

**CITIZEN JOURNALISM: THE CHALLENGE OF ONLINE FAKE NEWS
(AUCHI POLYTECHNIC AS CASE STUDY)**

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NOVEMBER, 2022

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**BEING
A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF MASSCOMMUNICATION,
SCHOOL OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY,
AUCHI POLYTECHNIC, AUCHI.**

**IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE
AWARD OF HIGHER NATIONAL DIPLOMA (HND) IN MASS COMMUNICATION.**

NOVEMBER, 2022

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this work titled: **“Citizen Journalism: The Challenge of Online Fake News”** was written by me, and that it is the record of my own research. To my best of knowledge, it has never been presented in any previous application for an academic award. All resources of information are specifically acknowledged using reference.

EGWUDA NEHEMIAH OJOCHONU

DATE

APPROVAL

This project work is approved based on the student's declaration and its compliance with the requirements of the Department of Mass Communication, Auchi Polytechnic I partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of Higher National Diploma in Mass Communication.

Mrs. Chioma Agboh
(Project supervisor)

Date

Mr. J. O. Ikerodah
(Head of Department)

Date

External Examiner

Date

DEDICATION

To my beloved parents, Pst., Mr. and Mrs. Friday U. Egwuda

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ABSTRACT

This study, 'Citizen Journalism: The Challenge of Online Fake News (Auchi Polytechnic as Case Study)', evaluated the implications of fake news in Citizen Journalism (also known as the new media journalism or online journalism), which is emerging as a powerful phenomenon across Nigeria and the world at large. For proper and adequate evaluation, relevant literatures were reviewed. The survey research was used; questionnaire was also used for data collection, and interview to obtain response from the respondents. The study was anchored on the democratic participant media theory. The proposition of this theory grants privilege to all citizens to participate in the information gathering, processing and dissemination process with less or no professional control. This implies that anyone who has the gadget can gather and report events at will and as desired. By its interactivity and ability to deliver news in split seconds, citizen journalism has posed a serious challenge of fake news dissemination in Nigeria. In as much as citizen journalism in Nigeria has broadened people's access to a variety of news, this study suggests that a proper synergy between the mainstream journalism and citizen journalism is recommended to ascertain the best way(s) forward, for effective and efficient journalism practices in the country. The need therefore to sensitize Nigerian citizen journalists on proper use of this emerging brand of journalism is obvious.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Declaration	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Approval	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dedication	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Acknowledgments	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Table of Contents	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Abstract	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

1.1	Background of the Study	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1.2	Statement of the Problem	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1.3	Objectives of the Study	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1.4	Research Questions	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1.5	Scope of the Study	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1.6	Significance of the Study	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1.7	Limitation of the Study	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1.8	Definition of Terms-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1	Review of Relevant Literature-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2.2	Theoretical Framework	-	-	-	-	-	-

CHAPTER THREE: Research Method

3.1 Research Design

3.2	Population of the Study	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3.3	Sampling Procedure	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3.4	Sample Size	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3.5	Validity of the Instrument	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3.6	Reliability of the Instrument	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3.7	Method of Data Collection	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3.8	Method of Data Analysis	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

CHAPTER FOUR: Data Presentation and Analysis

4.1	Data Presentation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
4.2	Discussion	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

CHAPTER FIVE: Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1	Summary	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5.2	Conclusion	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5.3	Recommendations	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

References

Appendices

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The emergency of citizen journalism has prompted the journalism field and scholars to redress what constitutes journalism and who is a journalist. Citizen journalism has disrupted news media ecosystems by challenging the veracity and representativeness of information flowing from mainstream news media newsroom. As early as the 1920s, journalist and political commentator Walter Lippman and American philosopher John Dewey, debated the role of journalism in democracy, including the extent that the public should participate in the news-gathering and production process.

The question of citizen involvement in news reemerged as an issue with the citizen journalism phenomenon around the late 1990s. People with no news-media organizational ties have taken advantage of the convenience and low cost of social computing technologies by publishing their own stories and content. These people are referred to as citizen journalists. Scholars have assessed the quality and credibility of citizen-journalism content, finding that citizen journalists have performed well on several standards of traditional news-content quality. Levels of quality differ dependent upon citizen journalists' goals and motivations, such as serving the public interest, increasing self-status, or expressing their creative selves.

The concept of citizen journalism has a long history. Communication researchers have tried to tell the story of the origin of citizen journalism from their respective angles. Kern and Nam (2008:12) write that "the roots of citizen journalism lie in the program of civic journalism, which developed as a reform movement among journalists in the United States. Facing the readership crises of the US newspaper industry in the late 1970s, some newspaper executives,

journalists, and intellectuals tried to improve the relationship between the press and the public by developing new ways of listening to citizens. To this end, Sirianni and Friedland (2001: 217), Kern and Nam (2008:13), report that “the first so-called public or civic journalists acted as advocates for ordinary citizens”. Kern and Nam (2008:13) added that, “towards the end of the 1990s, more and more intellectuals and social movement activists entered the field of media activism and developed the idea of citizen journalism.”

Contemporary citizen journalism’s history and popularity can be directly linked to the advent and currency of the Internet and its ancillary technologies. The real change in news reporting occasioned by citizen journalism did not come until 2004 when Web 2.0 features started appearing on websites. (Web 2.0 features enabled consumers or ordinary people to publish their own websites or weblogs, or feed content into the mainstream media among many other features. WordPress and BlogSpot are examples of such platforms).

The web 2.0 on which the citizen journalism operations are based has some peculiar features. Some of the characteristics often noted as descriptive of Web 2.0 include blogging, social networking sites like YouTube, Facebook, mash-ups, etc. The social media, with the help of web 2.0 technologies, have enabled citizens to be active participants in the processes of news gathering and distribution. “Thus said, since the invention of the web 2.0 in 2004, journalism has ceased to be the exclusive preserve of professional journalists. The styles of news gathering and reporting have drastically changed. This development has ended the era in which news consumers only participated in news generation through irregular letters to the editors, the lordly gate-keepers who decided which letter to publish, in which form and at what time.”

Following its advent, the power of the citizen brand of journalism has been tested in different places and situations. “The 2004 Indonesian Boxing Day Tsunami, the July 2005

London Bombing and the 2007 Virginia Tech disasters are cited in many research studies as examples where audiences on the ground took photographs, text and voice messages and eye witness accounts which told the ‘story’ in ways that almost eclipsed the traditional way of reporting news”; (www.theopennewsroom.com). Other instances that quickly come to mind are the Arab Spring, the Occupy Wall Street Movement, the 2013 military takeover of power in Egypt and the attendant protests, 2012 elections in the United States and Ghana, just to mention a few. In each of the instances, ordinary citizens gathered information, including action pictures from scenes of incidents, and uploaded to the Internet for global consumption, within split seconds. Nadine Jurrat (2011:9), poses three main events which shaped citizen journalism. The first one is the terrorist attack on New York City and the Pentagon on 11 September 2001. During the attack, the general public searched for eyewitness reports on the web for the first time. The second one was the 2004 Asian tsunami, where the term “citizen journalism” was used for the first time, while the third one was the 2005 London bombings when witnesses started sending their footage of the attack to the mainstream media (2011: 9). The recent attack of Kuje Maximum Prison at Abuja on July 5, 2022 justifies the invaluable place of citizen journalism. Non-professional journalists were reporting the event live in the night, with videos and sounds of gunshot even before the main stream media could report the news in the morning.

Citizen journalism offers professional and non-professional journalists alike opportunities to be active participants in news content creation. With it, members of the public are no longer helpless passive consumers of news. They are now content creators. Citizen journalism has broken the hitherto seemingly endless monopoly of the mainstream media. As such, journalism is today democratic and participatory.

Another rather amazing benefit of citizen journalism is that it delivers news almost at the speed of lightning. It has surpassed the immediacy of the broadcast media (radio and television). Citizen journalism, via the social media, spreads news like wild harmattan fire just in split seconds, apparently because the news does not need to wait for any editor to process it. Feedback is also immediate. The audience have the opportunity to react to the news instantly, and even add to the content.

Citizen journalism is now a popular brand of journalism in Nigeria. This development is attributable to the overwhelming use of the social media in the country. Both the political leaders and the electorate in Nigeria use the social media for various reasons. In his study of “The rise for citizen journalism in Nigeria – a case study of Sahara Reporters,” Dare (2011:44) stated that “National recognition came for social media when on June 28, 2010, Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan, launched his Facebook fans page to reach out to the youth and Nigerians with a view to getting feedback on electoral reform and other national issues.” He reported that Nigerian politicians employed the social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter and SMS messaging to advance their campaigns and deliver their manifestos to boost their followership during the country’s 2011 general elections.

As a result of the ubiquitous adoption of social media for public communication in Nigeria, citizen journalism has gained currency in the country. Nigerian citizen journalists report events in their localities and comment on national issues, using the social networking sites.

The foregoing benefits of citizen journalism notwithstanding, it has some downsides. One of such challenges is the question about the veracity of its content. Some commentators have criticized citizen journalism as a new way of spreading falsehood and other unethical practices in the name of journalism. Potential false news reports are just one of the many possible

ramifications of sourcing news from “anonymous” sources. The news could be factually correct, but have flaws like blatant disregard of ethics, lack of objectivity, impartiality and balance. It could also be a hidden agenda or opinion sugarcoated as fact or a libelous or defamatory statement that puts subjects in the story in bad light. In mainstream media, a process of verification and checks called gate-keeping can weed out any such inaccuracies and biases. Gate keeping, so it’s called, is done by experienced and trained journalists and editors, using tools and skills like knowledge of the law and in house or commercial stylebooks such as the Associated Press Stylebook.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In Nigeria, Citizen Journalism has been criticized by some elites. Some of the critics believe that citizen journalism lacks veracity. Dare (2011:44) found that only 33 respondents of the 120 surveyed trusted Sahara reporters. This, according to him, shows that most Nigerians do not believe stories from citizen journalists. It is believed in some quarters that they spread falsehood.

Citizen journalism is sometimes perceived as amateurish or as bad version of the mainstream media and it definitely has its critics. It is commonly known that professional journalists have formal education and ethical responsibilities towards the public. Moreover, there is an abundance of regulations, laws, and codes which helps professional journalists navigate the ethical field. Based on that, many criticize citizen journalism and its lack of regulations and codes of ethics. Other critics argue that citizen journalism fuels civil unrest, political instability and ethno-religious crisis. This angle of criticism peaked during the National protest that greeted the removal of fuel subsidy in January 2012. It was believed in some quarters that citizen journalists misinformed the protesters, making them to gang up against the government.

Again, citizen journalism has also been criticized for trivializing issues of national interest. This was evident in the outcry; especially by national leaders against the conduct of citizen journalists during the Dana Airline crash of June 03, 2012, as reported by Apeh, Andrew C, in his paper *Implications of Citizen Journalism on the Main Stream Journalism*. It was said that “while rescue operators were sweating profusely to see if there could be any survivors, citizen journalists were busy taking and uploading gory pictures to their friends”

Furthermore, past researchers over relied on content analysis method to study issues of online or social media false information, neglecting the opinion and perception of the public regarding their experience of online false information. To prove this, Apeh stated in his methodology the following, “The Researchers adopted qualitative research design for this study. The approach used for the generation of research data was desk study; data collection from secondary sources. Newspapers, Magazines, Libraries, Internet and Archives were among the sources the researchers consulted to drive home his points.” It is against this background that the question this study seeks to answer is to ascertain the effect of online fake information in Nigeria, taking Auchi Polytechnic as study.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the effect of online fake news on the users in Nigeria.
2. To know if Citizen and Online Journalism has been of any help to the community of Auchi Polytechnic.
3. To find out the extent fake news has affected the audience trust on the credibility and authenticity of online news.
4. To ascertain the best ways to form a synergy between the main stream journalism and online journalism.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What is the effect of online fake news on the users in Nigeria?
2. Have the Citizen and Online journalism been of any help to the Auchu Polytechnic community?
3. To what extent has fake news affected the credibility and authenticity of online news?
4. What are the best ways to form a synergy between the mainstream and online journalism.

1.5 Significance of the Study

There is no doubt about the fact that a research work like this will be beneficiary to some people. This work will benefit the general public, professional journalist, non-professional journalist, government and future researchers.

It will benefit the general public, in order for them to understand and detect fake news online, understand the danger of online fake news and the measure taken by the concerned authority to create awareness and to be enlightened.

It will help the professional journalist to be proactive in their fight against fake news and retaining the trust of the masses in the truthfulness, fairness and unbiased reporting. This will make them to do more.

The study will also help and encourage the non-professional (citizen) journalists to strive at reporting the truth and not manipulating information to suit their desires.

Government at all levels will see reasons to be more active in their responsibilities in setting up cyber security measures and control. It will also benefit government agencies like the ministry of information so that they can understand how best to save the masses from the effect of fake news.

Researchers working on this or related research will find the work interesting and as a reference material.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The scope of the study is online and social media users in general but limited to users in Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi Edo State, for easy administration of research tools. The study will basically focus on the experience and perception of these users as related to citizen journalism and online fake news.

1.7 Limitation of the Study

There were some challenges that I had to overcome to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings of this study. These include the inadequate development of empirical research literature on Citizen Journalism and Online fake news in Nigeria. While there were few adequate and rich research work found from earlier study to focus on the issue of online fake news, limited time required to carry out the research was also a limitation. Obtaining response from the respondents as related to the topic was also demanding and challenging as a result of time constraint. Added to the above challenges are others such as finance, stress emanated from the academic exercise.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHOD

3.1 Research Design

The survey research design was considered appropriate for this study because it helped in estimating the perceptions of internet users or netizens about fake-news in Nigeria. Ojo (2018, pp 42) refers to survey research as “an empirical study that uses questionnaires or interview to discover descriptive character of a phenomenon”. He also defines survey research as “the study of a sample through questioning that enables a researcher to make generalizations concerning his population of interest”. According to Ohaja (2003), whenever the source of primary data for a study would be the views of members of the public or any particular group, a survey would be required. This design will enable the researcher to elicit responses from the target audience. Justification for the use of survey for data collection from the respondents of this research is that, surveys is the most appropriate method of gathering data and measuring data relating to demographics, attitude, opinion and perception. It also enables the use of multivariate statistics (Wimmer and Dominick, 2000).

3.2 Population of the Study

The population of this research work consists of the students of Mass Communication department, ND to HND level (regular students, 2021/2022 academic session), Auchipolytechnic and those who were present during the period the researcher was conducting the interview and administering questionnaires. The total population of Mass Communication students for 2021/2022 academic session for all the levels mentioned above is 2,117.

ND 1 = 437

ND 2 = 662

$$\text{ND } 3 = 15$$

$$\text{ND } 4 = 2$$

$$\text{HND } 1 = 426$$

$$\text{HND } 2 = 565$$

$$\text{HND } 3 = 10$$

$$\text{HND } 4 = 0$$

(Source: MIS and class lists as obtained from <http://www.auchipoly-online.com>).

3.3 Sampling Procedure

Sampling in survey is the selection of a subset of individuals from within a survey statistical population to estimate characteristics of the whole population. The selective sampling method was used by the researcher to gather necessary information for the study. This sampling procedure is adopted to ensure proportionate representation based on the sample size of the population.

3.4 Sample Size

Sampling has lower cost and faster data collection than measuring the entire population and can provide insights in cases where it is infeasible to measure an entire population, therefore the need for sampling in this research.

The Krejcie Morgan's formula was adopted for this research in determining the sample size from a given population. Therefore, the Krejcie Morgan's formula was adopted in this study.

Krejcie Morgan's formula is:

$$s = \frac{x^2 NP(1-P)}{d^2 (N-1) + x^2 P(1-P)}.$$

Where;

s = required sample size.

X^2 = the table of value of chi-square for 1 degree freedom at desired confidence level.

N = population size

p = the population proportion (assumed to be .50)

d = the degree of accuracy expressed as a proportion (.05)

From the Krejcie and Morgan table, when the population size is 2,200, the sample size would be 327. The same sample size will be valid for my population of 2,117. Therefore, questionnaires will be administered to 330 students that will be randomly selected from ND to HND levels, of which the required 327 questionnaire will be completed.

3.5 Validity of the Instrument

The instrument for gathering data was pre-tested using a pilot study which was conducted in an attempt to conserve resources. On getting the results, modifications in the instrument were made to fill the gaps and lapses that were observed in the initial instrument. Face validity was conducted and used to measure the validity of the research instrument that was adopted to gather data.

The validity test helped to identify potential needs for modifications of some of the questions where necessary. The questionnaire is valid because it was meticulously examined to guarantee its clarity, significance, un-ambiguity, and understanding.

3.6 Reliability of the Instrument

The instrument was tested for reliability so as to ensure that data analysed are correct and true. The constructed questionnaire which was designed based on the research question by the researcher was pilot tested to eliminate possible error.

Reliability was addressed by making sure research and investigative questions were consistent in measuring across all members of the targeted group, delivered objectively and pretested as such.

The reliability of the study can be traced to the response and result given by the people interviewed and supportive literatures by authors.

3.7 Method of Data Collection

The administration of the questionnaire will be based on the sample size drawn from each component of the study population. A copy of the questionnaire will be administered to any student that could be reached in Mass Communication department, Auchi Polytechnic. The administering of the questionnaire will be carried out in class so as to gather valid and reliable response.

The researcher, with the aid of the supervisor will administer the copies of the questionnaire to the students. The completed copies of the questionnaire will be collected on the spot after administration. This will ensure that the total number of copies of questionnaire administered is the same with the number retrieved. The researcher will be present at the point of administration to answer all oral questions from the respondents and give guidance within the confines of research ethics where necessary, on how the questionnaire will to be answered.

3.8 Method of Data Analysis

The data collected through the questionnaire will be grouped into categories. The categories are converted into frequency distribution, while the raw data arising from the frequency distribution will be converted into percentage. The data are presented in tabular form and discussions will be based on the descriptive method to describe the raw data that will be presented in the table. The formula for data analyses that will be used is the simple percentage:

$$\text{Percentage} = \frac{\text{Actual Response}}{\text{Total sampling size}} \times 100$$

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Preamble

In this study; Citizen Journalism: the Challenge of Online Fake News as part of the data collection process, questionnaires was being administered to a sample population of 330 people in Mass Communication department Auchi Polytechnic. However, only 320 of the questionnaire were returned and found viable. The analysis is therefore based on the results that are found viable. Data analysis was done quantitatively using tables, frequency and percentage.

4.2 Analysis of Respondents' Data

Section A: Personal Data

Table One: Gender of Respondents

Gender	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Male	95	30
Female	225	70
Total	320	100

Source: Field survey, 2022.

The above table reveals that 95 respondents representing 30 %are male while 225respondents representing 70 % are female.

Table Two: Age of Respondents

Age Option	Respondents	Percentage(%)
15- 20	20	6
21-25	138	43
26-30	117	37
31-35	30	9
36 above	15	5
Total	320	100

Source: Field survey, 2022.

From the above table, it is reveal that 20 respondents representing 6% are between the ages of 15-20, 138 respondents representing 43% are between the ages of 21-25, 117 respondents representing 37 % are between the ages of 26-30, 30 respondents representing 9% are between the ages of 31-35 while 15 respondents representing 5% are between the ages of 35 and above.

Table Three: Educational Levels of Respondents

Levels	Respondents	Percentage(%)
ND I	47	15
ND II	65	20
HND I	95	30

HND II	113	35
Total	320	100

Source: Field survey, 2022.

The above table reveals that 47 respondents representing 15 % were ND I students, 65 respondents representing 20 % were ND II students, 95 respondents representing 30% were HND I students while 113 respondents representing 35% were HND II students.

4.3: Presentation and Analysis of Psychographic Data Collected

Table Four: Do you read news online?

Option	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	272	85
No	48	15
Total	320	100

Source: Field survey, 2022.

The table above reveals that 272 respondents representing 85% reads news online while, 48 respondents representing 15 % of the sample size do not read news online.

Table Five: How often do you use social media?

Option	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Very often	263	82

Seldom	57	18
Total	320	100

Source: Field survey, 2022.

The table above shows that, 263 respondents making 82 % of the sample size use the social media regularly while, 57 respondents who make up 18 % of the population seldom use the social media.

Table Six: Do you agree that the news you read on social media are always true?

Option	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	50	16
Partially agree	80	25
Not always true	190	59
Total	320	100

Source: Field survey, 2022.

From the table, 50 respondents making 16 % of the sample size strongly agree that social media news are always true. 80 respondents making 25 % of the population sample however, partially agree that social media news is always true. 190 respondents making 59 % disagreed that social media news are always true.

Table Seven: Majority of citizen journalism reports are true.

Option	Respondent	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	85	27

Partially agree	75	23
Never agree	160	50
Total	320	100

Source: Field survey, 2022.

From the above table, 85 respondents representing 27% of the sample size strongly agree that majority of citizen journalism report are true, 75 respondents making 23 % partially agree, while 160 making 50 % never agree.

Table Eight: Do you think that citizen journalism is authentic as mainstream journalism?

Options	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	65	20
No	160	50
Not sure	95	30
Total	320	100

Source: Field survey, 2022.

The table above reveals that 160 respondents, representing 50 % of the sample size that citizen journalism is authentic as mainstream journalism, 65 respondents, representing 20% of the sample size says no, citizen journalism Is not authentic as mainstream, while 95 respondents, representing 30% of the sample size were indifferent.

Table Nine: When a news story is reported both through online media and traditional media, how will you treat the story?

Option	Respondent	Percentage (%)
Highly true	195	61
True	110	35
May be true	15	5
Total	320	100

Source: Field survey, 2022.

Table nine above reveals that 195 respondents, representing 61% of the sample size agrees that when news is reported by both media genre it is highly true, 110 respondents representing 35% says; the news story is true while 15 respondents representing 5% of the sample size said the news may be true.

Table Ten: Should there a merging of online journalism and traditional journalism?

Option	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	110	34
No	105	33
Don't know	105	33
Total	320	100

Source: Field survey, 2022.

Table ten reveals that 110 of the respondents, representing 34 % of the sample size said that there should be a merging of online journalism and traditional journalism, 105 representing 33 % said no, while 105 representing 33% are indifferent.

Table Eleven: Have you ever been a victim of fake news through the social media?

Options	Respondent	Percentage (%)
Yes	10	3
No	40	13
Not sure	270	84
Total	320	100

Source: Field survey, 2022.

Table eleven reveals that 10 of the respondents, representing 3 % of the sample size said that they have been victims of fake news through social media, 40 representing 13 % said no, while 207 representing 84% are indifferent.

Table Twelve: How much knowledge do you possess to detect fake news and authentic news?

Option	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Much knowledge	80	25
Less knowledge	43	13

Not sure	197	62
Total	320	100

Source: Field survey, 2022.

Table twelve reveals that 80 of the respondents, representing 25 % of the sample size said that they have much knowledge to detect fake news, 43 representing 13 % said they less little detecting knowledge, while 195 representing 62% said they are not sure.

Table Thirteen: Do you think one must be a licensed or certified journalist to report events?

Option	Respondent	Percentage (%)
Yes	61	19
No	117	37
Not sure	142	44
Total	320	100

Source: Field survey, 2022.

Table thirteen reveals that 61 of the respondents, representing 19 % of the sample size said that only certified journalists, that is, journalists working with established media organization should be reporting events, 117 representing 37 % said no that anyone can report events , while 142 representing 44% are indifferent.

Table Fourteen: Between mainstream media and new media, which would you prefer as your source of information?

Option	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Mainstream	49	15
New media	183	57
Both	88	28
Total	320	100

Source: Field survey, 2022.

Table fourteen reveals that 49 of the respondents, representing 15 % of the sample size preferred the mainstream media as their source of information, 183 representing 57 % said they preferred the new media, while 88 representing 28% are indifferent.

Table Fifteen: Between mainstream and new media, where do think that fake news thrives easily?

Option	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Mainstream	3	1
New media	308	96
Don't know	9	3
Total	320	100

Source: Field survey, 2022.

Table fifteen reveals that 3 of the respondents, representing 1 % of the sample size opined that fake news thrives more easily through main stream media , 308 representing 96 % said fake news thrive more through the new media, while 9 representing 3 % are indifferent.

Table Sixteen: Have the mainstream media in Nigeria been able to adequately report all the necessary information in the country?

Options	Respondents	Percentage(%)
Yes	33	10
No	208	65
Not sure	79	25
Total	320	100

Source: Field survey, 2022.

Table sixteen reveals that 33 of the respondents, representing 10 % of the sample size said that the mainstream media has adequately reported all the necessary information in the country, 208 representing 65 % said no, while 79 representing 25% are indifferent.

4.4 Discussion of Findings

This is done to evaluate the effectiveness of the study. The data was gathered through the aid of questionnaires used to provide answers to the four research questions for this study.

RESEARCH QUESTION 1: What is the effect of fake News in Nigeria?

The majority of Nigerian today as revealed through this research in table four, source for their information through the online media instead of the traditional media. 272 of the respondents making 85 % of the sample size agreed that they read news online and, in table fourteen, 183 respondents making 57 %, the majority of the sample size preferred the social media as their choice source of information. To this end, when fake news is allowed to thrive, majority of the population of the nation will be led astray depending on the intent of the fake news. Definitely, if

the intent was to disturb the peace of the nation, it will be achieved. And, this is one of the effects of fake news in Nigeria. It disturbs the peace of the nation, it can be used to incite hatred, and mislead the masses.

RESEARCH QUESTION 2: Have citizen and online journalism been of any help to Auchi Polytechnic Community?

A major gauge for measuring news relevance is timeliness. To this, any information that arrives late is seen as stale information and may not be able to fulfill the information need of the audience. When the majority of the respondent were asked why they choose the new media as their source of information, they identify the timeliness of report on the social media as their reason. This was evident in table fourteen as 183 respondents making 57 % of the sample size, choose the new media as their source of information. The choice was made on the level of usefulness of the media.

Also, in table 13 and 16, the usefulness of online journalism was amplified by the respondents who are students of the polytechnic community. In table 13, 117 respondents making 37 % of the sample size agreed that non-certified journalist, that is, citizen journalist should be reporting events. While in table sixteen, 208 respondents making 65% of the population size said that the mainstream media has not been able to adequately report all the necessary information in the country, hence the need for citizen journalists.

Humans will, in most choose what has been of relevance to them. So, for the majority to have choosing the new media as their source of information, that means it is of help and relevant to their information need. This answer for the question: **have citizen and online journalism been of any help to Auchi polytechnic community?**

RESEARCH QUESTION 3: To what extent has fake news affected the credibility and authenticity of online news?

To uphold the importance of truthfulness in news judgment, though the majority of the population sample, choose the new media as their source of information because of timeliness, yet, when asked **do you think that citizen journalism is authentic as mainstream journalism?**, from table eight, 160 of the respondents making 50 % of the population sample, that is the majority said 'no'. Meaning that they do not believe or accept the social media news as authentic as the mainstream media.

Also, table fifteen shows that fake news thrive easily on the social or new media. 308 respondents making 96 % of the sample size agreed that fake news thrive easily on the social media, hence they hardly accept the news on social media as credible or authentic except, as indicated in table nine that news on the social media is accepted as credible when same news is reported by the mainstream media. Table nine has it that, 195 respondents making 61% of the sample size treat a news story to be highly true when reported on both media and, and 110 respondent making 35 % of the sample size takes news story reported by both media as true.

If the audience needs confirmation from the mainstream media to accept the credibility of online media news because of its proneness to fake news, then to a large extent, fake news has affected the authenticity and credibility of online media news.

RESEARCH QUESTION 4: What are the best ways to form a synergy between the mainstream and online journalism?

From table eight, 160 of the respondents making 50% of the sample size, that is the majority said "no" when asked **do you think that citizen journalism is authentic as mainstream journalism?** This is because; citizen journalism is prone to fake news and accuracy in mainstream journalism as a result of the gate keeping function or role of the mainstream media.

Yet, in table fourteen 183 respondents making 57 % of the sample size, the majority of the sample size preferred the social media as their choice source of information. They made the later choice due to the timeliness or speed involved in online news dissemination.

The situation above calls for synergy between the mainstream media and online media, whereby the inadequacy of one will cover by the adequacy of the other and vice-versa. There are observable deficiencies in both media, but a synergy will reduce the gaps of delay and proneness to fake news in the mainstream media and online media respectively, to the barest possible minimum.

One of the ways to form this synergy is through media convergence. *Study.com* defines media convergence as, “the joining of distinct technologies into one”. In a simple term, it is a situation where both the print media and broadcast media will operate an online platform on the social media. Then, the news will be fast and the authenticity or credibility of the information will be trusted.

Also, mainstream media should quote their citizen journalism source when the citizen journalist is their source of information. By so doing, the public will begin to trust the credibility of online news reports.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 SUMMARY

This closing chapter of this research work is evidence that the study was concluded and findings made. The study examined the challenge of online (basically, social media) fake news in the practice of citizen journalism. The aim of the study was to examine the challenge of fake news as it concerns citizen journalism; the benefit of citizen journalism, users' perception, experience and forming a synergy between mainstream journalism and citizen journalism, employing Auchi Polytechnic community as the reference point.

This research work reviewed related literature on the conceptual definition of citizen journalism, aims of citizen journalists, conventional media and social media convergence, citizen journalism and the challenge of fake news. Also, the appropriate theory was applied.

Survey research method was used to collect and interpret data, with the aid of questionnaire which guided the researcher. The study found out that citizen journalism in Nigeria has aid in efficient and speedy dissemination of relevant information. It also revealed that, due to the freedom of expression on the social media, dissemination of fake news is a constant component of the citizen journalism, and this has caused many to question the authenticity of some online news/information and messages.

5.2 CONCLUSION

Findings from this research show that, there are incidences of fake news in the practice of citizen journalism, due to the freedom of expression given to all who has the technology to access social media space without restriction. While some of the fake news are intentional, others are not.

Adequate and appropriate synergy between the traditional media and online/new media will aid in curtailing the fake news in the social space.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Citizen journalism remains one of the potent instruments that can be used to bringing about positive development and change in the society; with this in mind, the following recommendations are made:

1. There should be a constant campaign both on the social media and main stream media to warn the masses on the reality and danger of fake new.
2. The main stream media should not shy away from mentioning the social media that served as their source of information. The same applies to the citizen journalist whenever the mainstream media is their source of information.
3. Citizen journalists should endeavor the authenticity of their information before posting on the social space.
4. Forwarding and reposting of unverified information and messages form unknown sources should be discouraged.
5. The government should set up a board that will periodically award citizen journalists who are outstanding in reporting accurate, fair, balance and objective news reporting. The will encourage others to strive for accuracy in their reports.

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APPENDIX I

Department of Mass Communication,
School of Information and Communication
Technology,
Auchi Polytechnic,
Auchi.
25th October, 2022

Dear Respondents,

REQUEST FOR THE COMPLETION OF QUESTIONNAIRE

I am **EGWUDA NEHEMIAH OJOCHONU**, a Higher National Diploma student of the above named department and institution. I am currently working on a research topic: **CITIZEN JOURNALISM: THE CHALLENGE OF ONLINE FAKE NEWS IN NIGERIA**. This research is in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the award of Higher National Diploma in Mass Communication.

You have been selected to participate in this exercise. Please, kindly fill this questionnaire to the best of your knowledge and in all honesty. Be assured that answers given will be treated with utmost confidentiality as the information you provide is for academic purpose only.

Thanks for your anticipated favorable response.

Yours faithfully,

EGWUDA NEHEMIAH OJOCHONU

APPENDIX II
QUESTIONNAIRE

Section A: Demographic Variables

Please tick as (x) appropriate

1. Gender

a. Male ()

b. Female ()

2. Age

a. 15 – 20 ()

b. 21 - 25()

c. 26 - 30 ()

d. 31- 35 ()

e. 36 and above ()

3. Class level

a. ND I ()

b. ND II ()

c. HND I ()

d. HND II ()

Section B: Non Demographic Variables

4. Do you read news online?

a. Yes () b. () c. ()

5. How often do you use the social media?

- a. Very Often ()
- b. Often ()
- c. Seldom ()

6. Do you agree that news you read on social media are always true?

- a. Strongly agree ()
- b. Partially agree ()
- c. Never agree. ()

7. Majority of citizen journalism reports are true.

- a. Agree ()
- b. Strongly agree ()
- c. Never agree ()

8. Do you think that citizen journalism is authentic as mainstream journalism?

- a. Yes ()
- b. No ()
- c. Not sure ()

**9. When a news story is reported both through social media and traditional media,
how will you treat the story?**

- a. Highly true ()
- b. True ()

c. Not true ()

10. Should there be a merging of online journalism and traditional journalism?

a. Yes ()

b. No ()

c. Don't know ()

11. Have you ever been a victim of fake news through the social media?

a. Yes ()

b. No ()

c. Not sure ()

12. How much knowledge do you have to detect fake news and authentic news?

a. Much Knowledge s()

b. Less Knowledge ()

c. No Knowledge ()

13. Do you think one must be a licensed journalist to report event?

a. Yes ()

b. No ()

c. Not sure ()

14. Between mainstream media and the new media, which would you prefer as your source of information?

a. Mainstream ()

b. New media ()

c. Both ()

15. Between mainstream and new media, where can fake news thrive easily?

a. Mainstream ()

b. New media ()

c. Don't know ()

16. Have the main stream media in Nigeria been able to adequately cover and report all the necessary information in the country?

a. Yes ()

b. No ()

c. Not sure ()

APPENDIX III

*Robert V. Krejcie and Daryle W. Morgan Table for Determining Sample Size
from a Given Population*

<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>
10	10	220	140	1200	291
15	14	230	144	1300	297
20	19	240	148	1400	302
25	24	250	152	1500	306
30	28	260	155	1600	310
35	32	270	159	1700	313
40	36	280	162	1800	317
45	40	290	165	1900	320
50	44	300	169	2000	322
55	48	320	175	<u>2200</u>	<u>327</u>
60	52	340	181	2400	331
65	56	360	186	2600	335
70	59	380	191	2800	338
75	63	400	196	3000	341
80	66	420	201	3500	346
85	70	440	205	4000	351
90	73	460	210	4500	354
95	76	480	214	5000	357
100	80	500	217	6000	361
110	86	550	226	7000	364
120	92	600	234	8000	367
130	97	650	242	9000	368
140	103	700	248	10000	370
150	108	750	254	15000	375
160	113	800	260	20000	377
170	118	850	265	30000	379
180	123	900	269	40000	380
190	127	950	274	50000	381
200	132	1000	278	75000	382
210	136	1100	285	1000000	384

Note.—*N* is population size.
S is sample size.