

**THE IMPACT OF FAKE NEWS ON THE SOCIETY**

**BY**

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**DECEMBER, 2022**

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**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF  
THEATRE ARTS, FACULTY OF ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, IN  
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD  
OF BACHELOR OF ARTS (B.A) IN THEATRE ARTS.**

**DECEMBER, 2022**

## **DECLARATION**

This project is based on a research undertaken by me **DANLAMI, PSALM** in the Department of Theatre Arts, University of Benin under the supervision of Dr J.N. Bardi. All ideas and suggestions are products of personal research and the view of others have been duly acknowledged.

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## CERTIFICATION

This project work was done by **DANLAMI, PSALM** under my supervision.

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**Date**

## **DEDICATION**

To Almighty God the giver of life, wisdom, knowledge and deep reasoning for strength, perseverance, patience, direction and most importantly for bringing me this far.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My sincere Gratitude goes to the God of the heavens and the earth who has loved me regardless of my short comings, directed and provided for me throughout my stay on campus and Benin City particularly.

My gratitude also goes to my relentless supervisor Dr John Bardi who is always making sure I do the right thing, thank you sir for your time, corrections, guidance and most of all your prayers and goodwill, may God replenish you with strength and wisdom, I am grateful.

To my late Parents Mr and Mrs Danlami Tashanyibo Diko, for not only birthing me but also for raising me to be the man I am today. Also to my siblings Mrs Mercy Newman, Mrs Grace James and most importantly my closest sibling Miss Rachael Danlami, you are the best version of a sister, a friend and a Mother and I am so grateful for everything you have done for me, may God reward you beyond human imagination.

Also to my lecturers Mr. Chukwuma Cupid Omensa. Thank you for being a father and friend. And to my good friend Mr. Isaiah F.A. thank you for your time and support. And also to my good guy Ogochukwu Perpetual, may God bless you abundantly.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study focused on The Impact of Fake News on the Society. The main objective of this study is to find out the impact of fake news on the Nigeria Society. The study was built around the Agenda Setting Theory and the Hypodermic Needle Theory. The study adopted the survey research methods as its research design and employed questionnaire as data collection instrument for the study. The population of the study is 202, 567 but the sample size is 40 which is determined with the use of the Taro Yamane's equation. Out of the 400 questionnaire administered, all was retrieved and useful for the research. This was aided using the purposive sampling technique. The study found out that the public depend on media, mostly the social media platform for information. The study also shows that many people come across fake news often and it has had a negative impact on them. This research also revealed that the media is part of disseminating fake news. The study also recommends that both media and the public should desist from dissemination of fake news by promoting real news and the truth.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. Background of the Study

Traditional media consists of mostly nameless and faceless people deciding what does and does not get printed and broadcasted. In this new era of internet and variety of social media, creation, and consumption of news and information in our society is changing. The rapid transformation of traditional print media into online portals has become a new trend. On the one hand, the online social media has democratized the means of news production and dissemination, but on the other hand, it has become a breeding ground for false and fake news.

There is a great deal of fake news in Nigeria, even popular blogs and newspaper website like The Punch, The Nation and Linda Ikeji Blog among others circulate fake news sometimes, and also fake news influence and impact people negatively. Online newspapers should adopt the operation model of the conventional newspaper. Stories should be written to perfection, subjected to the rigorous scrutiny of the head of the reporter's desk, checked again by the news editor and his team with a strong re-write desk ensuring that the story conforms to a house style; and then a final check by the editor of the paper.

A major instance of fake news which dominated Nigeria's media space was the rumoured death of President Muhammadu Buhari shortly after he began a health

leave to the United Kingdom on January 19, 2017. So audacious were the masterminds that they cloned Metro newspaper of the UK or Huffington Post of US announcing in the spoofs that President Buhari has died in London. While “Metro” reported the “death” of the Nigerian president, “Huffington Post” alleged that he was caught “committing suicide”. The same picture of Buhari was used on both stories which had the same lines repeated in them. However these contradictions did not stop the spoofs from sending the internet into an overdrive in Nigeria, as the rumoured death of Buhari was lapped up by some blogs and the social media. In the face of this, little wonder that Nigeria's Minister of Information and Culture, Mr. Lai Mohammed, in February, 2017 asserted that fake news poses more danger to the country than insurgency and militancy. He catalogued some false reports the Information Ministry has had to contend with thus: Only recently, we have to refute the fake news that Nigeria today is the most difficult place for Christians to live. There was also the fake report that the Armed Forces of Nigeria armed the Fulani herdsmen and instigate them to carry out attacks. All these news are unfounded, fake and has the capacity to set one religion or group against the other. Mohammed spoke the same month that the Chocolate City founder, Audu Maikori, was arrested by security operatives for publishing a false report about the violence in the southern part of Kaduna state with the Kaduna State governor, Mr. Nasir El-Rufai stating that “what he posted may have led to killings and we are trying to link the date of the postings to attacks that happened the next day on Fulanis”.

The online platform, Sahara Reporters had dished out a story which was disputed by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, EFCC, stating that "no official of the EFCC was authorized to speak with Sahara reporters on the said story or on any issue affecting the investigation of the Paris Club refund". Also, the Senate President, who was at the receiving end of the story, disclosed that the publisher of Sahara Reporters is in the habit of creating fiction and quoting faceless sources. Yet, this is not a one-off development. It is in the light of these instances and many like it which show that the practice is assuming a life of its own in Nigeria that this study sets out to find out how the incidence of fake news is detracting from the credibility Nigerians accord popular online newspapers operating in the country. This is bearing in mind the submission by (Ekwueme, 91) that: Your readers want the facts you heard or observed from your various sources, and not figment of your own imagination. Many people believe media messages to be gospel truth and, of course, some of the readers believe either rightly or wrongly that anything that is not carried in the media is not authentic. Since they have that trust in you, you don't betray it. If you betray it, you have betrayed yourself and the integrity of your medium.

According to (Asemah, 37), "The media, whether electronic or print often set agenda for the public to follow; they monitor trends and events in our society and raised their agenda based on what they have monitored ... Whatever issue the media raised becomes an issue of public concern". Thiel spoke thus in 1998, "By electronically reproducing the news to cater to a much larger audience than its

newspaper subscriber base, online newspapers should be doing a great service to humankind. After all, they are bringing readers more information than anyone has done in history at a time when the value of information as a commodity is greater than ever”. Bearing this in mind and the need to sustain that pride of place earlier occupied by the print newspaper in setting the agenda as well as among other roles holding government accountable to the people, the society stands to lose out greatly if popular online newspapers, in the face of disappearing.

The overwhelming proximity of the impact of fake news spreads its fangs all through human endeavours and breeds undesirable characteristics. It is with this backdrop that I propose to study its phenomena in the Nigerian society.

## **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

The way that news is reported has changed significantly over the last 10-20 years. Nowadays we can hardly avoid it, many of us actively feel the need to seek it out, and its modern-day tone is increasingly emotive, its medium increasingly visual and shocking, and its commentaries increasingly negative and fear-laden. It’s not surprising that there is also growing evidence that negative news can affect our mental health, notably in the form of increased anxiety, depression and acute stress reactions.

Studies have also shown that many people cannot tell what news is fake and what news is real. This can create confusion and misunderstanding about important

social and political issues. Motsaathebe (14) posits that "the news media is generally regarded as a credible provider of a realistic view of what happens around the world. In composing news, journalists rely on various sources to verify or lend credibility to the Information they put across". However, there is a necessity of verified source(s) of any news that must be thrown to the public.

Kolawole says that, "Fake news — that art of concocting stories from your bedroom because you have a smart phone with cheap data — is becoming the biggest thing in town. No, it is not new. It was not invented in this generation of social media. We have been living with fake news most of our lives. The SAP riots of 1989, for instance, were sparked off by fake news." The assertions above point the how fake news affects not just the media but the society as well. With the advent of the new media, the scourge of fake news is becoming more prevalent that its negative impact on popular online newspapers is very evident. It can also be noted that fake news has the capability to induce war and the masses being misled at any level especially when it is negative.

As Allcot & Gentzkow (7) said, "The declining trust in mainstream media could be both a cause and a consequence of fake news gaining more traction". If fake news can affect traditional newspapers, then its impact on major online newspapers can only be imagined. The literacy level in the country has not entirely made the difference between social media and popular online newspaper a common

knowledge to all. It is still believed in some quarters that there is no difference between a major online news site and Facebook. To this extent, it is feared that whatever negative impression people have of one is extended to the other. Well-known online newspapers are too important to the fabrics of the society to be allowed to be smeared altogether by what users post on social media channels. Since mass media generally is a channel by which the masses are being notified of what happens across their local area and the world at large, fake news has the tendency of creating factions, frictions and factions among various group of people and the world at large. Therefore, it is crucial to tackle the menace of widespread of fake news in our societies at various levels and degrees due to its huge negative impact on the society.

The solution—which won't be all that easy, because of the current economic troubles of journalism—is to expand the real-news ecosystem as much as possible, by training people in how to do that work and by strengthening the institutions that will publish and broadcast it. (Along with this goes enhancing the smaller ecosystem for correcting fake news: snopes.com, PolitiFact, factcheck.org, and so on.) This will deal with the proliferation and influence of fake news. It's also facile and unhelpful of the government if their role in journalism can be either nothing or absolute control for propaganda purposes and not contribute to the dissemination of authentic news or censor news.

Finally, fake news has the ability to generate uncontrollable situations like killings, suicide, accidents, rancor, fight, jungle justice, verbal bullying, wrong justice and other negative decisions. Therefore, it is important for government, authorities at various levels and every individual to rise against it.

### **1.3. Aims and Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of this study is to find out the impact of fake news on the Nigerian society. Specifically the study intends to;

1. To find out if the media play a part in dissemination of fake news in Nigeria.
2. To discover how frequent cases of fake news are reported in the country.
3. To know the perception Nigerians have for news report in the country.
4. To know the impact of fake news on the target audience.

### **1.4. Research Questions**

1. Does the media play a part in dissemination of fake news in Nigeria?
2. How frequent are cases of fake news reported in the country?
3. What is the perception of Nigerians on news report in the country?
4. What is the impact of fake news on target audience?

### **1.5. Significance of the Study**

This would serve as a means for people to understand the negative impact of fake news. Effective self-regulation and legally-enforced regulation of social media

and web search engines are needed to frame the narrative. The information space needs to be flooded with accurate news to displace fake news. Individuals need to actively confront false narratives when spotted, as well as take care when sharing information via social media.

From this research, media practitioners would better understand the extent of damage which fake news is doing to their trade. They would get to know why they should rely on credible sources of information rather than embellishing what a user posted on the social media as story for their readers. This study would help readers know the difference between the social media and real media news in order not to misinterpret the information dissemination. This study will also serve as a reference point for other researchers who will embark on the same research topic.

## **1.6. Scope of the Study**

This study will be focusing on bringing to light the impact which fake news have on the perception of students of the University of Benin, Edo State. It studies the fake news dissemination particularly on how people react to fake news.

## **1.7. Definition of Terms**

**Impact:** Impact means the striking of one body against another; collision; The force or energy of a collision of two objects; (chiefly, medicine) A forced impinging; significant or strong influence; an effect.

**Fake:** is something that is not real, false, fraudulent and insincere.

**News:** The English word "news" developed in the 14th century as a special use of the plural form of "new". News, therefore is Information about current events disseminated via media.

**Society:** A society is a group of individuals involved in persistent social interaction, or a large social group sharing the same spatial or social territory, typically subject to the same political authority and dominant cultural expectations.

More broadly, and especially within structuralist thought, a society may be illustrated as an economic, social, industrial or cultural infrastructure, made up of, yet distinct from, a varied collection of individuals.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1. Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on two media theoretical constructs thus: Agenda Setting Theory and Hypodermic Needle Theory.

##### 1. Agenda Setting Theory

This posits that the mass media determines the issues that are regarded as important at a given time in a given society. That means that the press is significantly more than a purveyor of information and opinion; and though it may not be able to tell its readers what it thinks, it does successfully tell them what to think about. In other words, our perception of the world is dependent not only on our personal interests, but also on the map that is drawn for us by the media. Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw (1972) corroborate the agenda setting theory by their research. They posit that: In choosing and displaying news, editors, newsroom staff, and broadcasters play an important part in shaping political reality. Readers learn not only about a given issue, but how much importance to attach to that issue from the amount of information in a news story and its position ...The mass media may well determine the important issues- that is, the media set the 'agenda' of the campaign (McCombs and Shaw 1976). The elements involved in agenda setting include:

1. The quality or frequency of reporting
2. Prominence given to the reports – headlines display, layout, timing on radio and TV set
3. The degree of conflict generated in the reports
4. Cumulative media-specific effects over time

### **1. Hypodermic Needle/ Magic Bullet Theory**

This was a media theory that saw the media as all-powerful and supremely effective; and believed that all human beings responded the same way to the powerful influence from the media. The theory was a propaganda theory, produced by a combination of Behaviourist and Freudian schools of thought. Behaviourism held that human action was as a result of or response to external environmental stimuli. It argued that the so-called consciousness was meant to rationalise behaviours after they were triggered by the external stimuli. Freudianism saw the self that controls human action as having three parts: Ego- rational mind; Id- pleasure seeking part of the mind and Superego- internalised set of cultural rules. It said the human action was often the product of the darker side of the self -the Id-, which is the pleasure-seeking part of the mind. By appealing to the Id, so that it could overcome the ego, then, propaganda would be effective.

So, the Magic Bullet saw the media as conveying external stimuli that can condition anyone to behave in whatever way a master propagandist wants. People

were viewed as powerless to consciously resist manipulation no matter their level of education or social status. The rational mind was viewed as a mere façade, incapable of resisting powerful messages. People had no ability to screen out or criticise these messages. The messages penetrate to their subconscious mind, and transform how they think and feel.

During the troubled decade of the 1930s, one of the first communication theorists, Harold Lasswell, proposed a theory that attempted to explain disturbing events of the times. Lasswell argued that the worldwide economic depression and political strife had made people particularly vulnerable to propaganda conveyed by the mass media. He posited that the power of propaganda was not so much the result of the substance or appeal of specific messages but, rather, the result of the vulnerable state of mind of average people. Unlike the Magic Bullet Theory's prediction of rapid and powerful persuasive effects of the mass media, this Propaganda Theory said that mediated propaganda conditioned the audience slowly over time.

Propaganda works through projection of master symbols, emotion-charged images (for example, a national flag). Lasswell's depiction of the working mechanism of propaganda was especially prescient in Germany. The National Social Party (Nazis) under Adolph Hitler took control of the German government in 1933 and launched a systematic campaign of propaganda to win popular support for its

policies. Joseph Goebbels Propaganda Ministry produced propaganda films to promote the party's militarism and anti-Semitism. A network of carefully-crafted Nazi master symbols included the swastika, the "Zeig-Heil" gesture, German ascendancy from a mythical Aryan race, and a fictitious Jewish conspiracy. Reinforced by terrorist tactics of the secret police, the propaganda helped to firm a Nazi grip on the highly educated German people. The Propaganda Theory ascribed great persuasive power to a technocratic elite. Influential newspaper columnist Walter Lippmann, author of the first book on public opinion (1922), thought that propaganda so threatened democracy that the mass media must be censored to protect the public from their powerful influences. Later theorists decided that people are not so gullible and that the 1930s was a unique era.

The foregoing theories are very germane to the present study for obvious reasons: the Agenda setting and Hypodermic Needle theories, for instance, underscore the undeniable power and capacity of the media not just to decide what the public thinks about but also how they think about the subjects. It also explains why media regulatory bodies like NBC (in the Nigerian context) recommend stiff sanctions for media stations that peddle fake news, knowing how the mere fact if such news emanating from the media have the natural tendency to be accepted by the usually unsuspecting public as the truth.

## **2.2. Review of Concepts**

### **News**

The word “news “ means different things to different people taking into consideration the varying levels of political, social, economic, cultural or geographical orientations in the world. However, it is worthy to note that the term has over the years been understood as “something which is extra – ordinary, a rare occurrence or, something different from what is believed to be normal. According to Wikipedia, News is information about current events. This may be provided through many different media: word of mouth, printing, postal systems, broadcasting, electronic communication, or through the testimony of observers and witnesses to events.

As its name implies, "news" typically connotes the presentation of new information. The newness of news gives it an uncertain quality which distinguishes it from the more careful investigations of history or other scholarly disciplines. News conspicuously describes the world in the present or immediate past, even when the most important aspects of a news story have occurred long in the past—or are expected to occur in the future. To make the news, an ongoing process must have some "peg", an event in time which anchors it to the present moment. Relatedly, news often addresses aspects of reality which seem unusual, deviant, or out of the

ordinary. Hence the famous dictum that "Dog Bites Man" is not news, but "Man Bites Dog" is.

Elements of news include timeliness, proximity, prominence, consequence, human interest etc.

### **Sources of News**

In journalism, a source is a person, publication, or other record or document that gives timely information. Outside journalism, sources are sometimes known as "news sources". Examples of sources include official records, publications or broadcasts, officials in government or business, organizations or corporations, witnesses of crime, accidents or other events, and people involved with or affected by a news event or issue.

Reporters are expected to develop and cultivate sources, especially if they regularly cover a specific topic, known as a "beat". Beat reporters must, however, be cautious of becoming too close to their sources. Reporters often, but not always, give greater leeway to sources with little experience. For example, sometimes a person will say they don't want to talk, and then proceed to talk; if that person is not a public figure, reporters are less likely to use that information.

**The primary sources of news are Reporters, Correspondents and News Agencies (Akpan 35).** Reporters are **full time paid** employees of the newspaper, T.V or radio who gathers the news for the same. Their area is specified by locality or by beat. Some reporters are specially assigned to cover event or an incidence so they stand first in the list of primary sources.

Correspondent is a journalist who contribute through a story or report he / she are not actual filed reporters but always stories which can be further illustrated as news. The key element here is the correspondent's network. Most importantly correspondent must possess good communications skill so that he can interview the people well and get acquainted with the inner workings of his allotted area.

In a developing area of news, news agencies are considered to be the most important source of news. New media is reason behind the development and spread of news agencies through the world. Reporters and correspondents and other secondary sources have geographical restrictions but news has no boundaries. News agencies plays an important role in gathering and delivering the news to the news houses. This is the only virtual source available.

### **2.3 News Dissemination**

News dissemination refers to the entire process by which specific contents are articulated, selected, transformed into news, and received by news audiences. In our

context, the contents are conflict related and belong to three main types: evidential claims, interpretive frames and agendas for action.

In communication with dissemination, Peters J.D enlisted the three main stages involved in the news dissemination process:

- Verbalization – the articulation of claims, frames and agendas by sources and advocates. This stage often involves strategic efforts to insert specific contents into the news. However, for verbalized contents to actually enter the news dissemination process, they need to be selected by the news media.
- Mediation – the selection and transformation of the articulated content by the professional news media, as well as social media (either as the original publication venue or by remediating contents disseminated by the professional media).
- Reception – the appropriation and (re)use of the distributed news content by audiences; in our context, by political actors and lay publics. Audiences' appropriated evidential beliefs, interpretive frames and agendas for action are articulated in official political discourse (e.g., parliamentary debates), media venues (e.g., social media and comments on news articles), and face-to-face discussions.

## 2.4 Censorship of News

Censorship is the suppression of speech, public communication, or other information. This may be done on the basis that such material is considered objectionable, harmful, sensitive, or "inconvenient". Censorship can be conducted by governments, private institutions, and other controlling bodies. Government and private organizations may engage in censorship. Other groups or institutions may propose and petition for censorship. When an individual such as an author or other creator engages in censorship of his or her own works or speech, it is referred to as *self-censorship*. General censorship occurs in a variety of different media, including speech, books, music, films, and other arts, the press, radio, television, and the Internet for a variety of claimed reasons including national security, to control obscenity, child pornography, and hate speech, to protect children or other vulnerable groups, to promote or restrict political or religious views, and to prevent slander and libel.

Direct censorship may or may not be legal, depending on the type, location, and content. Many countries provide strong protections against censorship by law, but none of these protections are absolute and frequently a claim of necessity to balance conflicting rights is made, in order to determine what could and could not be censored. There are no laws against self-censorship.

Although you may not realize it, media censorship happens to your news on a regular basis. While news stories are often simply edited for length, in many cases subjective choices are being made about whether to keep some information from becoming public. Sometimes these decisions are made to safeguard a person's privacy, other times to protect media outlets from corporate or political fallout, and yet other times for concerns of national security. Journalists make difficult choices every day about what to share and what to hold back. Not only that, but they often experience pressure from outside forces to suppress information. It's important for the public to be informed about the choices those who deliver the news face, and why they might decide to keep certain information private or not.

## **2.5 History of Fake News and Fake News in Nigeria**

Firstly, let us just clarify something: Donald Trump is not solely responsible for this current cultural phenomenon. The history of fake news is more in depth than many would initially assume.

The phrase 'fake news' has become one of the most commonly-used in the media in recent years, but it means different things to different people.

The meaning of fake news is usually seen as being stories that have been made up or exaggerated, in an attempt to influence the way people think. The most common types of fake news are political, and fake news has been blamed for interfering in elections in countries like the UK, US and France. But although it's

made the headlines and created huge scandals (even in the playground), experts still debate whether these stories have had enough of an effect to change the result of an election.

Donald Trump is not responsible for the idea or the phrase, but he does play a role in the history of fake news. The controversial 45th president of the United States helped popularise the expression ‘fake news’ in the early days of his presidency, most of the time as a defence strategy. Mr. Trump might have helped propel the popular phrase to the top of search engines at one time, but fake news, as a concept, has existed for as long time as news has been shared.

The internet and technology may have made it easier to fake pictures and stories, but pranksters have been pulling the wool over people’s eyes for a long time. So, in short: fake news is far from new.

Seven types of fake news were identified by Claire Wardle of First Draft News Article, which includes the following; Satire or parody (this has no intention of causing any harm although it has potentials to fool), false connection, (this is when headlines or captions do not support the content), misleading content (here misleading information is used to frame an issue or an individual), false context (this is when authentic information is shared with false contextual information), impostor content (this is when authentic sources are impersonated with false, made-up sources), manipulated content (this is when authentic information or imagery is

manipulated to deceive, as can be related in the case of a doctored photo) and fabricated content (in this case, the content is 100% new, yet false, it is designed to deceive and do harm).

Fake news is currently an issue of global interest right now; this is so because globally discussions about fake news and its impact on global affairs are being held. This century sadly has seen the use of information as a weapon in rather unprecedented scale. the exploitation and falsification of contents have simply become rather easy with the presence of Powerful new technology, this has also given easy rise to the use of social networks in intensifying the rate falsehoods in rather very dramatic fashion especially as peddled by States, politicians, deceitful corporate entities, and individuals who go about sharing uncritical publics stories, these and other forms of misinformation are perpetrated with the intent seeking or gaining platforms to pursue financial gains in the advertising section. There is a high spread of the fake news phenomenon on the internet; this is so because of the internet's ever connected nature and a major function of the masses' preference for speed over accuracy. Thus, since those who provide content on the internet are a Zero-sum, winner-takes-all battle for attention and for of course the revenue that comes with advertising, they do not mind doing any and everything to boost traffic. Distinct from print publications that allows for enough time before reporting a breaking story the next day, publications that are made online which are majorly

reports on the franticness of the present world. Due to the nature of *modus operandi* of the internet, one who is on that space might as well go fast or go home. Hence, so many journalists are left in an unreasonable competition for attention, where they are forced to publish information first and then verify the authenticity of their contents later, this hurts our world today badly. Nonetheless, this is also a Nigerian problem, as there are also a bulk of news sites and blogs that publish contents without properly authenticating their sources. Fake news stories are usually thrilling in nature and by this factor, are very likely to spread quickly; since these blogs or platforms by their nature contain a high level of followers, making the news possess an existing number of massive reader base that have their notification on, looking up to them for second to second information, and since these have special flavors added to them to make them captivating, such stories will most likely be believed by those who them, in turn, these people will share the story on social media as today it is about a thing of pride to be the first to have information about a story, sadly though, this is how fake news goes on and on, more painful is the fact that even after the story has been debunked, Sometimes, the fake news still prevails.

Nigeria as a country is in tension; one characterised by security threats in different parts of the country. These threats are manifested in forms of multiple conflicts, systemic and widespread corruption, debilitating poverty, weak institutions, threats of secession as well as perceived marginalisation, anger, hatred and economic challenges in a time when preference for untrue information is rising – i.e., post-truth

era. These issues are offensively, progressively and relentlessly destroying relationships, heightening animosities across communities and threatening democratic survival in the country . Arguably, all of that are facilitated by the revolution in information and communication technologies (ICT) that have democratised and simplified access and dissemination of information across space and time.

Cited in Premium Times Nigeria, Professor Umaru Pate, the Dean, School of Postgraduate Studies, Bayero University, Kano (BUK) explained that like many other countries, Nigeria, too, is battling with the rise in populism politics, youth radicalisation, extremism, terrorism, drug and human trafficking, ethnic nationalism, hate and dangerous speech, fake news and the rewriting of the country’s history, among others. Indeed, these are critical times for the media and the country. The political climate in the country has changed rapidly in recent years, signaling innovative developments and strange challenges in the country’s democratic system. By and large, the current political culture in the country is inextricably linked to the growing development of information and communication technologies (ICT).

Cited in Vanguard, Professor Danjuma Gambo, the Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Maiduguri who is also the Director, Public Relations of the university agrees with Professor Pate that fake news can mislead the public and cause tension in an already tense political climate with communal and reprisal

attacks here and there in addition to the Boko Haram conflict. He stressed that if the media would cultivate the culture of verifying information and fact checking (if necessary) before going to press, the spread of fake news can be contained. This has severally affected the delivery and form of political communication and the communication of political ideas in our democratic system, as well as shifted and undermined the accountability for those messages.

For instance, what was labelled "yellow journalism" and "character assassination/slander" have metamorphosed into what is today known as "fake news" and "fraudulent news"; these are terms that sound 'big' and portend devastating effects in the society. These terms are fuelled and spread by the power of modern technology.

In the words of Egan in the TIME magazine, lies and truth look the same. This has been a boon for professional liars, (who) use these platforms to market falsehood; as vehicles for personal fame, or, as a way to spread propaganda”. These have raised concerns that Nigerians are constantly and increasingly accessing inaccurate and/or misleading content without verification (gatekeeping) or verifiable attribution

Fundamentally, the breed of 'yellow journalism', 'fabricated or manipulated stories', 'fraudulent content' and 'character assassination' and 'fake news' are largely new technology-dependent (e.g., social media platforms and the internet) rather than traditional technologies such as radio, TV, newspaper or magazine. Thus, while we

grapple with what modern technology has enabled us to do, “we also face a new wave of change, which we have only started to understand the ramifications of”. For example, the concerns around recent, or newer technologies such as ‘artificial intelligence’ and ‘machine learning’ show that any regulatory response to stem fake news peddled via new technologies, whether by state actors or technology developers, need to be as “dynamic as the technological mischief it seeks to contain”.

## **2.6 Identification of Fake News**

The term fake news has been somewhat co-opted by Donald Trump recently, it is global and further eroding an already weakening trust in media. A lot of attention has been focused upon the issue of fake news recently, the level and nature of activity, and the supposed risks and threats that come with it. Blame for the current fake news trends has been levelled at different scapegoats. Some have rushed to blame technology and the bottom-line priorities of internet and social media giants such as Google, Facebook and Twitter for the crisis. Others point to the media’s own failures a deeply flawed and politicised press and broadcast system stuck in a metropolitan bubble, itself part of the establishment elite, and unable to properly connect with the frustration and anger of people and communities. Fake news as a manipulative tool of communication and a problem is not something that is new. President Thomas Jefferson complained in 1807 that someone who does not read a newspaper is better informed on events than someone that does read newspapers.

What is new and changing is how fake news is conceived and defined. In a 2017 British Parliamentary inquiry submission identified a number of aspects associated with the fake news trends:

- Fake news has a broader definition than online media outlets publishing false stories to garner publicity,
- Fake news has been a problem in the news media for a long time and fake news articles can be published by any media outlet.
- Two common sources of fake news are press releases as part of marketing campaigns that are reproduced in the media without due process of fact-checking, as well as reporting on developments in science without a full critique of the scientific research conducted.

The first point is in reference to the expansion of public relations and lobbying firms inside the news systems of the world, which has resulted in a deliberate form of news management. This is a basic summary from the point of view and observations of policy makers and practitioners, trying to establish the nature and extent of the problem at hand. They identified three types of fake news in their research:

- Serious fabrications that are uncovered in the media.
- Large scale hoaxes.
- Humorous fakes, such as news satire, parody and game shows.

There are some that object to the use of the term 'fake news' because they think that it is unhelpful, yet feel obliged to use it because there are a lack of alternative means to name it. There is also an understanding that this is not just about news, but the whole information ecosystem. Therefore, there needs to be a breaking down of that environment into:

- The different types of content being created and shared.
- Understanding what motivates those who create that content.
- Means of disseminating that content.

Fake news has had a long history of use, recently the way in which the term was defined began to change. About one decade ago, some academics attempted to characterise such media and communication formats and content as satire and talk shows as being 'fake news' owing to the aspect of their dependence on the mimicry of journalists and journalism that made up the 'real' news. More recently, the definition of fake news has moved to one that includes the elements of deception and misinformation. This stresses the need for journalists to seek facts and to engage audiences with accurate information. However, it is contradicted by an information environment where fact-based evidence is less relevant for a growing segment of the populace. This is evident where news organisations follow news trends and shape the narrative with deceptive statements. The observation by Albright concerning audiences increasingly seeking opinionated news rather than objective news was in

part substantiated in a study on youth news behaviours and attitudes. Given the current level of debate and use of the term 'fake news' a new turn in the definition and understanding of the practice seems to have evolved, which is fake news is a label to attach to news and information that contradicts one's world view and beliefs, and within the context of politicised debates where disputed facts surround complex controversies. This is seen in the different sides that publicly dismiss news and information, such as Trump's use of this tactic against mainstream reporting on or about him. This leads to discussions on the presumed effect of fake news and assigning guilt for it. The fake news cycle does exert an effect upon people that are exposed to it. Research conducted by hints at a trend where people exposed to high levels of fake news and low levels of hard news (as opposed to high levels of exposure to both fake and hard news) perceive a greater level of realism and authenticity in the fake news content. The higher profile of fake news in the global information environment has resulted in calls for creating automated methods for detecting deception and fake news in informational and news content. Social media have taken a lot of attention and blame for spreading 'fake news', however, a lack of professionalism by journalists should be taken into account too. Even though social media is a significant source of news headlines for mainstream media, and in some cases at least a third of that information is proven to be false, there are still few editorial guidelines issued on how to verify information from social media sources. This has an impact upon how the public view mainstream media content and its

reliability. A Harvard-Harris poll conducted in the United States in 2017 saw nearly two thirds of the respondents say mainstream press is full of fake news, which is a sentiment held by voters across the ideological spectrum. There are some disagreements and diverging perceptions concerning the issue of fake news and how it should be defined and understood. However, not everyone agrees on the level of presumed potency of social media and fake news in manipulating people to think and behave in a manner desired by the communicator.

## **2.7 Causes of Fake News**

In an attempt at stating clearly the causes of fake news in Nigeria as well as the world at large, so many factors come into consideration, but for the sake of emphasis, this piece include but not limited to the following:

Monetary gains: this is about the major reasons for the creation and spread of fake news today, basically all other reasons are means tilting towards this end, this is why Jestin Coler, who formerly owned the fake media conglomerate Disinfomedia, was once known to have stated that when he ran his company, he once had to employ about 20 to 25 writers making up to \$10,000 to \$30,000 per month just from advertisements. A close look at this show that this is about the same story with that which is obtainable in the Nigerian media market.

More so, some media outlets have indulged in fake news simply for the sake of significance, this is a major feature of the social media in Nigeria where persons and

organizations go any length just to be “verified”, to do so they fill their space with anything, irrespective of how credible it is or not as long as such information say stories or advertisement or can attract enough viewers to their space. Furthermore, another factor that aids the spread of fake news is in states with government authorities that are unfriendly, together with have over the years been known for creating and spreading fake news, especially during events such as an election where certain information are in the custody of the government only, we can find this during elections.

Although the loose nature of the guidelines regulating the internet is one factor which is also responsible for the spread of fake news. When the internet was made reachable for the general public in the 1990’s it was done for the chief purpose of seeking and reaching information. But with the advent of fake news in the internet, obtaining credible information has become though. Since there are really no stringent rules on the internet Fake news have become rampart with the use of news sites that are falsified, they do so by creating catchy news or gossips, pretending to be reliable sources.

## **2.8 The Impact of Fake News in Nigeria**

Simply, the attachment of the negative word 'fake' to the word 'news' heightens the degree of the perceived effect of the term. News, simply put, is an account of what happened. Because of the value attached to it, news is envisaged to be the truth. However, in the era of post-truth and for a Nigeria that has lived in non-truth for years even “the two fundamentally contradictory terms can occupy the same textual space”. Recently, the BBC interviewed a group of Nigerian experts on their opinion about the greatest challenges of the 21st Century. Many of them indicated that failure of credible information sources is one of the serious problems facing Nigerians, indeed, mankind. In a related development, Pate has criticised the Nigerian media, particularly broadcast media for allotting greater percentages of their news, reports and programmes to political matters, phenomena, he was quoted by Itedge News to have said, “feast on hatred and incitements.... Everything political is news but burning issues poverty and violent conflicts do not seem to worry us. This is bad.” The scholar went further to blame the rising levels of fake news in the country on the “absence of patriotism, ethnic and religious bigotries, political affiliations and foreign interests”.

The Zonal Director of Nigerian Broadcasting Commission (NBC) in charge of the North-Central zone of Nigeria, Dr. Igomu Onoja cited in Itedge News argued that, “it [is] part of media ethics to ensure balance reporting and give all parties equal hearing” and desist from journalism capable of spreading fake news that could undermine the Nigerian democratic process. Dr. Onoja cites an example of fake

news broadcast over a media outlet in Jos, Plateau State (north central of Nigeria) saying, “we have radio stations in Jos clapping for people that say that the Plateau governor is mentally deranged”.

In Nigeria, we do not have a better story, for fake news here is not solely a function of the social media for on 5th July 2018, the National newspaper’s front page headline read: Court orders National Assembly to begin impeachment of Buhari. Creating unnecessary tension on the polity, that news was a simple manipulation of the following judgment: “The applicants are hereby granted leave to issue and bring an Application for the order of Mandamus to compel 1st to 3rd Respondents to start impeachment proceedings against the 4th Respondent, the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria” as delivered by the Presiding Judge of the Federal High Court in Oshogbo. Fake news over the years have aggravated the herders/farmers crises in Nigeria, this is why The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) once reported that the fake news circulating in the social media is a major factor responsible for the fueling of the farmers/herdsmen crises in Nigeria., it stating that “fake pictures circulating on social media which users are falsely claiming depict inter-communal violence are inflaming already high tensions in Nigeria” one of such stories was the fake report which circulated the social media in Nigeria of the story that claiming that about five students of the College of Education at Gidan Waya, were ambushed and murdered by Fulani herdsmen in the Southern part of Kaduna. Also, major Nigerian news outlets once ran a story alleging

that Danladi Ciroma, a leader of the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association, said the attacks in the Plateau were retribution for the loss of 300 cows, they even went ahead to have quoted him to have said that “Since, these cows were not found, no-one should expect peace in the areas”, nevertheless, Mr. Ciroma had denied making such reports before the media organization apparently tendered apology.

Based on seven articles that was analysed, six major fake news epidemics with serious adverse consequences across Nigeria were identified; Plotted stories caused an increase in polio cases (2017), Ebola ‘cure’ kills two (2014), President Muhammadu death in 2017 and his marriage saga in 2019, Fake Facebook post intensifies the regional and religious crisis (2012, 2018), Fake photos and news exacerbate tensions between the herdsmen and farmers conflict (2019), Claims of under-age voting in elections and other misleading stories (2015 presidential election).

In the face of the 2020 pandemic (Covid-19) the cause of Corona virus was linked to 5G mobile broadband technology that would eventually replace 4G LTE connection with faster internet connectivity which will enhance faster downloads and other internet activities. 5G conspiracy theorists argue that the newly developed network generates radio frequency radiation that can damage DNA and lead to cancer and premature ageing. They also contend that the network can disrupt cell metabolism, and potentially lead to other diseases through the generation of stress

proteins, and Corona virus in particular by weakening the immune system. In fact, a notable Nigerian Bishop took to social media in a protest against the installation of 5G network in Nigeria. Though it had not been proven that 5G network is responsible for Corona virus pandemic, originators of fake news disseminated stories online that suggest that 5G network has a direct causal link with Corona virus.

In the end we can clearly see that Fake news most often leads to confusion, tension, and even the tendency to be suicidal, depending on the person or institution as the case may be, while on the other end, it waters down the efforts of serious media coverage making the work more difficult for journalists to cover significant news stories.

As a matter of 'post-truth' fact, truth has nowadays shifted to becoming relative; facts now have alternatives, and news is weaponised, a phenomenon that Abdullahi in *Democracy and the challenge of fake news: The Cable* quoted Nigeria's Information and Culture, Minister, Lai Mohammed describing it as “the greatest threat to democracy and security as it played a role in the civil war in the country and that Nigeria could not afford to fall victim to the same circumstances that led to the war”. Furthermore, realising the dangers of fake news, the Federal Government of Nigeria launched a national campaign against fake news on July 12, 2018 to enlighten Nigerians and counter its prevalence. Indeed, fake news is summarily unethical, dangerous, provocative, and subversive to peace and societal serenity

especially in a multicultural setting like Nigeria as it heightens tension and build fear and mistrust among people. Fake news could “threaten and destroy” the country as the Minister of Information cautioned. Pate and Idris and Abdullahi cited Section 22 of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria, which provides that, “The press, radio, television and other agencies of the mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in this chapter and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people”. According to Abdullahi, Section 39 of the 1999 Constitution states that:

- i. Every person shall be entitled to freedom of expression, including freedom to hold opinions and receive and impart ideas and information without interference; and
- ii. Without prejudice to the generality of Sub-section (1) of this Section, every person shall be entitled to own, establish and operate a medium for the dissemination of information, ideas and opinions.

The constitution was framed to promote and uplift the process of democratization. The constitution has clearly recognised freedom of expression and freedom of the press as fundamental elements in our democracy. Democracy thrives when people have free access to genuine and correct information about issues and matters that affect them to make informed decisions and choices. Therefore, the escalating effects of fake news and 'alternative facts' are direct assaults on

fundamental principles and practice of democracy. This is because while Section 39 of the Constitution provides for freedom to hold and impart opinions, ideas and information without interference, “interference is exactly what fake news does”, Abdullahi notes. In fact, by battling for space and vying for acceptability with authentic information and news, fake news deprives people of the very constitutional right to hold opinions and receive and impart ideas and information.

Side by side with authentic information, the creation of alternative facts often makes it difficult for people to distinguish truth from untruth. When people get confused as to what is the truth, or genuine information, they cannot create shared meanings in conversations, let alone hold their political representatives accountable for their stewardships.

The Information and Democracy Commission notes that: “Political control of the media, subjugation of news and information to private interests, the growing influence of corporate actors who escape democratic control, online mass disinformation, violence against reporters and editors, and the undermining of quality journalism, threaten the exercise of the right to knowledge”.

Pate has highlighted the manner of dissemination of fake news in Nigeria. Some of these are through:

- Selective reporting and promotion of prejudices about groups and individuals based on stereotypes, incomplete facts, mischief and ignorance.

- Spreading of manipulative or fabricated stories and pictures regarding the complexities of our composition; often, matters are ethnicised, religionised or politicised to the detriment of the collective good.
- Presentation of poorly researched information due to low capacities of media professionals thereby manifesting in shallow reporting and fake news.
- Common tendency of reporting inter-group conflicts out of their fundamental sociological, economic, political and other contexts, often resulting in fakery.
- The promotion of statements of politicians, ethnic champions, religious zealots and other interested parties without being critical or fact checking information about specific contentious issues.
- Generalised statements not supported by facts and figures on very sensitive national integrative issues.
- Official lies from governments and officials through established sources.

Since the rising to notoriety of the present 'genre' of malicious content peddled as 'fake news' (mostly over social media) in 2016 during the United States' presidential election, barely three years until Nigeria's 2019 general elections, fake news has made dangerously damaging impacts on the Nigerian society socially, politically and economically. Notably, the escalating herder-farmer communal clashes in the northern parts of the country, ethno-religious crises in Taraba, Plateau and Benue states and the furiously burning fire of the thug-of-war between the ruling

party (All Progressives Congress, APC) and the opposition, particularly the main opposition party (People's Democratic Party, PDP) have all been attributed to fake news, untruth and political propaganda. This aims to provide further understanding about the evolving issues regarding fake news and its demonic impact on the Nigerian polity. To make that contribution toward building the literature, extant literature and verifiable online news content on fake news and its attributes were critically reviewed. In conclusion, fake news and its associated notion of post-truth may continue to pose threat to the Nigerian polity unless strong measures are taken. For the effects of fake news and post-truth phenomena to be suppressed substantially, a tripartite participation involving these key stakeholders – the government, legislators and the public should be modelled and implemented to the letter.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Research Design**

Zach Claybaugh refers to Research design as the overall strategy utilized to carry out research that defines a succinct and logical plan to tackle established research question(s) through the collection, interpretation, analysis, and discussion of data. Incorporated in the design of a research study will depend on the standpoint of the researcher over their beliefs in the nature of knowledge and reality, often shaped by the disciplinary areas the researcher belongs to. A research design is a framework that has been created to find answers to research questions.

Research design seeks to answer the questions about the what, where, when, how and but what means data is generated to provide solutions under investigation. According to Trochim (224), research design 'provides the glue that holds the research project together.' It can also be seen as the 'backbone' of the research protocol.

Therefore, this study employed the survey research methods under the descriptive type of research design. According to Okwechime (27) survey research studies both large and small populations by selecting and studying samples chosen from the populations to discover the relative incidence, distribution and interrelations of sociological and psychological variables. This research design was adopted to enable the researcher involve the use of a set of questions on various aspects of

the subject of study to which selected members of the study's population are expected to discuss and also give answers to.

### **3.2 Population of Study**

Population forms the total number of people that resides in that area where the sample will be drawn; The people in Oredo, Benin City, Edo State is the population of study.

### **3.3 Sample Size**

The Population projection for 2022 making up Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State is 553,300. According to the National Population Commission which was selected for this study, the age distribution of 20 to 69 years makes up a total number of 202,567 derived from the Population Census of 2006. To get the sample size from the population of the above age distribution of Oredo Local Government Area, Taro Yamene's sample size formula will be employed.

TARO YAMENE FORMULA:  $n=N/1+N(e)^2$

Given that

n = Sample size sort

N = Population Size

e = Level of significance (.05)

$n = 202,567/1+202,567(.05)^2$

$$n = 202,567/202,568(0.0025)$$

$$n = 202,567/506.42$$

$$n = 399.9 \text{ approximately } 400$$

### **3.4 Sampling Technique**

The sampling procedure used for this study was the purposive sampling technique. The purposive sampling technique is a method used by the researcher to pick those considered to Possess the required attributes or information (Asemah, S. E., Gujbawu, M., Ekharefo, O. D., Okpanachi, A. R. 171). The idea behind the use of this sampling technique is to be able to eliminate other members of the access population and work with those that meet the requirements and are reliable for this research.

### **3.5 Instrument of Data Collection**

The instrument used for collecting data for this study is questionnaire. The questionnaire included both open ended and close ended question which gives respondents the free will if expressing themselves as they provide their answers. Options were also provided for them to choose from respectively. The questionnaire was made up of two sections. The first section includes the demographic characteristics such as age, gender, qualification etc., of the respondent. While the second section contained 10 items comprising of close ended and open ended questions structured as it relates to the variables or research questions of the study.

### **3.6 Method of Data Collection**

The method of Data collection adopted for the study is the face to face method. The researcher will administer the questionnaire himself and it would be filled by the respondents in the presence of the researcher.

### **3.7 Method of Data Analysis**

The method used in presenting the data collected for this study is the triangulation (quantitative) method of data analysis. The quantitative method for this study employed the use of descriptive data such as frequencies, percentages and tables for presentation. The tables which have titles include columns, rows and figures and clearly delineated to avoid confusion of data presented. The tables also aided the explanation of the analysis and enhance the presentation of double-option responses.

### **3.8 Validity and Reliability of Data Presentation**

Validity is the process of finding out whether the instrument measures what it is set out to measure (Asemah, S. E., Gujbawu, M., Ekhareafo, O. D., Okpanachi, A. R. 191). It is the extent to which a measurement tool measures what is supposed to measure (Boyd, 2017) cited in Asemah (191). For this study, the research instruments were subjected to the examination or face validation and approval of the research supervisor.

Mehren and Lehmann (1991), cited in Asemah (188) defined reliability as the degree of consistency between two measures of the same thing. It is the consistency, dependability, stability of repeatability of a measuring instrument. The reliability of the instruments for this study was determined and achieved through a previous comparison experiment, a thorough test retest conducted on the chosen sample.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

#### 4.1 Data Presentation and Analysis

**TABLE 1: Statistics of the questionnaire administered and retrieved.**

Variables	Number of respondents	Percentage
Number of questionnaire retrieved	400	100
Total number of questionnaire administered	400	100

Source: Field Survey 2022

The table above shows that out of the 400 copies of questionnaire administered by the researcher, all 400 copies were retrieved. Therefore, the analysis of the data for this study is based on the 400 copies of questionnaire.

**TABLE 2: Sex Distribution of the Respondents**

Variables	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage of respondents
Male	208	52
Female	192	48
Total	400	100

Source: Field Survey 2022

Table 2, presents the sex distribution of respondents, it shows that 208 respondents representing 52% of the total distribution of the study were males, while 192 respondents representing 48% of the total population of the study were females. This shows that the respondents of the study were more of males.

**TABLE 3: Age Distribution of the Respondents**

Variables	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage of respondents
-----------	--------------------------	---------------------------

20 -29 years	177	44.25
30 - 39 years	118	29.5
40 - 49 years	40	10
50 - 59 years	43	10.75
60 - 69 years	22	5.5
Total	400	100

Source: Field survey 2022

Table 3, presents the age variation of the respondents, it shows that 177 respondents representing 44.25% of the total distribution of the study were between 20 - 29 years of age, 118 respondents representing 29.5% of the total distribution of the study were between 30 - 39 years of age, 40 respondents representing 10% of the total distribution of the study were between 40 - 49 years of age, 43 respondents representing 10.75% of the total distribution of the study were between 50 - 59 years of age while 22 respondents representing 5.5% of the total distribution of the study were between 60 - 69 years of age. With this we can say that the ages of 20 - 29 were the highest respondents for the study, followed by those between the ages of 30 - 39, followed by those between the ages of 40 - 49, followed by those between the ages of 50 - 59, then those between the ages of 60 - 69.

**TABLE 4: Marital Status of the Respondents**

Variables	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage of respondents
-----------	--------------------------	---------------------------

Single	295	73.75
Married	95	23.75
Divorced	10	2.5
Total	400	100

Source: Field survey 2022

Table 4, presents the marital status of the respondents. It shows that 295 respondents representing 73.75% of the total distribution of the study are single, 95 respondents representing 23.75% of the total population of the study are married while 10 respondents representing the 2.5% of the total population of the study are divorced. This shows that the respondents of the study are majorly single.

**TABLE 5: Religion of the Respondents**

Variables	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage of respondents
Christian	360	90
Islam	40	10
Others	0	0
Total	400	100

Source: Field survey 2022

Table 5, presents the Religion of the respondents, it shows that 360 respondents representing 90% of the total distribution of the study are Christians, while 40 representing 10% of the total population of the study are Muslims and none was perceived for other kinds of religion. This shows that the respondents of the study were majorly Christians.

**TABLE 6: Occupation of the Respondents**

Variables	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage of respondents
-----------	--------------------------	---------------------------

Students	200	50
Employed	64	16
Unemployed	16	4
Business Man/Woman	120	30
Total	400	100

Source: Field survey 2022

Table 6, presents the Occupation of the respondents, it shows that 200 respondents representing 50% of the total distribution of the study are Students, 64 respondents representing 16% of the total population of the study are Employed, 16 respondents representing 4% of the total population of the study are Unemployed and 120 respondent representing 30% of the total distribution of the study are Business Men/Women. This shows that the respondents of the study are majorly Students.

**TABLE 7: Do you have access to information?**

Variables	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage of respondents
Yes	400	100
No	0	0
Total	400	100

Source: Field survey 2022

Table 7, shows that 400 respondents representing 100% of the total population of the study have access to information. No respondent was perceived to not have access to information. This shows that all respondents of the study have access to information.

**TABLE 8: Which of the following media do you depend on for information?**

Variables	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage of respondents
Radio	16	4
Television	56	14
Newspaper	8	2
Magazine	32	8
Social media	288	72
Total	400	100

Source: Field survey 2022

Table 8, shows that 16 respondents representing 4% of the total population of the study depend on Radio for information, 56 respondents representing 14% of the total population of the study depend on Television for information, 8 respondents representing 2% of the total population of the study depend on Newspaper, 32 respondents representing 8% of the total population of the study depend on Magazine for information and 288 respondents representing 72% of the total population of the study depend on the Social media platform for information. This shows that majority of the respondents of the study depend on social media for information.

**TABLE 9: How often do you gain access to information?**

Variables	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage of respondents
-----------	--------------------------	---------------------------

Everyday	336	84
Some days	40	10
Once in a while	24	6
Never	0	0
Total	400	100

Source: Field survey 2022

Table 9, shows that 336 respondents representing 84% of the total population of the study gain access to information everyday, 40 respondents representing 10% of the total population of the study gain access to information some days while 24 respondents representing 6% of the total population of the study gain access to information once in a while. No respondent was perceived to not ever gain access to information. This shows that majority of the respondents of the study gain access to information everyday.

**TABLE 10: Have you ever come across fake news?**

Variables	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage of respondents
Yes	384	96
No	16	4
Total	400	100

Source: Field survey 2022

Table 10, shows that 384 respondents representing 96% of the total population of the study have come across fake news while 16 respondents representing 4% of the total population of the study have not come across fake news. This shows that majority of respondents of the study have come across fake news.

**TABLE 11: How often do you come across fake news?**

Variables	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage of respondents
Very often	96	24
Often	256	64
Rarely	40	10
Never	8	2
Total	400	100

Source: Field survey 2022

Table 11, shows that 96 respondents representing 24% of the total population of the study come across fake news very often, 256 respondents representing 64% of the total population of the study come across fake news often, 40 respondents representing 10% of the total population of the study rarely come across fake news while 8 respondents representing 2% of the total population of the study have never come across fake news. This shows that majority of the respondents of the study gain access to information everyday.

**TABLE 12: Do you think fake news has taken a toll on the society?**

Variables	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage of respondents
Yes	376	94
No	24	6
Total	400	100

Source: Field survey 2022

Table 12, shows that 376 respondents representing 94% of the total population of the study thinks that fake news has taken a toll on the society while 24

respondents representing 6% of the total population of the study do not think that fake news has taken a toll on the society. This shows that majority of respondents of the study thinks that fake news has taken a toll on the society.

**TABLE 13: How do you think fake news have affected the society?**

Variables	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage of respondents
Positively	16	4
Negatively	352	88
Undecided	32	8
Total	400	100

Source: Field survey 2022

Table 13, shows that 16 respondents representing 4% of the total population of the study thinks that fake news have affected the society positively, 352 respondents representing 88% of the total population of the study thinks that fake news have affected the society negativity while 32 respondents representing 8% of the total population of the study are undecided about the effect of fake news on the society. This shows that majority of respondents of the study thinks that fake news have affected the society negatively.

**TABLE 14: Do you think the media is part of disseminating fake news?**

Variables	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage of respondents
Yes	368	92

No	32	8
Total	400	100

Source: Field survey 2022

Table 14, shows that 368 respondents representing 92% of the total population of the study thinks that the media is part of disseminating fake news while 32 respondents representing 8% of the total population of the study do not think that the media is part of disseminating fake news. This shows that majority of respondents of the study thinks that the media is part of disseminating fake news.

**TABLE 15: Do you think that the constant dissemination of fake news will dominate over real news in the society?**

Variables	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage of respondents
Yes	296	74
No	40	10
Not really	64	16
None of the above	0	0
Total	400	100

Source: Field survey 2022

Table 15, shows that 296 respondents representing 74% of the total population of the study thinks that the constant dissemination of fake news will dominate over real news in the society, 40 respondents representing 10% of the total population of the study do not think that the constant dissemination of fake news will dominate over real news in the society while 64 respondents representing 16% of the total population of the study do not really think that the constant dissemination of fake

news will dominate over real news in the society. This shows that majority of respondents of the study think that the constant dissemination of fake news will dominate over real news in the society.

**TABLE 16: Will strengthening the real eco-system reduce the dissemination of fake news?**

Variables	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage of respondents
Yes	200	50
No	80	20
Maybe	120	30
Total	400	100

Source: Field survey 2022

Table 16, shows that 200 respondents representing 50% of the total population of the study are sure that strengthening the real eco-system will reduce the dissemination of fake news, 80 respondents representing 20% of the total population are not sure that strengthening the real eco-system will reduce the dissemination of fake news while 120 respondents representing 30% of the total population of the study are probable that strengthening the real eco-system will reduce the dissemination of fake news. This shows that majority of respondents of the study are sure that strengthening the real eco-system will reduce the dissemination of fake news.

**TABLE 17: Which medium do you get fake news from most?**

Variables	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage of respondents
Television	39	9.75

Radio	27	6.75
Newspaper	16	4
Social media	318	79.5
Total	400	100

Source: Field survey 2022

Table 16, shows that 39 respondents representing 9.75% of the total population of the study get fake news from the Television, 27 respondents representing 6.75% of the total population of the study get fake news from the Radio, 16 respondents representing 4% of the total population of the study get fake news from the Newspaper and 318 respondents representing 79.5% of the total population of the study get fake news from the Social Media. This shows that majority of the respondents of the study get fake news from the Social Media.

#### 4.2 Answering Research Questions

In the analysis of the Impact of Fake News on the Society, the research questions will be discussed using the psychographic data through the use of questionnaire.

##### **Research Question one (1) restated: Do you think the media is part of disseminating fake news?**

In providing answers to the above research question, reference would be made to Table 8 and 14.

Analysis based on Table 8 shows that 4% of respondents depend on Radio for information, 14% of respondents depend on Television for information, 2% of

respondents depend on Newspaper, 8% of respondents depend on Magazine for information while 72% of respondents depend on Social Media for information.

On the other hand, Table 14 shows that 92% of respondents think that the media are part of disseminating fake news, while 8% of respondents do not think the media are part of disseminating fake news.

From the aforementioned, we can say for a fact that fake news is disseminated by the social media.

**Research Question two (2) restated: How often do you come across fake news?**

In providing answers to the above research question, reference would be made to Table 10 and 11.

Analysis based on Table 10 shows that 96% of respondents have come across, while 4% of respondents have not come across fake news.

On the other hand, Table 11 shows that 24% of respondents come across fake news very often, 64% of respondents come across fake news often, 10% of respondents rarely come across while 2% of respondents have never come across fake news.

From the aforementioned, we can say for a fact that majority of the population have come across fake news.

**Research Question three (3) restated: Do you think fake news has taken a toll on the society?**

In providing answers to the above research question, reference would be made to Table 12, 15 and 16.

Analysis based on Table 12 shows that 94% of respondents think that fake news has taken a toll on the society while 6% of respondents think that fake news has not taken a toll on the society.

Also, analysis based on Table 15 shows that 74% of respondents think that the dissemination of fake news will dominate over real news in the society, 10% of respondents do not think that the dissemination of fake news will dominate over real news in the society while 16% of respondents do not really think that the dissemination of fake news will dominate over real news in the society.

And then, analysis based on Table 16 shows that 50% of respondents are sure that strengthening the real-news ecosystem will reduce the dissemination of fake news. 20% of respondents are not sure that strengthening the real-news ecosystem will reduce the dissemination of fake news while 30% of respondents are probable that strengthening the real-news ecosystem will reduce the dissemination of fake news.

From the above, we can infer that majority of the total population think that fake news has taken a toll on the society and majority of the respondents feel fake news will dominate over real news if we don't strengthen the real-news ecosystem to reduce the dissemination of fake news.

**Research Question four (4) restated: How do you think fake news have affected the society?**

In providing answers to the above research question, reference would be made to Table 13.

Analysis based on Table 13 shows that 4% of respondents think that fake news have affected the society positively, 88% of respondents think that fake news have affected the society negatively while 8% of respondents are undecided about the effect of fake news on the society.

From the above, we can say for a fact that fake news have affected majority of the population negatively.

### **4.3 Discussion of Findings**

Studies have shown that the society is being affected by fake news and it is important to delve into and address this menacing issue.

This study sought to find out the impact of fake news on the society. The study found out that the people have access to information through the media and the media is part and parcel in the spread of fake news in the society. This study also discovered that there is more fake news in social media than the conventional media.

The study also exposed that fake news is been reported to the society often due to the perception of the people. We can understand that this sort of news takes a toll on them and affects them negatively.

Findings also show that if care is not taken, the constant spread of fake news will surpass real news and no one will be able to identify a blatant truth from a disguised lie. The only way that fake news can be compressed or eradicated is by strengthening the real-news ecosystem.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Summary of Findings**

This research is aimed at examining the impact of fake news in the society. It focused on exploiting the audience's perception on fake news which in turn shows that fake news is very much prevalent in the society.

Meanwhile, since this research work case studied the people of Oredo Local Government Area, the respondents were confronted on their source of information as well as ascertaining if the media was part of influencing and disseminating fake news in the society. Based on the data collected and analyzed in the study, the researcher discovered the following:

Individuals have access to information mostly through the social media.

That these certain individuals come across fake news more often than usual.

That these individuals perceive that fake news has taken a toll on the society and negatively too.

And most of all, the media is part and parcel of disseminating fake news and that the constant dissemination will supersede over real news sooner than later in the society.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

Fake news has become the talk of the town in various seminars and conferences in Nigeria. This is due to various unmonitored social media platforms

whereby some individuals just sit in their comfort zones and upload unfounded information online and it spread everywhere within a twinkle of an eye. Fake news has done a lot of arms to the society in recent times and based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that fake news has a negative impact on the society and the sooner we prevent the spread of fake news, the better for us. Therefore, all stakeholders should take proactive measures against the spread of fake news.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

1. Media houses should make every effort to distance themselves from any form of propaganda and misinformation
2. Bloggers and other social media users should be very careful and desist from the spread of fake news as it may cause death in the society.
3. The government at all levels through special Information Technologists should try as much as possible to monitor social media platforms in order to sieve any information that will be deployed to the public.
4. News agencies and other media outlets should be scrutinized and be given set of rules and regulations on censorship and dissemination.

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## **APPENDIX**

Department of Theatre Arts,

Faculty of Arts,  
University of Benin,  
Benin City, Nigeria.

14th November, 2022.

Dear Respondent,

### **REQUEST FOR THE COMPLETION OF ITEMS IN QUESTIONNAIRE**

My name is DANLAMI, PSALM a final year student of the above named department and institution. I am conducting a research on the topic: “**The Impact of Fake News in The Society**”. This study is in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of Bachelor of Arts (BA) Degree in Theatre Arts.

I hereby appeal to you to fill this questionnaire as honestly as possible, as your candid responses are required in providing solution to the research problem. Kindly tick the appropriate option as they relate to you.

I assure you that your response will be treated with utmost confidentiality as it would be used exclusively for academic purposes.

Thanks for your anticipated cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

**Danlami, Psalm**  
Researcher

### **APPENDIX**

**Please tick as appropriate**

## SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHICS

1. Sex: Male  Female
2. Age: 20-29years  30-39  40-49  50-59  60-69
3. Marital status: Single  Married  Divorced
4. Religion: Christian  Muslim
5. Occupation status: Student  Employed  Self-Employed  Business man/woman

## SECTION B

6. Do you have access to information (a) Yes  (b) No
7. Which of the following media do you depend on for information? (a) Radio  (b) Television  (c) Newspaper  (d) Magazine  Social Media
8. How often do you gain access to information? (a) Everyday  (b) Some days  (c) Once in a while  (d) Never
9. Have you ever come across fake news? (a) Yes  (b) No
10. How often do you come across fake news? (a) Very often  (b) Often  (c) Rarely  (d) Never
11. Do you think fake news has taken a toll on the society? (a) Yes  (b) No
12. How do you think fake news have affected the society? (a) Positively  (b) Negatively  (c) Undecided
13. Do you think the media is part of disseminating fake news? (a) Yes  (b) No
14. Do you think the constant dissemination of fake news will dominate over real news in the society? (a) Yes  (b) No  (c) Not really  (d) None of the above
15. Will strengthening the real-news ecosystem reduce the dissemination of fake news? (a) Yes  (b) No  (c) Maybe
16. which medium do you get fake news from most? TV  Radio  Newspaper  Social Media

