogs that they already know contain lies and half-truths, and as long as we have uneducated people who are unable to differentiate between real and fake news, fake news will continue to sell. The solution to the fake news problem lies in the online media revenue model. Articles online are optimized for clicks. That means that the best

performing content-headline, article body, the images etc. are designed, wittingly or unwittingly, to get people to click on them. The more clicks and the more time spent on an article, the better the analytics figure, the more likely the media house is to attract premium advertising revenue. So, to get from the point of content to more revenue, many times media platforms water down journalistic standards and integrity. Online media is a zero-sum game: the more time someone spends on your platform, the more time they spend away from other platforms (Adeleke, 2016).

The Minister stated that big technology companies like Google, Facebook and Twitter have started to address the problem. Google is reported to have dedicated 300 million US dollars over the next three years towards efforts to fight the spread of false information. Facebook, according to Bloomberg, took down 583 million fake accounts in the first three months of 2018. According to Reuters, Twitter suspended over 70 million accounts in May and June this year alone, and the pace of suspension has continued. Apart from the big technological organizations, the European Commission, in January 2018, set up a high-level group of experts to advise on policy initiatives to counter fake news and disinformation spread online (Elebeke, 2018).

According to Jamie Angus, the Director of BBC World Service Group encouraged people to fall back on the most trusted news brands they could rely on for their news sources. He also advocated increased standard of education and media literacy. He went further to say that there is need to educate the young people in particular on what is trustworthy and what is fake. Media literacy is key in this regard. It is also important for people to invest more in making journalists to partner with reputable and credible international media organizations. Again, government must find ways to support its core traditional media for acceptability over the social media.

Finally, Nigeria must find a way to ensure that its national newspapers and TV stations are sustainable to practice quality journalism that will be acceptable to people. When you

do that successfully, you will consider good independent regulation of the media; with this will reduce the attention that the fake media get and penalty should be given for maliciously published items (Okogba, 2018).

2.1.6 Freedom of Expression, Social Media and Fake News

In contemporary media landscape, journalists, communications experts and others see expression as a weapon. The Internet which provides open space for the exercise of the right to receive and impart information has redefine public discourse and information sharing process. The open nature of the Internet, social media and the lack of total regulation and restrictions by authorities in Nigeria and the world at large defiles freedom of expression. However, in a number of cases, countries like China in order to prevent access to certain content, adopted measures such as blocking and filtering for the purpose of adequate regulation.

In Nigeria, before the advent of social media, people rely on the conventional media as their reliable and trusted news source. This is because, the conventional media provide the public with well researched news that were gate kept and scrutinised. Our democracy thrived on this model impressively. Unfortunately, the social media arrive with a freedom for public to develop and distribute information in their own quota. This is a new model that has been abused for several selfish and nonchalant reasons. It provides the public with anonymity and immunity to by cut the order. As a result, some unscrupulous elements with gruesome intentions use the social media to create fake news and distribute. Such news has created public chaos, communal clashes, political tension as well as economic threats which are very pillar in democratic dispensation. To this end, it can be deduced that fake news is a threat to Nigeria's growing democracy not just as a country with high population but as a country with huge diversity and differences.

In order to combat fake news, scholars posit that glaring discrepancies should be enacted in respect of how freedom of expression is exercised physically (offline) and virtually (online). The potentially universal accessibility of the Internet by everyone as a publisher;

is totally or partially false (Gelfert 2018; Rini 2017) and is created with the aim of deceive or manipulate and misinform (Gelfert 2018; Meinert et al. 2018; Pate and Ibrahim 2020; Tandoc 2019), we recognize that fake news takes on the value of "news", in the sense of bringing "information" or "novelty", even if it is false. Fake news seeks to become legitimate and credible mostly by imitating the format of real news (Lazer et al. 2018; Levy 2017), with similar sources (Tandoc et al. 2018a; Silverman 2016), so if one can consider that the majority of people who share a fake news consider it to be true, it follows that their motivations are similar as when sharing real news.

However, it is known that there may also be people who share fake news with the same intention as those who created it, that is, with the deliberate intention of deceiving, which can be done for different reasons. These spreaders, like the fake news creators, can be motivated by the ambition to attract attention, to denigrate the image of a political candidate, to impose a certain ideological belief or to encourage some type of behavior on users (Lewis and Marwick 2017; Marwick 2018). People who consciously share fake news can do it simply for fun or to create chaos (Vorderer et al. 2004; Coleman 2014).

On social media, for both fake news and news, likes, reactions, comments and shares can serve as credibility criteria for other users (Delmazo and Valente 2018), as they may also have implications for how topics are selected, produced and disseminated either by journalists or by fake news producers (Salgado and Bobba 2019).

2.1.8 Fake News and Related Concept

There exist multiple meanings of fake news that need to be clarified. On the other hand, there are some terms with similar meanings to fake news. Junk news, pseudonews, alternative fact, hoax news are terms with similar meaning to fake news. In this case, fake news refers to inaccurate facts distributed in cyberspace in the sense that the inaccurate facts are spread online rather than in the format of news reports. These inaccurate or incorrect messages are named as disinformation, misinformation, malinformation, and rumors that are related to fake news.

○ **False News**

It is not easy to distinguish fake news from false news. All too often, the terms fake news and false news can be used interchangeably. However, fake news is news that is deliberately fabricated, while false news is with inaccurate information, whether it is created intentionally or mistakenly. It is observed that Facebook has stopped saying fake news and replaced it with the term "false news". Nevertheless, there is still no consensus on the difference between "fake news" and "false news" for most scholars.

○ **News Satire**

News satire is a type of humorous TV show or a satirical article that the audience knows the content of the news satire is not always correct. Some media companies constantly publish news satire, such as the Onion², a U.S. based satirical newspaper organization. Although news satire does not report real facts, it is different from fake news. The purpose of news satire is to have fun and to cheer the audience. However, in some cases, people might mistakenly treat news satire as actual news. Audiences with no knowledge about the satirical media may consider satirical news reported by the satirical media as real news.

○ **Yellow Journalism**

Yellow journalism uses shocking headlines, exaggerating facts, or rumors to catch audience attention. Yellow journalism might help with the spread of fake news. In some forms of yellow journalism, the news content is real but with shocking headlines. Thus, yellow journalism is not always identical to fake news since some yellow journalism just uses shocking headlines that catch audience attention. Nevertheless, yellow journalism is indeed an important source of fake news, since it may exaggerate the facts or promote the spread of rumors.

○ **Junk News**

The concept of junk news emphasizes the news is massively disseminated with the content of propaganda and ideologically extreme, hyper-partisan, or conspiratorial political information. The term "junk" is used to reflect the news is considered as junk

since the contents are as useless as trash. Junk news discusses the topic that the audience does not care about. Not all fake news can be characterized as junk news because some fake news is treated as an important message rather than a junk message by some targeted audience.

- **Pseudo-News**

Pseudo-news reports a non-existent story. The whole story does not exist. Fake news is also not identical to pseudo-news in the sense that some fake news actually exists but with some misleading or false details. It is called fake news because the news contains incorrect content, whereas pseudo-news indicates that the news story does not exist.

- **Hoax News**

Hoax is defined as a humorous or malicious deception. Hoax news refers to news that contains humorous or malicious deceptions. The incorrect messages are purposely, not mistakenly included in hoax news. However, in some cases, hoax news is deemed a joke, such as April Fools' Day hoax.

- **Propaganda News**

Propaganda news is a paid news report containing propaganda messages that disguise as news. However, propaganda news usually reports a real but prettified fact. News media receive sponsorship to deliver the propaganda news. The audience cannot be sure that the news is not a normal news report since it does not disclose the source, the funding provider, and the motivation.

Propaganda news is not fake news since it does not include wrong or false information. Propaganda news is not a normal news report since it is purposely provided to deliver some specific information. Propaganda news is a paid message but not a commercial message since it looks like a news report rather than an advertisement or advertorial.

2.1.9 Fake News Case Study in Nigeria

Fake news aggravates herders/farmers crises in Nigeria: The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) has reported that fake news circulating in the social media is fueling the farmers/ herdsman crises in Nigeria.

In the report by the media organization, it stated that "fake pictures circulating on social media which users are falsely claiming depict inter-communal violence are inflaming already high tensions in Nigeria" (Adekunle2018). The international media outfit, specifically made reference to repellent images circulating in the social media which the originators purportedly claimed was from recent violence in Jos, Plateau State. A gruesome image of a woman faces down in a pool of blood with a gaping shoulder wound is purported to be from the recent attacks. It has hundreds of retweets on Twitter, but it first appeared on the internet in 2011 in a story about domestic violence in Nigeria. Another image appears to show half a dozen people that were killed in the attacks. On closer inspection it becomes clear that the picture was not taken in Nigeria, and is actually the scene of a 2015 traffic accident in the Dominican Republic (Adekunle, 2018).

Also, major Nigerian news outlets ran a story claiming that Danladi Ciroma, a leader of the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association, said the attacks in Plateau were revenge for the loss of 300 cows. "Since, these cows were not found, no-one should expect peace in the areas", MrCiroma was reported to have said. Ciroma had refuted the report and the media organization had reportedly tendered apology (Adekunle, 2018).

Fake news most times instigates confusion, tension, suicide depending on the person or institution on the other end and it undermines serious media coverage and makes it more difficult for journalists to cover significant news stories.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.2.1 Uses and Gratification Theory

Coined in the early 1940s by Katz and Blumler, Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) is one of the theories of communications that focuses on social communications. This theory adapts a functionalistic approach to communications and media, and states that media's most important role is to fulfill the needs and motivations of the audience.

Therefore, the more these needs are met, the more satisfaction is yielded (Windahl, Signitzer, and Olson, 2008).

The theory of satisfaction and gratification is based on two core questions:

1) Why are people attracted to certain media? And

2) What kind of satisfaction does media provide for people?

This theory initially focuses on the motifs of the audience (Ruggiero, 2000 in Seekhiew, 2009) and then analyzes the message and social system (Sarkisian, Nikoo, Saeedian, 1997). In other words, this theory concentrates on how users seek media and to what extent they are satisfied with its type, content, and method of use (Amiri, Noori, Basatian, 2012). By answering the two mentioned questions in "Use and Gratification" the positive and negative outcomes of using specific media will be ultimately determined (Balakrishnan and Loo, 2012)

This study was hinged on the uses and gratification theory to understand how social media messages are used to disseminate fake news. The thrust of the uses and gratification theory stipulates that individuals utilize social media platforms for specific gratifications (Griffin, 2005).

Furthermore, the tenets of the theory propound how active audiences use social media platforms and digital technologies for diverse purposes. This theory is related to this work in the sense that some individual utilizes the use of the social media for publishing fake news for the intent to mislead individuals in most modern society. Conversely, these individuals derive satisfaction by sharing fake news on social media spaces.

In another perspective, individuals who have detect fake news on any phenomenon, utilize the social media to alert their friends, colleagues and family members about the fake news circulating on the social media. In sum, gratification is derived using the social

media in the areas of information sharing, health literacy and communal health protection.

Park H, Blenkinsopp J. (2009) proposed four gratifications derived from social media use, including:

- i. Information-seeking,
- ii. Socializing,
- iii. Entertainment, and
- iv. Self-status-seeking.

Due to the inherently participatory nature of social media, MaLGoh (2014) contended that these gratifications is still be relevant in the current context of fake news sharing.

2.2.2 Source Credibility Theory

The source credibility theory as propounded by Hovland, Janis and Kelly (1963) stated that people or receivers are more likely to be persuaded when the source presents itself as credible. Furthermore, Hovland (1963) and Weiss (1974) later studied the influence of sources in persuasion. The study was done by comparing credible and non-credible sources using same persuasive message to test if the sources seen as credible could influence opinions change in the message receivers more than the non-credible source. The study confirmed the assumption that credible sources tend to create the desired impact on the audience.

According to the source credibility theory, trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness of information is what attract and convince information receivers to share certain information. The theory has elements of persuasion. This means that messages, news and other information has to acquire certain features to persuade media or social media users before sharing it. The theory was selected because it explains elements of reasons why fake news spread like wild fire. This is for the fact that social media users do not inquire the genuineness of information rather looks at its attractiveness and expertise in its syntax.

On a similar note, McCroskey et al. (1974), submitted that communicators with high credibility in the eyes of message receivers tend to have respect and their words are accepted more readily. Also, middle Brook's findings (1974) showed that differences in receivers' attitudes have a bearing to source credibility. There is obvious uniformity in communication theories that message receivers relate source credibility to the communicator's favorable character or ethos that emits knowledge, moral standards and goodwill towards the message receivers. That is, favorable senders' ethos equals credibility and believability.

2.3 EMPIRICAL REVIEW OF RELATED STUDY

New media, new audience and the proliferation of fake news

New media does a lot to the practice of journalism the world over. It has changed the face of the profession. The new media has the potential of reaching larger audiences in a shorter period of time and often leads to a greater interaction between journalists and the readers or viewers. Journalists now make use of new media technologies to post news content while the readers equally make use of the same to access news. The fact that new media are highly interactive platforms with their emergence, the former recipient of news who used to be receivers are now active creators of content.

Again, it is important to state that the emergence of new media technologies equally redefines the concept of media audience today. Today's digital audience considerably removed barriers to news production and signaled "the shift of the tools of production to the people formerly known as the audience," who became coproducers, of content, including news - a function and practice described as 'prod usage'. They initially built audiences via email and chat-rooms before social media platforms dramatically amplified their reach, (See Gilmore, 2004; Bruns, 2008; Posetti, 2018).

The arrival of social media has also been a big issue to authentic news dissemination. In many countries, by the late-2000s, Twitter and Facebook had joined YouTube as major social media platforms, wielding considerable influence on the practices and professional

The ability of governments and other agencies to side-step news media interrogation and verification by 'going direct to audiences' to avoid scrutiny. There is evidence of increased manipulation of the power of social media by those seeking to influence election outcomes and public policy.

Sensational information is more likely to be shared.

The inability to easily pull back or correct disinformation and misinformation.

Whereas the issue of fake news has always been with us, the new media and ICTS constitute the media that changed everything. The truth is the scale with which "alternative facts", untruths and blatant lies can be spread by people and algorithms, records shows can for the first time threaten democracy and social cohesion at a global scale. "Fake news is now viewed as one of the greatest threats to democracy, journalism and freedom of expression," (Zhou & Zarafani, 2019, para. 1).

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Research can be defined as careful study or investigation especially in order to discover new fact or information. It could be scientific research historical research etc.

According to Peil et al (1982), "research is usually designed to handle a problem, something which needs describing, explaining or improving and or about which more information is needed so that future occurrences can be predicted and policy decided". In this regard, research is a science of knowledge investigation concerned or problem.

Methodology: This word is derive from the word method, methodology means the philosophy of the research process and this includes the assumption and values that serve as a rational for research and the standard criteria the researcher use for interpreting data and reaching conclusion.

3.2 Research Design

This research study aspires to aver the correlation between social media and fake news thus;

The success, reliability and validity of any research work is highly determined by the collection, collation, interpretation and analysis of data. Although, there are many method used in collecting data, the method to be used in research depend on the purpose and nature of the study.

Undeniable, the best method of studying attitudes, behavior and motive remains the survey research method hence, it was adopted for this research. Survey method is one of the oldest research methods as define by Kerlinger. It is the process of collecting data from a population or a sample drawn from a population or with the purpose of investing relative incidence, occurrence or inter relationship among the variables of natural phenomenal.

The aim and objective of this chapter is to present the procedure followed in achieving the goals of the research.

3.3 Population of the Study

Population of study for any research work has been variously defined by different scholars and their definitions jagged toward the same route. Avwokeni [2015: 92] refers to populations of a research study as the set of all participants that qualify for a study.

In another wise, Wimmer & Dominick [2006] posited that population of a research study is a list of collection of subjects, objects, variables or concept in a defined environment which could be a group or class of variables, concept or phenomenal in a given study. However, the population of this study is made up of approximately 20,000. The target population of the study is limited to over 150 residents in Ilorin west Local government of Kwara state. Due to financial factor and limited timeframe in preparing the research work.

3.4 Sample Size

For the purpose of population targeted, the research sample will be limited to manageable size of 100 respondents.

3.5 Sampling technique

The study could not be carried out on all population of residents of Ilorin west local government of Kwara state. Hence, a purposive sampling technique was used to select respondents as follows: 100 respondents in the age range of 18-25, 26-35, 36-45, 46 and above.

3.6 Instrumentation

Since this study employs surveyed method or design, questionnaires were used to collect data. In order to ensure that relevant items were included in the questionnaires, extensive and relevant literature were consulted before the instrument for data collection was constructed. The questionnaire was divided into two parts, part A contains items intended to collect data on demographic characteristics of the respondents, while part B contain items designed to obtain data on the research topic.

3.7 Method of Administration of the Instrument

The data of this research work is collected through the administration of questionnaires to respondents in the study areas. This instrument was used to elicit demographic data for specific questions for the study. To ensure accurate data collection, questionnaires were distributed by researcher to respondents. The above instrument used has helped in collecting an aggregate amount of data used for the study.

3.9 Method of Data Analysis

The data obtained from the distributed questionnaires were retrieved and analyzed and were shown by using simple percentage and cross tabulation table method of data presentation. Furthermore, statistics analysis was adopted for the simplification of data gathering during field work to ease better understanding of the study.

Issa (2004) gives further explanation on data analysis that the last segment of chapter three is developed to explain how the research intends, analyzed and interpret the data that will accrue for the administration of the respondents, that is, when data has been collected, how he intends to set out and analyzed the collected data.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the presentation of finding and analysis of the result obtained from two hundred (100) questionnaires administered to the respondents. It was collected after completion which is used to draw up conclusion on this study. The data obtained from these questionnaires were analysis in form of table.

4.2 ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Demographic Segment of the Instrument

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Sex

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	70	70%
Female	30	30%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The table presents the distribution of survey respondents by sex. Out of 100 participants, 70 are male, comprising 70% of the total, while 30 are female, making up the remaining 30%. This data reflects the gender composition of the surveyed population, indicating a significant majority of male respondents. The figures are sourced from a field survey conducted in 2024.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Age

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18-25	82	82%
26-35	11	11%
36-45	6	6%
46 – 60	0	0%
60 & Above	1	1%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The table shows the age distribution of 100 survey respondents. The majority, 82%, are aged 18-25. Respondents aged 26-35 make up 11%, those aged 36-45 account for 6%, and 1% are 60 and above. There are no respondents in the 46-60 age group.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Marital Status

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Married	19	19%
Single	80	80%
Divorce	1	1%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The survey data on the marital status of respondents reveals that the overwhelming majority, 80%, are single, with 80 out of 100 respondents falling into this category. Married respondents account for 19%, representing 19 individuals. Only 1 respondent, making up 1% of the total, is divorced.

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents by Occupation

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Civil servant	6	6%
Enterprise Staff	6	6%
Self-employed	24	24%
Students	63	63%
Others	1	1%
Total	200	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The table presents the occupational distribution of 200 survey respondents. Students dominate at 63%, followed by self-employed individuals at 24%. Civil servants and enterprise staff each make up 6% of the total, while 1% falls into the 'others' category.

Table 5: Distribution of Respondents by Nationality

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Nigerian	98	98%
Non- Nigerian	2	2%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The table shows the occupational distribution of 200 survey respondents. Students form the largest group at 63%, followed by the self-employed at 24%. Civil servants and enterprise staff each account for 6%, while 'others' make up 1%. This data, from a 2024 field survey, highlights the predominance of students among the respondents.

4.2.2 ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONS IN RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Table 6: How often do you access news?

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Daily	59	59%
Several times a week	29	29%
Once a week	12	12%
Rarely	9	9%
Never	1	1%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The table presents how frequently 100 respondents access news. The majority, 59%, access news daily. 29% check news several times a week, while 12% do so once a week. A smaller group, 9%, rarely access news, and only 1% never do. This data, sourced from a 2024 field survey, highlights a high frequency of news consumption among respondents, with daily and several times a week being the most common habits.

Table 7: What is your primary source of news?

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Television	10	79.5%
Radio	31	4%
Newspapers	8	16.5%
Social media	34	
Online News Websites	15	15%
Word of Mouth	2	2%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The table shows the primary sources of news for 100 respondents. Social media is the leading source at 34%, followed by television at 31%, and online news websites at 15%. Newspapers are preferred by 10%, radio by 8%, and word of mouth by 2%. This data, sourced from a 2024 field survey, underscores the prominence of digital platforms as primary news sources.

Table 8: Have you ever encountered fake news?

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	85	85%
No	15	15%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The table shows respondents' experiences with fake news. Out of 100 participants, 85% have encountered fake news, while 15% have not. This data, sourced from a 2024 field survey, indicates a high prevalence of fake news encounters among the respondents.

Table 9: How often do you think you encounter fake news?

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very often	31	31%
Often	23	23%
Occasionally	10	10%
Rarely	24	24%
Never	12	12%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 11: How confident are you in identifying fake news?

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very confident	31	51%
Confident	27	32%
Neutral	13	4.5%
Not confident	17	6%
Not at all confident.	12	6.5%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The table reveals that most respondents feel capable of identifying fake news, with 51% expressing high confidence and 32% feeling confident. A smaller portion remains neutral (4.5%), while 6% are not confident and 6.5% are not at all confident in their ability to discern fake news. Overall, a significant majority (83%) report some level of confidence.

Table 12: What factors do you think contribute to the spread of fake news?

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Lack of media literacy	30	30%
Social media algorithms	12	12%
Political propaganda	46	46%
Sensationalism	5	5%
Public distrust in traditional media	7	7%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

The table indicates that the main factor contributing to the spread of fake news is political propaganda, accounting for 46% of responses. Lack of media literacy follows at 30%,

while social media algorithms are cited by 12%. Sensationalism (5%) and public distrust in traditional media (7%) are considered less significant factors.

Table 13: Do you think fake news has led to misinformation among the residents of Ilorin West?

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	63	63%
Agree	27	27%
Neutral	7	7%
Disagree	3	3%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The table shows a strong consensus among respondents that fake news has led to misinformation among residents of Ilorin West. A majority (63%) strongly agree and 27% agree with this statement. Only 7% are neutral, and 3% disagree, while none strongly disagree. Overall, 90% acknowledge the impact of fake news on misinformation.

Table 14: Do you believe fake news can lead to conflicts?

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	43	43%
Agree	45	45%
Undecided	8	8%
Disagree	3	3%
Strongly Disagree	1	1%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The table indicates that a significant majority of respondents believe fake news can lead to conflicts, with 43% strongly agreeing and 45% agreeing. Only 8% are undecided, while a small minority disagrees (3%) or strongly disagrees (1%). Overall, 88% of respondents acknowledge the potential for fake news to cause conflicts.

Table 15: Do you think schools should teach students about identifying fake news?

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	50	50%
Agree	38	38%
Undecided	9	9%
Disagree	3	3%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The table indicates strong support for teaching students about identifying fake news in schools, with 50% strongly agreeing and 38% agreeing. Only 9% are undecided, while 3% disagree, and none strongly disagree. This shows that 88% of respondents favor educational initiatives to help students recognize fake news.

Table 16: Do you believe public awareness about fake news has increased over the past few years?

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	28	28%
Agree	42	42%
Undecided	15	15%
Disagree	12	12%
Strongly Disagree	3	3%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

field survey, highlights a high frequency of news consumption among respondents, with daily and several times a week being the most common habits. The table shows the primary sources of news for 100 respondents. Social media is the leading source at 34%, followed by television at 31%, and online news websites at 15%. Newspapers are preferred by 10%, radio by 8%, and word of mouth by 2%. However, the table shows how frequently respondents believe they encounter fake news. Out of 100 participants, 31% think they encounter fake news very often, 23% often, 24% rarely, and 12% never. Highlights varying perceptions of the frequency of encountering fake news, with a significant portion experiencing it frequently.

Research Question Two: How do residents perceive and form beliefs in response to fake news in Ilorin West Local Government of Kwara State?

The table shows that social media is perceived to have the most fake news, with 66% of respondents indicating it as the primary source. Online news websites follow at 20%. Television and radio are considered less significant sources of fake news, with 4% and 10% respectively, while newspapers are perceived to have no fake news presence (0%). The table indicates that the main factor contributing to the spread of fake news is political propaganda, accounting for 46% of responses. Lack of media literacy follows at 30%, while social media algorithms are cited by 12%. Sensationalism (5%) and public distrust in traditional media (7%) are considered less significant factors. The table shows a strong consensus among respondents that fake news has led to misinformation among residents of Ilorin West. A majority (63%) strongly agree and 27% agree with this statement. Only 7% are neutral, and 3% disagree, while none strongly disagree. Overall, 90% acknowledge the impact of fake news on misinformation.

Research Question Three: In what ways does fake news influence the behavioral aspects of public opinion in Ilorin West?

The table indicates that a significant majority of respondents believe fake news can lead to conflicts, with 43% strongly agreeing and 45% agreeing. Only 8% are undecided, while a small minority disagrees (3%) or strongly disagrees (1%). Overall, 88% of respondents acknowledge the potential for fake news to cause conflicts. The table reveals that the majority of respondents believe public awareness about fake news has increased over the past few years, with 28% strongly agreeing and 42% agreeing. However, 15% remain undecided, and a minority disagrees (12%) or strongly disagrees (3%). Overall, 70% of respondents perceive an increase in public awareness.

Research Question Four: What strategies can be implemented to mitigate the impact of fake news and enhance media literacy among residents of Ilorin west Local government of Kwara State?

The table reveals that the majority of respondents believe public awareness about fake news has increased over the past few years, with 28% strongly agreeing and 42% agreeing. However, 15% remain undecided, and a minority disagrees (12%) or strongly disagrees (3%). Overall, 70% of respondents perceive an increase in public awareness. The table shows that a majority of respondents believe tech companies' interventions would be effective in reducing fake news, with 33% strongly agreeing and 31% agreeing. However, 20% are undecided, while 10% disagree and 6% strongly disagree. Overall, 64% of respondents view tech companies' efforts positively in combating fake news.

4.4 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings from the survey conducted among residents of Ilorin West Local Government highlight several critical aspects regarding the exposure, perception, and impact of fake news, as well as potential strategies to mitigate its effects and enhance media literacy.

majority (88%) believe that fake news can lead to conflicts, indicating the potential for misinformation to incite discord and unrest within the community. This highlights the broader societal implications of fake news, beyond individual misperceptions, affecting social cohesion and stability. The perception of increased public awareness about fake news over the past few years (70%) suggests that there has been progress in recognizing and addressing the issue, but it also points to an ongoing need for sustained efforts to combat misinformation.

To address the challenges posed by fake news, several strategies can be implemented. A strong consensus (88%) supports the idea that schools should teach students about identifying fake news. This educational approach aims to build media literacy from a young age, fostering critical thinking and analytical skills necessary to discern credible information. Moreover, the role of tech companies is seen as vital, with 64% of respondents viewing their interventions positively. This includes efforts by social media platforms to regulate content, flag misinformation, and promote credible sources. However, the effectiveness of these measures depends on the implementation and enforcement of policies by tech companies, as well as the cooperation of users in recognizing and reporting fake news.

Overall, the findings underscore the pervasive nature of fake news in the daily lives of residents of Ilorin West Local Government, the significant influence it has on public opinion and behavior, and the critical need for educational and technological interventions to mitigate its impact. Enhancing media literacy and fostering a critical approach to news consumption, coupled with robust regulatory measures by tech platforms, can help create a more informed and resilient public capable of navigating the complex media landscape.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

This study is based on "application of media ethics in news-gathering and dissemination". The study was organized in five chapters. Chapter one covers the introduction of the study, background to the study, statement of the problem which exposed the problem the study identified and seek to resolve, research questions, the significant of the study, the scope of the study and operational definition of term.

Chapter two focused on the conceptual framework, theoretical approach and review of related literatures. The researcher adopted social responsibility theory and absolutist theory of Merrill (1974). Chapter three is about the research method. The researcher used survey research design as suitable for the study. A structured closed-ended questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection and administer to one hundred (100) respondents.

The chapter four presented the data analysis and discussion of the findings. The analysis was in tabular form and chi-square (χ^2) method was adopted for statistical analysis. Finally, chapter five discussed the summary of the study, the conclusion of the study base on the outcome of the findings and recommendation of the study.

1. Fake news could lead to anarchy by disrupting democratic processes and manipulating public opinion, spreading false information about candidates or voting procedures, and sowing doubt about the legitimacy of elections. It can lead to widespread dissatisfaction and even protests or acts of civil disobedience, which can escalate into chaotic situations.

2. It could also lead to erosion of trust and overthrow of government institutions and delegitimize elections, sow distrust in democratic institutions, and create social divisions, which can undermine the functioning of governments and lead to political

turmoil. If the public perceives the government as dishonest or untrustworthy due to the dissemination of false information, it can undermine the government's authority and weaken its ability to effectively govern.

3. It could also devastate the reputation of individuals or organizations. False accusations or fabricated stories can harm someone's personal or professional life, leading to damage to their reputation, career setbacks, or social isolation. This can have long-lasting effects on their well-being and livelihood.

5.2 Conclusion

Fake news on social media is a complex and challenging task, given the vast amount of information shared daily on these platforms. While complete eradication may be an unrealistic goal, significant progress can be made through a combination of measures and concerted efforts from various stakeholders.

Promoting media literacy education is crucial to equip individuals with critical thinking skills and the ability to discern reliable information from misinformation. Educating people on how to identify fake news, fact-check sources, and critically evaluate information can empower them to make informed decisions.

Encouraging the development and use of fact-checking organizations and tools can help verify the accuracy of information. Collaboration between social media platforms, news outlets, and fact-checkers can enable the swift identification and flagging of fake news, making it more difficult for false information to spread unchecked.

Furthermore, public awareness and demand for reliable information are growing. This increased awareness can push social media platforms and content creators to take stronger measures against fake news. Additionally, media literacy programs and educational initiatives can help build a more informed and discerning society.

However, it is important to recognize that the fight against fake news is an ongoing battle that requires continuous adaptation and collaboration. Combating fake news on social media requires a collective effort from individuals, governments, media organizations,

and technology platforms to foster an environment where reliable information prevails and misinformation is effectively

5.3 Recommendations

In sequel to the conclusion above, the researcher sporulated the following recommendations that:

- Social media platforms should allocate more resources to improve content moderation, including investing in advanced AI algorithms, increasing the number of human moderators, and establishing clear guidelines for identifying and removing fake news content.
- Media literacy and digital citizenship should be prioritize through media literacy programs in schools and educational institutions to equip individuals with critical thinking skills, fact-checking techniques, and responsible online behavior. Encourage users to question sources, verify information, and evaluate the credibility of content.
- Governments should consider enacting appropriate regulations that strike a balance between freedom of speech and curbing the spread of fake news. These regulations should hold social media platforms accountable for monitoring and addressing misinformation while respecting fundamental rights.
- Continuous Public Awareness Campaigns should be launched to sustain public awareness about the impact and consequences of fake news and ollaborate with media outlets, influencers, and educators to disseminate accurate information and promote critical thinking skills.

By implementing these recommendations, it is possible to make significant strides in the eradication of fake news on social media platforms. However, it is important to recognize that the battle against fake news is an ongoing effort that requires continuous adaptation, collaboration, and the collective engagement of individuals, organizations, and policymakers.

REFERENCES

- Ahn, Y, Jeong, H, Han, S, Kwak, H, & Moon, S (2007). 'Analysis of topological characteristics of huge online social networking services', 16Th International World Wide Web Conference, WWW2007, 16th International World Wide Web Conference, WWW2007, p. 835-844.
- Akpan, E. B (2019). An assessment of Social media discourses and youth activism in Uyo Metropolis. An Unpublished M.Sc. dissertation, Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Social Sciences, Rivers State University, Port Harcourt.
- Albright, J 2016, 'The #Election (2016) Micro-Propaganda Machine', Medium, <https://medium.com/@d1gi/the-election2016-micro-propaganda-machine383449cc1fba>
- Allcott, H, & Gentzkow, M (2017), 'Social Media and Fake News in The 2016 Election', *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 31 (2), p. 211–236
- Asemah, E.S., Nwanmuo, A.N. & Nkwam-Uwaoma, A. O.A (2017). Theories and models of communication revised edition. Matkol Press
- Bakshy, E, Messing, S, & Adamic, L (2015), 'Exposure to ideologically diverse news and opinion on Facebook', *Science*, 348, 6239, p. 1130-113
- Balmas, M (2014) When Fake News Become Real, Combined Exposure to Multiple News Source and Political Attitude of Inefficacy, *Alienation and Cynicism, Connection Research* 41 (13) 430-544
- Baran, S.J. (2004). Introduction to mass communication: Media literacy and culture. Updated media enhanced. (3rd Ed.): Mc Graw Hill
- Bourke, J, Kirby, A, & Doran, J (2016), Survey & Questionnaire Design: Collecting Primary Data To Answer Research Questions, np:Ireland:NuBooks, an imprint of Oak Tree Press Brandtzæg, P 2012, 'Social networking sites: Their users and social implications - A longitudinal study', *Journal Of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 17, 4, p. 467-488

- Bukar, A. & Ibrahim, A.M. (2020). Hate speech and Nigeria's struggle for democratic consolidation: a conceptual overview. *International Journal of Journalism and Mass Communication*, 6(1), 80-83.
- Chen, Y Conroy, M. J & Rubin, V. L (2013), *News in an Online World: The Need for an Automatic Crap, Detector* St Louis (MO) ASIST
- Chukwu, B.I. & Uzoma, I.C (2014). Impact of social media networks on consumer patronage in Nigeria: A study of Jumia and Konga Nigeria Limited. *European Journal of Business and Management*, 6 (3), 63-70.
- Clare D (2018) Fact-checkers have debunked this fake news site 80 times. It's still publishing on Facebook. Poynter.org. Available at <https://www.poynter.org/news/fact-checkers-have-debunked-fake-news-site-80-times-its-still-publishing-facebook>. Accessed September 4, 2018.
- Dunu, E. S. (2018) *Principles and Practice of Mass Communication*. 2nd ed. Jos: MATKOL Press.
- Huan, L, Jiliang, T, Suhang, W, Silva, A and Shu, K (2017), Fake News Defection on Social Media: A Mining Perspective, Export Newsletter A and E Television Network
- Ibrahim, A.M., & Pate, U. (2019). In a democratized media context what hoax can do, a misinformation can do even worse: influences of fake news on democratic process in Nigeria. *New Media and Mass Communication*, 79, 10-17.
- Igwebuike, E.E. & Chimuanya, L. (2020). Estimating falsehood in social media: a discourse analysis of political fake news. *Discourse and communication*, 15 (1), 42-58.
- Njegomir, N. M. (2016). The impact of Facebook, Twitter, a YouTube on millennial' political behaviour. ProQuest dissertations and theses. Gonzaga University, Ann Arbor. <http://ezproxy.nypl.org/Login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1803580439?accountid=35635>

- Obabaniji, J. (2018). The misinformation you choose to believe could be harmful. [http://www.dailytrust.com.ng/the misinformation-you-choose-to-believe-could-be-harmful](http://www.dailytrust.com.ng/the-misinformation-you-choose-to-believe-could-be-harmful).
- Ogunbeni, J. I., Adekanye, A. O., Bamigbose, A. A. & Sulaiman, M. A. (2016). Internet Use among Undergraduates in Nigeria: The Role of Policy. *Information and Knowledge Management*, 6 (6), 88- 94.
- Russell, D. (2017). Benjamin Franklin/the problem of 18th century fake news. [http: / Ifia. umd.edu /benjamin-franklin-the-problem-of-1 8th-century-fake-news-Ladybugs!](http://Ifia.umd.edu/benjamin-franklin-the-problem-of-18th-century-fake-news-Ladybugs!)
- Samuel, O.A., Out, I.M., Olimide, K.A. & Ogbette, D.N. (2019). Fake news in Nigeria; causes, effects and management. *Journal of Information and Knowledge Management*, 9(2), 96-99.
- Shaibu, A. & Yinusa, S. (2020). Perception of fake news on social media among residents of Offa local government, Kwara State, Nigeria. *Governmental journal of communication studies*, 2, 111-120.
- Uwalaka, T., Nwala, B. & Amadi, C.C. (2021). Social media, fake news and fake covid-19 curse in Nigeria. *JAMS*, 13(3), 435-449.
- Vosoughi, S., Roy, D. & Aral, S. (2018). The spread of true and false news. *Online Science*, 359, 1146-1151.
- Wardle, C. (2017). Fake News: Its complicated. [https://firstdraftnews .com/fake- news-complicated!](https://firstdraftnews.com/fake-news-complicated!)
- Williams, A. (1975). Unbiased study of Television News Bias. *Journal of Communication*, 25 (4), 190-199.