

**AN EVALUATION OF THE IMPLICATION OF FAKE NEWS ON THE NIGERIAN
SECURITY**

BY

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**DEPARTMENT OF MASS COMMUNICATION,
AUCHI POLYTECHNIC, AUCHI,**

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**A PROJECT WORK SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF MASS
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this study entitled “An Evaluation of The Implication of Fake News on the Nigerian Security” was written by me and that it is the record of my own research. To the best of my knowledge it has not been presented in any previous application for an academic award. All sources of information have been acknowledged using references.

Abdul-Malik Amin Abdul-Malik

Date

APPROVAL

This project is approved based on the student's declaration and its compliance with the requirements of the Department of Mass Communication in partial fulfillment of the award of Higher National Diploma (HND) in Mass Communication.

Mr. Ikerodah Joseph
(Project Supervisor)

Date

Mr. Ikerodah Joseph
(Ag. Head of Department)

Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this project work to God Almighty

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First and foremost praise to the God Almighty for his shower of blessings throughout my research work.

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ABSTRACT

The study was carried out to examine the implication of fake news on the Nigerian security. The major objective was to examine if the existence of fake news has positive or negative effect on the Nigerian security. Four research questions were asked in line with the objectives. The survey methodology was used, while the questionnaire was used as instrument of data collection. A total of 400 questionnaires were administered while 350 were returned and found usable. The simple percentage method was used in the analysis. The study revealed that respondents have awareness of what fake news is and Fake news is spread almost every on all types of media especially social media. It was concluded that development cannot thrive well in an environment where fake news is popular among the people. The study recommend among others that adequate awareness and enlightenment campaign on the negative implications of fake news to Nigerian political development should be carried out amongst Nigerians.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Arguably, Nigeria is one of the most diverse countries globally in terms of tribe and ethnicity, and these tribes and ethnicities are invariably linked to different beliefs, socio-political affiliations, and religions. Nigeria's political landscape is always tensed and given the increasing security challenges in different parts of the nation, perceived marginalization, anger, confusion, and economic challenges; there is a tendency that persons might take advantage of these shortcomings either to misinform and promote apathy through fake news (Pate, 2018). Despite these challenges, Ibrahim and Adamu (2016) and Pate (2018) reiterate that we are at a pervasive and persuasive information age; when and where there is, to a considerable extent, the free flow of information courtesy of the developments in information and communication technologies (ICT) that have liberalized mainly and simplified access and dissemination of information across time and boundaries and in real-time. This, in turn, has changed both the delivery and form of information communicated within Nigeria's system and shifted and undermined the accountability for those messages. What used to be called 'yellow journalism' or "sensational journalism"; acts that have been ethically and morally frowned at, according to Agbese (2017) have suddenly metamorphosed into 'fake news. It is a buzzword that sounds 'bigger' and portends more negative effects in the society especially given that term is more easily fueled and spread by the potential of the new media technology (Wasserman & Madrid-Morales, 2018). Madu *et al.* (2019) argue that several factors include the absence of institutional capacity, a disconnect between the people and government, the failure of security agencies, and ethno religious/tribal conflicts, among others, have been identified as handling the lack of political development in

Nigeria. Nonetheless, the authors point out that one silent element that has emerged as the greatest threat to national integration in Nigeria is the phenomenon of fake news.

Fake news is a false and fabricated message or information that is circulated deliberately with the intent to mislead the audience. Ethical Journalism Network (EJN) defines fake news as a piece of information purposely fabricated and disseminated with the intent to deceive and mislead others into believing falsehood or suspicious messages (EJN, 2017). The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) explains fake news as "completely false information, photos or videos purposefully created and spread to confuse or misinform (BBC News, 2019 June 29, online). Madu *et al.* (2019) argue that fake news is a piece of fabricated information deliberately created and circulated to deceive the populace. It is a conduit pipe through which social vices such as fake news are disseminated, fuelling political/ethno religious crises. The promoters and mongers of fake news aim to instigate acts capable of causing disunity among people (Madu *et al.*, 2019). It is pertinent to reiterate that it has become easier to promote fake news with rapid information and communication technology. Precisely, the emergence of social media has augmented the pace at which fake news is churned out.

Going by the apparent ugly developments resulting from fake news across the globe, the topic has become a significant preoccupation for scholars, multinational organizations, governments, policymakers, the media, civil society, and academia. However, what is 'fake news'? How did it come about? What implications does it have for political development? Moreover, how can fake news be curtailed with the view to engendering political development? Proffering tenable answers to these questions is the crux of this study.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

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1.3 Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the factors that motivate fake news on social media
2. To examine the moral consequences of fake news

3. To examine the legal implication of fake news on political development
4. To examine if fake news can be constricted to conform to the ethical and moral standard of journalism in Nigeria.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What are the factors that motivate fake news on social media networks in Nigeria?
2. What are the moral and ethical consequences of fake news in the social media to journalism profession and the society?
3. What are the legal implications of using social media to promote fake news in Nigeria?
4. Can fake news on social media be constricted to conform to the ethical and moral standards of journalism profession?

1.5 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study covers fake news languages on social media. That is, it hope to explore what constitute fake news, its moral implication, and how it affects information dissemination. The study will be carried out in Etsako West local Government Area of Edo State.

1.6 Significance of the Study

Literatures on this subject matter are still relatively scanty. Based on this, upon completion, this study will contribute to the body of knowledge thereby boosting the literature on this subject. In the light of this, the study will serve as reference material to future researchers who will be interested in delving into researching further on the subject matter.

Also, the study will provide a holistic exploration of what constitute fake news. It will therefore attempt to chart a way forward by making recommendations on how fake news can be conscripted with a view to providing regimented regulations of social media platforms to meet the standard of conventional media. This will to a large extent help in nation and peace building,

To government, this study will provide a blue print on how to makes people friendly social media regulation that will not be perceived to be autocratic,

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Review of Relevant Literature

Recently, the menace of fake news has become popular. The pace at which misinformation is churned out in the media, especially social media, is alarming. The term "fake news" has two words: "fake" and "news". Let us start with "fake". Fake means false, unauthentic, not genuine, not true, among other meanings. On the other hand, the news is a timely report of events. Put together, fake news could mean the prompt report of false events. Being an emerging domain of study, there is no accepted definition of fake news. According to Towers-Clark (as cited in Pate and Ibrahim, 2019), the term attracted so much attention recently that it was named the Collins Dictionary Word of the Year in 2017 due to its unmatched usage. McGonagle (2017) opines that fake news is information that is intentionally fabricated and disseminated with the intent to deceive and mislead. In this regard, it is misinformation/disinformation that is presented as or is likely to be discerned as news. Alawode *et al.* (2018) reiterate that fake news is a piece of information that is deliberately false and could mislead readers. The scholars explained that fake news includes false information that can be verified, created with dishonest intention to mislead readers.

The explosive growth of fake news, driven by the social media trend, demands investigation and intervention. While fake news is not a new phenomenon, it has received much attention at the present time because of the popularity of social media for interaction and for the diffusion of news and ideas. Social media is the "lifeblood of fake news" because it permits anyone to share a viral fake story to people at a low cost (Warner-Søderholm et al., 2018; Klein & Wueller, 2017). The "concern about the spread of fake news focuses on both the ubiquity of

social media and the easy circulation of information that social media platforms afford due to their technical affordances” (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). Social media platform incentivizes the dissemination of problematic news content and permits its circulation in a novel perplexing manner (Quandt, 2019), and the rapidity with which news content moves within social media causes fake news to swiftly spread unverified, making it hard to correct (Lazer et al., 2017). Hence, the rise of fake news has become a global concern. Although the problem is universal, fake news spreading is often drawn by local issues and contextual situations. What motivates people to share news or fake news, for example, may come from cultural attributes that are not necessarily captured by motivation typology deduced from the vast majority of Western-centric research. The impacts of fake news spreading through society may be varied in many ways from other communities as well. Acknowledging the locality of this global problem, it is important to examine fake news proliferation at the micro-level. In this paper, we analyze past studies focusing on fake news in Nigeria to provide a microanalysis of the reasons or motivations for fake news sharing in Nigeria and consequences upon the populace. Our goal is to propose some strategies to help prevent fake news proliferation in this context.

Literally, the term fake news consists of two words ‘fake’ which implies something not genuine, but meant to be accepted as true, and ‘news’ which means information about current events. Therefore, it can be said that fake news is information or news that is not genuine but presented and expected to be conceived as being true. Scholars have conceptualized fake news in many different ways but with almost the same meanings. Duffy et al. (2019) define fake news as a situation when misinformation takes the form of a news story to approximate the legitimacy which society associates with real news. Many scholars focus on the intention behind fake news when defining the term. McGonagle (2017) defines fake news as information that has been

deliberately fabricated and disseminated with the intention to deceive and mislead others into believing falsehoods or doubting verifiable facts. In this regard, it is disinformation that is presented as or is likely to be perceived as news. Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) view fake news as news articles that are intentionally and verifiably false and could mislead readers. Visentin et al. (2019) regard “fake news as fabricated stories that are intentionally false, realistically portrayed, and potentially verifiable”. These definitions suggest that fake news is false information that is created with dishonest intention to mislead readers. Tandoc et al. (2018) provide a wider range of fake news category namely news satire, news parody, fabrication, manipulation, advertising, and propaganda. Relating those mentioned categories to fake news, the authors argued that there is a piece of fake news in the form of satire often found in comedy programs, fake news using parody for humorous purposes based on fictitious, fairly implausible news material, fake news as fabricated news, with no factual basis and disguised as real news in order to misinform audiences, fake news in forms of manipulated images and videos intended to create false narratives, fake news in the shape of advertising, but disguised as genuine reports and fake news as propaganda aimed at manipulating audiences’ political orientations and attitudes (Tandoc et al., 2018). The definitions of fake news, thus far, suggest that the core deducible elements of fake news are falsity of news content and the intent to deceive or mislead.

Fake news has gained research attention as it has a huge impact on democracy (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). In fact, past studies found many adverse effects of fake news. It was found that fake news further polarizes already divided societies (Vargo et al., 2018). For instance, in Nigeria, Sadiku (2018) reported that in June 2018, the gruesome murder of over 86 people in 11 communities in Barkin Ladi, Rirom and Jos South Local Government areas of Plateau state was spread on social media as a retaliation carried out by the Miyetti Allah group. However, a new

report revealed that the killings had nothing to do with the Miyetti Allah group. By then, the spread of fake news stories associated with the killings caused further deaths in the Plateau state of Nigeria. Similar research conducted in the US found that in 2016 there was a reported US “Pizza Gate conspiracy theory” where leaked party Emails of Democratic National Party were disseminated online during the US Presidential campaign, leading to speculations that the leaked emails contained an oblique reference to pedophilia and human trafficking, focusing on the family of a pizza restaurant in the Washington DC area, without a substantial proof (Barthel et al., 2016). This misinformation caused harassments, threats as well as inciting citizens to commit a shooting at a Pizza parlor (Barthel et al., 2016). Consistent with this finding, research reported that fake news was spread during the US 2016 elections, suggesting that Pope Francis endorsed the Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump. This fooled millions of readers around the world as well as caused chaos and panic among Americans (Tandoc et al. 2018). Likewise, in 2016, a piece of fake news suggesting that Israel threatened Pakistan with nuclear weapons surfaced online causing a lot of confusion (Goldman, 2016). In another incident, a Facebook picture posted by a refugee in Germany was used in several fake news stories blaming refugees for terrorist attacks, despite the individual having no ties to the events (Torres et al., 2018). These findings demonstrate the universal effect of fake news on society at large. Despite the rise of fake news in the world, research focusing on its effects on developing countries is scarce. Duffy et al. (2019) stated that most research examining fake news has emerged from the US and UK contexts and they recommended scholars to look beyond. In this paper, we purposely select Nigeria, a developing country that is less well studied (Wasserman & Madrid-Morales, 2019) to provide an alternative view of understanding this global problem. Due to marginalization, anger, confusion and economic challenges, “there is a tendency that political actors [in Nigeria] can

take advantage of these lapses either to misinform, misinform and promote apathy” (Pate et al., 2019). In addition, studies on fake news in Nigeria are still limited. A few studies that appear in the literature focus on the consequences of fake news rather than solutions to the problem (Pate et al., 2019; Pate & Ibrahim, 2019). As such, this paper contributes to knowledge in two ways. First, it compiles past research on fake news in Nigeria and analyzes contextual factors and consequences of fake news proliferation in this context. Second, it reinforces the need for fake news awareness as a means of reducing the spread of fake news among social media users in Nigeria. Therefore, this current work looks at fake news spread in Nigeria and its outcome, identifies the motivations for fake news sharing among Nigerians and further proposes fake news awareness as a strategy for prevention.

Even though the phenomenon of news articles aimed to mislead readers is popular at the moment (Standage, 2017), by no means is it entirely new. Standage (2017) writes that printers would write scary headlines on papers in the early 16th and late 17th centuries to attract patronage and readership. The emergence of radio and TV ushered in satirical news (Posetti and Mathew, 2018), and the coming of the Internet towards the end of the 20th century, followed by social media in the 21st century, culminated in an unprecedented escalation in fake news (Madu *et al*, 2019). Authors (Okoli, 2017; Persily, 2017) assert that globally, the phenomenon of fake news has become a prevalent concern because of its remarkable effect in the 2016 United States presidential campaign and British referendum, Brexit.

So far, the main elements of fake news are the 'falseness' of news content and the intent to deceive or mislead. Hence, malicious content that is created in error and circulated without the intent to mislead the consumers may be pardonable because no human system is immune to error. It is against this background that Wardle (as cited in Ogbette *et al.*, (2019) identifies seven

categories of fake news: satire, false connection, and misleading imposter content, manipulated content, fabricated content.

Effect Of Fake News On Nigeria's Political Development

Njoku and Udeh (2013) define social cohesion as the peaceful co-existence of members of a society, that is, a people. In other words, it refers to a society that is united. To cohere means to assemble various parts to achieve a unified whole. For this paper's purpose, political development is defined as a state of being free from distrust, insecurity, violence, false information, and other things that may hinder the progress of Nigeria. Nigeria is facing diverse and grievous economic and socio-political challenges, and several factors have been advanced as the causes of these challenges. According to Oderinu *et al.*(2019), weak security systems, porous borders, persuasive material inequalities and unfairness, unemployment/poverty, corruption, and ethno religious conflicts are some of the triggers of these challenges. Besides, Salami *et al.* (2018), as enumerated in Madu *et al.* (2019) summarize the causes of lack of political development in Nigeria to include absence of institutional capacity resulting in government failure; disconnection between the masses and government; weak and poorly funded military establishment, and non-prosecution of perpetrators of social vices in Nigeria. Hence, the country has continued to witness escalations in kidnapping, banditry, terrorism, and related vices.

Our society's dynamics have since changed the arrangement of security to now include consideration for societal induced crises such as terrorism, riots, demonstrations, kidnapping, advance fee fraud, among other social vices that threaten the peace orderliness in the society (Oloyede & Esimokha, 2018). Madu *et al.* (2019) assert that, currently, Fake news is chief among the elements that threaten Nigeria's tranquility because it has appeared as the propeller to the forces that engender insecurity. This assertion was corroborated by the country's current

Minister of Information Lai Mohammed, who reiterates that fake news endangers Nigeria's corporate existence, describing it as a time bomb waiting to explode. The problems nations contend with are inextricably linked with their history, culture, social structure, and economic conditions (Oloyede & Esimokha, 2018). The inference of fake news crisscrosses all the social vices connected to Nigerian society to fuel one form of crises or the other ranging from electoral violence, ethno-religious crises, economic instability, and leadership mistrust. How does fake news fuel these social vices that have to threaten Nigeria's corporate existence?

Ethno/Religious Crises

Ethno-religious conflicts are unarguably the greatest drivers of violence in Nigeria. Nigeria is comprised of about 250 ethnic groups speaking over 500 different languages. A considerable number of its citizens pay allegiance to their tribes ethnic groups, followed by their religions with insignificant interest in the Nigeria project. The Nigerian structure's ethno religious fabric is fragile, that it is at the center of every widespread violence in the country (Madu *et al*, 2019). News Wires (2019) argued that manufactured lies in the guise of news endanger Nigeria's fragile ethno religious fabric. Of particular interest is the constant fake and deceiving stories pitting the country's mainly Muslim north against the predominantly Christian south. This act is a traditional fault line often employed by advocates of restructuring the country's present federal structure.

An abundance of fake stories circulated through social media with the ultimate mission of inciting fear, anxiety, suspicion, and disunity across ethnic/religious groups in Nigeria. A statement credited to Alhaji Gidado Siddiki, the leader of the Miyetti Allah Group, with a bold headline "Southeast will boil any moment from now because of their stubbornness" where he was suspected to have said that, "since they (people from the southeast) claim to be adamant, and

had refused to give them their lands in peace; hence, it will be forcefully taken, and entire southeast will be raided and taken over by the herdsmen (Siddiki, 2019). Expectedly, the news turned out to be sensational and misleading. Correspondingly, a certain story about the Fulanis disguising to maraud people in some parts of Osun State went viral on various WhatsApp platforms.

Adegoke (2019), cited in Edwin and Yalmi (2019), reiterates how a fake and gruesome post on Facebook triggered hate and violence amongst the people of northern and southern Plateau in Nigeria during the 2019 general elections. The post showed pictures of a man's skull open, and a baby with machete wounds across its head and jaw was made viral around Facebook, and it attracted about 11,000 views. According to the claims, the Fulani Muslims were killing Christians of Berom ethnic minority. This news engulfed hatred among both tribes costing the life of Many Fulani Muslims in the region (Edwin and Yalmi, 2019). The consequence of circulating such fake news is that it causes panic and can engendering violence across ethnic and religious divides, thereby endangering the national fabric of the nation's unity. Similar fabrications abound on other social media platforms, in some cases, even in the print and broadcast media, especially when news contents are not verified across multiple platforms. Besides, fake news may be disseminated in the mainstream media when news organizations are in a rush to be the first in breaking news items.

Economic Instability

For some years now, Nigeria has witnessed a great deal of political and ethno-religious crises. Let us trace these crises from the post-independence era. A few years after the country's independence in 1960, the entire fabric that holds Nigeria's unity degenerated into a bloody civil. The aftermath of this crisis still haunts the country to date, especially in terms of economic

development. During the civil war, businesses worth millions were destroyed, and some of these businesses bounce back today. Presently, the ethno-religious crises that have ravaged the north-central states of Benue, Plateau, Nasarawa have created economic hardship for the people of the region. The unending onslaughts and clashes between the Fulani herders and farmers have put these communities' economic activities in a docile state. Some of these crises are caused by unverified fake news circulated purposely to create embers of disunity among the different ethnic and religious groups in the region.

Nigeria's northeast region's continued ravaging by the deadly Boko Haram terrorist has rendered the region economically unstable. Businesses and other means of livelihood have been crushed, and the surviving ones have left the region. The inhabitants of the northeast are heavily dependent on the government for survival. To revive the economic fortune of the region, the federal government established the North-East Development Commission. This government agency is put in place to assess the level of damage in the area and come up with modalities on restoring the region's socio-economic activities. Before now, the activities of militancy and oil bunkering has ravaged the south-south region of Nigeria. These ugly activities in the south-south are caused by innate leadership mistrust; the people do not trust or believe the political class's promises (Pate, Gambo, and Ibrahim, 2019).

The overall effect of economic instabilities from different regions of the country is evident; sixty years after independence, the nation has not advanced economically. Its per capita income is among the lowest in the sub-region. Its health and education sectors are in shambles. No doubt, no meaningful development can occur in an environment of chaos, and fake news has been said to be one of the causes of economic retardation (Pate, 2018).

Electoral Violence

Elections are indispensable elements of a thriving democratic society. It advances competitive politics, guarantees political participation, and entrenches the rule of law. Nevertheless, over the years, elections in Nigeria have been marred by disruptions and violence, which always results in the loss of lives and properties. Regrettably, some of the violence was instigated by the never real news (Madu *et al.*, 2019). McGonagle (2017) argues that, unlike other forms of information, news plays a significant role in democratic societies; it is an essential medium for verifiable political and social affairs, which informs public opinion and action. Suppose a piece of news is false and misleading. In that case, it misinforms the public, and democratic debate is contaminated at the same source, leading to the unpopularity of electoral victories with the people's attendant potential of rejection and revolt. For instance, in the build-up to the 2019 elections, President Muhammadu Buhari was said to have been cloned and that he was a man named Jubrin Aminu from Sudan (Edwin and Yalmi, 2019). This speculation was to become one of the most widely circulated misinformation during the 2019 general elections.

Madu *et al* (2019) opine that most worries that characterize elections in Nigeria are generated and transmitted by peddlers of fake stories with the intent to cause chaos. The authors further submit that these peddlers of fake news use social media instrumentality, and they fabricate false insightful materials about political parties, political actors, and electoral bodies to cause tension in the polity. In extreme cases, they even concoct and spread fake election results, which are not verified by the electoral authority, thereby fueling widespread violence when the authentic results are different from the already circulated fake result (Madu *et al.*, 2019). The negative impact of fake news on the electioneering process is not peculiar to Nigeria. McGonagle (2017) argues that fake news is often blamed for having a disruptive effect on

elections and referenda outcomes and skews democratic public debates, for instance, the 2016 United States Presidential elections and Brexit referendum.

Leadership Mistrust

Earlier this paper, Pate *et al.* (2019) identified leadership mistrust as fake news drivers. Besides, Madu *et al.* (2019) assert that fake news is also used as an instrument for gaining political advantage, especially during elections. According to Madu *et al.* (2019), in this circumstance, politicians and their followers peddle all sorts of propaganda and fake stories to tarnish and dint the public of their opponents. In other words, they carefully plan and execute systematic character assassination to diminish individuals' public perception of obstacles. A good example is the "Occupy Nigeria" protest of 2012 that was engineered by the then opposition party, All Progressive Congress (APC) against the former President Goodluck Jonathan. When the President announced the removal of fuel subsidy, the APC capitalized on it to peddle propaganda and fake news; they claimed that fuel subsidy is non-existent that the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) is planning to loot the national treasury. What ensued was massive revolts and demonstrations that crippled the economy of the country for days. Following the victory of the opposition, All Progressive Party (APC), in 2015, Nigerians were surprised when the President Buhari led administration announced an increase in the prices of petroleum products citing subsidy as the reason. Although the opposition had achieved their main intention power in the 2015 elections, the January 2012 catastrophe with its attendant implications on the nation's economy would have been evaded if not for propaganda and peddling of fake news (Madu *et al.* 2019). Standage (2017) believes that 'the flowering of concocted stories erodes trust in the media and makes it easier for unscrupulous politicians to peddle half-truths' which is always inimical to the overall welfare of the citizenry.

With the advent of smart technologies that have enabled consumers of media content to be producers of the same contents they consume, the term "fake news" could be misinterpreted by the government. For instance, when authentic information that the government does not want the citizens to be privy to is leaked to the masses, the government oftentimes tag it "fake news," whereas the information is true. This further creates a huge distrust in the government. In this way, "fake news" is employed as a smokescreen to suppress and shade factual information. Fake news is a social phenomenon that is prominently promoting social vices in Nigeria. Therefore, any sincere effort at tackling some of these vices in the country most includes techniques for curbing the menace of fake news. Hence, this paper proceeds to discuss the drivers of fake news some techniques for combating it.

Drivers Of Fake News

Pate (2018), cited in Pate, Gambo and Ibrahim (2019), diverse reasons can be adduced for the alarming spread of fake news in Nigeria. The scholars outline the below:

- Lack of or often times the late arrival of official information on issues. This creates a vacuum conveniently filled in by rumors and fake news.
- Affordable data services and ICT gadgets facilitate explosive use of social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, among others, to spread fake information.
- Coercive lies are widespread from government sources at all levels. Such lies are reported as news with little effort to investigate their veracity by the media.
- Desperate politicians, ethnic and religious bigots, foreign interests, and mischief-makers generate fake news for influence or persuade the audience to actualize their motives.
- General distrust of the political elites by a significant number of the populace. Nigerian elites and politicians enjoy low credibility ratings among the population because of their

record of failures, lies, and unworthy conduct in several respects. Because of that, many Nigerians tend to believe whatever information in the public domain.

- Government tight control and excessive commercialization in the broadcast media exclude alternative ideas and the opposition, thereby forcing them to respond even if mischievously by spreading fake news on the social media that lacks gatekeepers.
- Capitalist motives: fake news is disseminated for economic reasons, especially on social media, where efforts are often made to attract traffic to pages and timelines of bloggers and senders for clicks.
- Low capacity of the media to be able to gather, process, and verify immediate and distant information in real-time exacerbates fake news through the internet or social media platforms where the majority lack gate keeping processes.

How To Spot Fake News

Chakrabarti *et al.* (2018) carried out a BBC study in Nigeria and Kenya that attempted to analyze and investigate the primary source responsible for spreading fake news. The study discovered that people participated vigorously by sharing and commenting on social media platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook without verifying the information. The following steps can help curb the spread of fake news in society (Pate, 2018).

- Check sources: encourage people and stations to fall back on the most trusted news brands they could rely on for their news.
- Look at multiple sources.
- Use verification tools.
- Check metadata.
- Think before broadcasting/publishing.

- Media literacy is paramount to decipher fake news.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

To enhance the significance of this study, it is essential to underpin it with a relevant theory. Hence, the current study is anchored on the honeycomb framework. The honeycomb is a relatively new theory that explains possible reasons for sharing information, especially on social media platforms. Social media are the highest carrier of fake news, even as exemplified in this article's body. According to its proponents, Kietzmann *et al* (2011), the honeycomb model encompasses seven social media building blocks: identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, and groups. Researchers have employed the honeycomb model to study social media and fake news (Talwar *et al.*, (2020), online recovery strategies (Azemi *et al.*, 2019), among others. Highlighting the dearth of theories to investigate social media and fake news, Talwar *et al.* (2020) suggested that the framework serves as a veritable foundation for exploring social media's roles in news dissemination. Given that the framework explores the reasons for the exchange of information online, it is ideal for this paper's focus on the dissemination process of fake news. In this discussion, we adopted it to understand better and buttress the significant part social media play in propelling fake news.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The issues intended to be studied in this study cannot be adequately treated using a single methodological approach. Thus, in the first place, we adopted the survey research design, which allowed us to investigate empirically the factors that motivate fake news on social media networks in Nigeria, assess the moral impact of the practice in the society and examine whether this can be constricted through the enhancement of journalism ethical standards. This method was however, inappropriate to investigate the second aspect of the study, which borders on the legal consequences of fake news in Nigeria. The qualitative, doctrinal and analytical approach shall therefore, be adopted to investigate this aspect.

3.2 Population of the Study

The population of study of this research was people of Etsako West Local Government. According to the final result of 2006 population census of Nigeria as published by the National population Commission, Etsako West Local Government has total population of 197,609.

Research studies have their various areas of coverage or boundary limits. According to Uzoagulu (1999, p.63) “the area of study is geographical area boundaries where study is carried out”. Etsako West Local Government has been designed as the area for this study. The existence of administrative, social and cultural institutions encourages the growth and development of Etsako west Local Government. Etsako west Local Government as a local government is made up of several rural communities.

3.3 Sample Size

Many a time, an entire population would not be easy to study due to time and resource constraints. The usual approach in this situation would therefore entail taking sample. Considering the fact that the population of the area would be too bogus, sample size of 400 respondents were selected for this research population. A sample of 400 was drawn from the population using the Taro Yamane Sample calculating formula. The formula is:

Where:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(0.5)^2}$$

Where

n = Sample

N = Population

0.5 = allowable error

$$= \frac{197,609}{1 + 197,609 \times (0.5)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{197,609}{197,610 \times 0.0025}$$

$$n = \frac{197,609}{494.025}$$

$$n = \underline{400}$$

3.4 Sample Procedure

The purposive sampling technique was employed to determine the sample size of the study. According to Ikeagwu (1998, p.189), “the basic assumption behind purposive sampling method is that, with good judgment and appropriate strategy, one can hand– pick the cases to be included in the sample that is satisfactorily in relation to ones needs”

3.5 Validity of the Instrument

According to Okoro (2001 p.12) “validity refers to the accuracy of an instrument i.e how well it measures what it is supposed to measure.” In order to establish validity of the instruments the researcher used the expertise of some mass communication professionals who reviewed and made very useful imputes that helped to achieve high level of validity for the questionnaire. The project supervisor also did a thorough scrutiny of the instrument to ensure that it captures all relevant information before final administration.

3.6 Reliability of Instrument

Ogbazi and Okpala (1994, p.25) posits that “reliability of an instrument or test is the degree to which an instrument is consistent in measuring whatever it purports to measure”. In establishing the reliability of the instrument, the researcher applied the Pre-test technique. The Pre-test technique is a process whereby the researcher administered the constructed questionnaire to the same sample group more than once with a view of discovering how consistent each element of the group is in the scoring of the instrument at such different times.

The researcher administered the questionnaires to twelve elements of the sample group to ascertain the reliability of the instrument, but was not used in the final analysis of the work.

3.7 Method of Data Collection

The research instrument used for data collection was questionnaire. A questionnaire consists of questions relating to the aims of the study and the research questions to be verified (Nwanna 1990 p.121).

3.8 Techniques of Data Analysis

Quantitative data generated in the study were analyzed in frequencies, percentages and presented in tables.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Data Presentation

This chapter deals with the presentation of the data gathered. The analysis is done in line with the research questions. The analysis was done in two sections. Section A was on demographic data of respondents while the second section was on psychographic data. Out of the 400 questionnaires administered 285 representing 71.3% were returned.

Section A: Analysis of Respondents Bio-data

Table 1: Age Bracket of Respondents

Age bracket	Frequency	Percentage
20 – 25	65	22.8
26 – 30	20	7
31 – 35	180	63.2
36 – 40	10	3.5
41 and above	10	3.5
TOTAL	285	100

Table 1 has it that 65 of the respondents or 22.8% are between age 20 and 25, 20 of them or 7% are between age 26-30, 180 of them or 63.2% are between age 31-35, 10 of them or 3.5% are between age 36-40. Those who are 41 years and above are 10 or 3.5%.

Table 2: Gender of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	180	63.2
Female	105	36.8
Total	285	100

Table 2 shows that 180 of the respondents or 63.2% are male while 105 of them or 36.8% are female.

Table 3: Marital Status of Respondents

Marital status	Frequency	Percentage
Married	185	64.9
Single	100	35.1
Total	285	100

Table 3 shows that 185 of the respondents or 64.9% are married while 100 of the respondents or 35.1% are single.

Table 4: Educational Qualification of Respondents

Educational qualification	Frequency	Percentage
SSCE	65	22.8
ND/NCE	20	7
HND/B.SC	180	63.2
MA/M.SC	10	3.5
Others	10	3.5
Total	285	100

Table 4 shows that 65 of the respondents or 22.8% have S.S.C.E as their highest qualification while another 20 or 7% have ND/NCE as their highest qualification. These who have either HND or B.Sc are 180 or 63.2% while those with either M.Sc or MA are 10 or 3.5%. Those with other qualifications are 10, representing 3.5%

Table 5: Occupation of Respondents

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Students	65	22.8
Civil Servants	180	63.2
Artisans	20	7
Business	10	3.5
Others	10	3.5
Total	285	100

Table 5 show that 65 of the respondents or 22.8% are students, 180 of them or 63.2% are civil servants, 20 of them or 7% are artisans while 10 of them or 3.5% are business people, the last 10 or 3.5% have other occupations than the ones mentioned.

SECTION B: Psychological Data

4:3 Presentation & Analysis of Psychographic Data Collected

Table 6: Are fake news Prevalent on social media?

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	145	50.8
Strongly Disagree	5	1.9
Agree to Some extent	97	34
Not Sure	38	13.3
Total	285	100

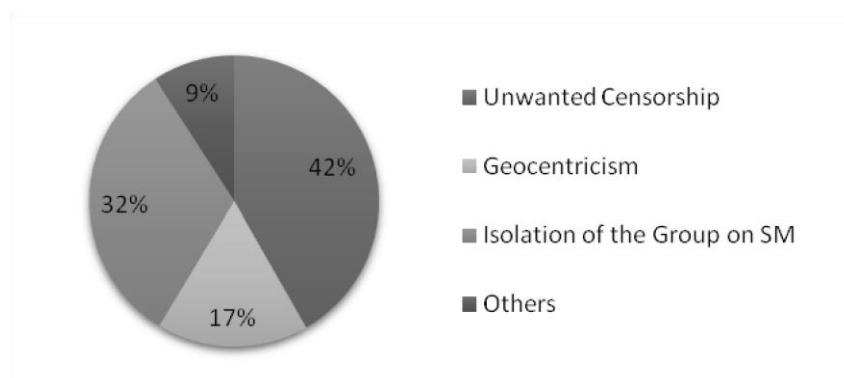
Table six sought to know if the respondents agree that fake news is prevalent on social media. Data distribution shows that 50.8% of the respondents strongly agree that fake news is prevalent on social media, 1.9% strongly disagree, while 34% agree to some extent and 13% are not sure. This implies that majority of respondents agree that fake news is prevalent on social media.

Table 6: Factors motivating fake news in Nigeria

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Financial Inducement	23	8
Journalistic malpractice	63	22
Political interest	134	47
Proprietors pressure	6	3
Citizen journalism	14	5
Sectional and religious interest	43	15
Total	285	100

The table above shows the distribution of the respondents' response on the factors motivating the publication of fake news on social media in Nigeria. Data from the table shows that 8% responded to Financial Inducement, 22% responded to Journalist Malpractice, 47% responded to Political Interest, 3% responded to Proprietors Pressure, 5% responded to Citizenry Journalism and 15% responded to Sectional and Religious Interest. Based on the data presented

above more than one factor motivates the publication of fake news on social media, however, majority of respondents were of the opinion that political motivation contributes more to the publication of fake news on social media in Nigeria.



The pie chart above shows the respondents' response on the implication of fake news on social media networks in Nigeria. The data distribution shows that 41.6% of the respondents were of the opinion that fake news on social media leads to Unwanted Censorship of social media platforms, 16.8% of respondents were of the opinion that it leads to Geocentricism, while 32.5% were of the opinion that it leads to Isolation of the Minority Group on Social Media. 9.1% of the respondents constitute others. Therefore, this implies that fake news has several implications on social media however, majority of the respondents agree that it leads to Unwanted Censorship of the social media platform.

As stated earlier, this section of the study is based on qualitative analysis using doctrinal methodology rather than the quantitative and empirical methods used above. The main question we intend to answer in this part is whether there are any consequences, in terms enforceable duties against perpetrators of fake news on the social media in Nigeria. It is noteworthy that Nigeria, like most nations suffers from the difficulty of achieving a balance between the right of free speech and speech that is inimical to national harmony, unity and peace (OHCHR, 2011).

Thus, section 45 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended), provides for the suspension or restriction of the right of freedom of expression in appropriate situation: “...(a) in the interest of defence, public safety, public order, public morality or public health; or (b) for the purpose of protecting the rights and freedom of other persons.”

This constitutional provision allows for the enactment of any law in Nigeria to restrict certain expressions for the above stated purposes. The obligation is also contained in Article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which Nigeria has ratified (by accession 1993). The provision of Article 20 specifically requires member states to enact laws to prohibit fake news (Leo et al. 2011; Callamard, 2008, p.8-9): any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law.

In line with the above, Nigeria has enacted two legislations that have direct bearing on expressions of hate and foul language. Because of the phenomenon of politically motivated fake news bordering on elections and party politics in Nigeria, the 2010 Electoral Act (as amended) in section 95 criminalizes the use of certain language or expressions during electioneering campaign:

- “(1) No political campaign or slogan shall be tainted with abusive language directly or indirectly likely to injure religious, ethnic, tribal or sectional feelings.
- (2) Abusive, intemperate, slanderous or base language or insinuations or innuendoes designed or likely to provoke violent reaction or emotions shall not be employed or used in political campaigns.”

Individual offenders of this section are liable on conviction to imprisonment for a term of 12 months or a fine of not more than one million naira (\$2300), while political party offenders

are liable to a fine of two million naira (\$4600). Although, this provision may hardly pass as prohibition of fake news even by the simplest definition of the term, and especially going by the rationale for inclusion of the provision in the Act, it nonetheless, prohibits foul language which is rife in Nigeria during electioneering campaigns. There is no doubt that such prohibition may forestall the use of certain political expressions that would lead to violence as the example of the 2007 Kenyan election so clearly shows. In this sense, the use of foul or abusive language has dire legal consequences for perpetrators during election periods in Nigeria. One obvious drawback of this provision however, is that it prohibits such offensive political conduct only during election campaigns, but evidence of political rivalry in Nigeria and indeed, the entire African continent shows a tradition of continuous violence between political parties that set the stage for power grab using all necessary means (Cohen 2015; Elischer 2008).

Apart from the Electoral Act, the Political Party Code of Conduct (2013) contain provisions that prohibit foul or abusive language and expressions of hate by political parties in Nigeria. Paragraph 7 of the instrument specifically provides that no political party or candidate shall during campaign resort to the use of inflammatory language, provocative actions, images or manifestation that incite violence, hatred, contempt or intimidation against another party or candidate or any person or group of persons on grounds of ethnicity or gender or for any other reason. Accordingly, no Political Party or candidate shall issue any poster, pamphlet, leaflet or other publication that contains any such incitement.”

Like the Electoral Act, this provision relates only to conduct of political parties during elections, and while it purports to regulate such conduct, it lacks any enforceable mechanism and does not specifically prohibit fake news. Thus, the Political Party Code of Conduct (2013) is a

document that holds political parties and organizations in Nigeria morally accountable for political peace and stability, rather than impose legal duties and consequences.

On the other hand, the Cybercrime (Prohibition, Prevention etc) Act 2015 is a very different legislation that is very germane to our discussion in this paper. The Act is a national legislation that criminalizes various harmful conducts in the cyber space within Nigeria including fake news on social media platforms. Unlike the Electoral Act, the Cybercrime Act clearly conceptualizes and criminalizes fake news in its different forms in the cyber space in Nigeria. Section 26(1) of the Act makes it an offence to threaten or insult a person or group of persons through a computer system or network “for the reason that they belong to group distinguished by race, colour, descent, national, or ethnic origin, as well as, religion”. The section also criminalizes the distribution of “any racist or xenophobic material”, or material that “denies, or approves, or justifies acts constituting genocide or crimes against humanity” to the public through a computer system or network. Sub-section (2) of the section defines ‘racist or xenophobic material’ to mean: “...any written or printed material, any image or any other representation of ideas or theories, which advocates, promotes or incites hatred, discrimination or violence, against any individual, group of individuals, based on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin, as well as religion.”

It also defines ‘crime against humanity’ to include: “...any of the following acts committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack: murders, extermination, enslavement, deportation or forcible transfer of population, imprisonment, torture, rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity, persecution against an identifiable group on political, racial, national, ethnic, cultural, religious

or gender grounds, enforced disappearance of persons, the crime of apartheid, other inhumane acts of similar character intentionally causing great suffering or serious bodily or mental injury.”

The penalty for conviction of a person under this section is imprisonment for a term of not more than 5 years or fine of not more than ten million naira or both. The section is broad enough to cover a wide spectrum of conduct and expressions of persons in the cyber space within Nigerian jurisdiction, including activities of persons on social media networks that may originate from offline sources. It not only criminalizes individual beliefs and utterances in form of words, images or symbols on any platform in the cyber space, but also forestalls any belief system credited to any group of persons in Nigeria. In this way, the section lies at the intersection of the major fault lines and contradictions within the Nigerian polity that have the potential to ignite a system of hatred among the different ethnicities, political divisions and religions. This is already seen in the mindless atrocities committed by the Boko Haram sect against civilians mainly, Christians in the northern parts of the country, as a form of widespread and systematic attacks to enforce Islamic doctrines and values, which they publicly distribute in the cyber space through computer systems (Chiluwa & Adegoke, 2013).

Apart from this section of the Cybercrime Act, the recent introduction of the “Digital Rights and Freedom Bill 2016” in the national parliament (national assembly) is another attempt to regulate the balance between free speech and expressions of hatred on online platforms in Nigeria. The proposed bill seek to restrict the right of free expression where an expression posted on any digital platform (defined as including “any internet-based mode of expression, section 13(3)) unduly contravenes the human rights of others, such as the right against discrimination and right to life (s.14(11)). Section 12(13) & (14) and section 16(3) of the bill clearly prohibits and penalizes fake news. It defines fake news as “any speech, gesture or conduct, writing or

display capable of inciting violence or prejudicial action against, or by a protected individual or group, by disparaging or intimidating a protected individual or group on the basis of attributions such gender, ethnic origin, religion, race, disability or sexual orientation”. Section 16(3) specifically criminalizes fake news online. It provides for a term of imprisonment of not more than one year or fine of not less than one million naira (about \$2300). In the event that any publication of fake news online resulted in loss of lives and destruction of property, the publisher of such speech is liable on conviction to imprisonment of not less than seven years, or to a fine not less than five million naira (\$11,500) or both fine and imprisonment including compensation to the victims. In the case of a body corporate, upon conviction, a fine of not less than one million naira shall apply in addition to compensation to the family of the victims as the court may decide.

The above provisions of the proposed Act are very impressive both as deterrence and as remedial legal measures (compensation for victims) against the phenomenon of fake news in Nigeria. However, the bill is yet to be enacted as binding law, therefore, perpetrators of fake news in Nigeria may presently, only be accountable under the offences created in section 95 of the Electoral Act 2010 and section 26 of the Cybercrime (Prohibition, Prevention etc) Act 2015. Notwithstanding, an ancillary cause of action may arise in civil jurisdiction against any perpetrator of fake news relating to the constitutional prohibition against discrimination and abuse of dignity under sections 34 and 42 of the 1999 constitution (as amended). This is because fake news is essentially a form of discrimination (Morsink 1999) and indignity of the person (Pillay and Azriel, 2012).

4.2 Discussion of Findings

The major findings of this study indicate that promoting fake news on social media have moral consequences in the society and to journalism practice. These consequences include loss of credibility, diverting media from fulfilling their primary role of serving the public interest and increasing moral decadence in the society.

Further findings indicate that freedom of speech on social media and political interest are the major factors that motivate the posting of fake news on social media platforms in Nigeria and that majority of fake news prevalent on social media platforms in Nigeria is politically motivated fake news.

Findings also reveal that fake news has negative implications on social media as it leads to unwanted censorship of social media platforms among others.

The study also found that although, most people in Nigeria are aware that there need to enact law to regulate the increasing spate of fake news on the social media, however, they are unaware if there are already any existing legal measures against the practice in Nigeria. Finally, findings of the study established that fake news on social media platforms cannot be constricted to conform to the ethical standards of journalism practice in Nigeria because most perpetrators of this practice are not journalist.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

The study was carried out to examine the implication of fake news on the Nigerian security. The major objective was to examine if the existence of fake news has positive or negative effect on the Nigerian security. Four research questions were asked in line with the objectives.

The survey methodology was used, while the questionnaire was used as instrument of data collection. A total of 400 questionnaires were administered while 350 were returned and found usable. The simple percentage method was used in the analysis. The study found out the following:

- i. Respondents have awareness of what fake news is.
- ii. Fake news is spread almost every on all types of media especially social media.
- iii. Media audience has perception of hate speech.
- iv. Fake news has negative implication on Nigerian political development because it affects the smooth running of the nation.

5.2 Conclusion

Based on the above findings, it can be concluded that development cannot thrive well in an environment where fake news is popular among the people. Therefore, if Nigerian must join the league of developed democracies, fake news must be tackled.

5.3 Recommendations

In the light of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are hereby made;

1. Adequate awareness and enlightenment campaign on the negative implications of fake news to Nigerian political development should be carried out amongst Nigerians.
2. Government should come up with legislations that will help checkmate unverified information being spread in the media, especially social media.
3. Government should enact frightening laws that will dissuade people from make post that have questionable sources.

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APPENDIX

Department of Mass Communication
Auchi Polytechnic,
Auchi.
Edo State.

Dear Respondent,

I am a student of the above named Department as part of the requirement for the award of a Higher National Diploma (HND) in Mass Communication; I am conducting a research on An Evaluation of the Implication of Fake News on The Nigerian Security.

In the light of the above, I attach a questionnaire to this letter which I require you to help me complete to aid the research. I assure you that any information you provide will be treated in confidence and will be used solely for academic purpose.

Thanks for your anticipated co-operation.

Yours faithfully,

Abdul-Malik Amin Abdul-Malik
Researcher

APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

Instruction: please tick the appropriate box

1. Age Bracket of Respondents

Age bracket
20 – 25
26 – 30
31 – 35
36 – 40
41 and above

2. Gender of Respondents

Gender
Male
Female

3. Marital Status of Respondents

Marital status
Married
Single

4. Educational Qualification of Respondents

Educational qualification
SSCE
ND/NCE
HND/B.SC
MA/M.SC
Others

5. Occupation of Respondents

Occupation
Students
Civil Servants
Artisans
Business
Others

SECTION B: Psychological Data

6. Are fake news Prevalent on social media?

Variable
Strongly Agree
Strongly Disagree
Agree to Some extent
Not Sure

7. Factors motivating fake news in Nigeria

Variable
Financial Inducement
Journalistic malpractice
Political interest
Proprietors pressure
Citizen journalism
Sectional and religious interest

8. Can fake news impede political development?

Variable
Strongly Agree
Strongly Disagree
Agree to Some extent
Not Sure