

**THE INFLUENCE OF X ON NEWS FACT-CHECKING IN CONTEMPORARY
TIMES**

BY

**AUGUSTINE AGU CHRISTOPHER
ART2100904**

**DEPARTMENT OF MASS COMMUNICATION,
FACULTY OF ARTS,
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN,
BENIN CITY, NIGERIA**

AUGUST, 2025.

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ART2100904

**A RESEARCH SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF MASS
COMMUNICATION, FACULTY OF ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN
CITY, EDO STATE**

**IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF
BACHELOR OF ARTS (B.A HONS) DEGREE**

IN MASS COMMUNICATION

AUGUST, 2025.

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this research work was written and submitted by me, **AUGUSTINE AGU CHRISTOPHER**, matriculation number **ART2100904** to the department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State.

Dr. D.O. Ekhareafo
Supervisor & Head of Department

Date

DECLARATION

This project is based on a study undertaken by me, **AUGUSTINE AGU CHRISTOPHER**, with Mat. No. **ART2100904**, in the Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria under the supervision of Dr. D.O. Ekhareafo in the Department of Mass Communication. All ideas are products of my personal research and where the views of others were used, they were duly acknowledged.

AUGUSTINE AGU CHRISTOPHER
ART2100904

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to God.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to my parents and siblings, relatives, and friends for their unwavering support, love, and encouragement throughout my academic journey. Their belief in me and constant motivation has been instrumental in my achievements.

I am immensely grateful to Mrs. Rita Onyejose for her continuous support during my time in school and for her generous contribution to my project work. Her guidance and support have played a crucial role in shaping my academic pursuits.

Special appreciation goes to Mr. O. Emmanuel Christopher, my beloved brother, whose intense support cannot be adequately described. I am grateful to him for his valuable support throughout my academic journey.

I would like to extend my deepest appreciation to Dr. D.O. Ekhareafo, my project supervisor and Head of the Department for his invaluable guidance, expertise, and patience throughout the entire process. His insightful feedback and constructive criticism have helped me refine my ideas and produce a better dissertation.

I would also like to acknowledge the entire academic and non-academic staff of the Department of Mass Communication. Their dedication to providing quality education and their unwavering support have greatly contributed to my growth and learning.

I am truly grateful to all the individuals mentioned above, as well as those who have supported me behind the scenes. Your contributions have played a significant role in my academic journey, and I am honored to have had your support.

Thank you all for being a part of my success.

AUTHOR'S STATEMENT

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ABSTRACT

This study was informed by the growing concern over the rapid spread of misinformation on social media platforms, particularly X, and its implications for public discourse and the credibility of news reporting. Despite the introduction of tools like Community Notes, the effectiveness of fact-checking on X remains debated, especially among young, active users. The study was guided by five key objectives: to examine the influence of X on news fact-checking, evaluate the effectiveness of fact-checking mechanisms, assess user awareness and reactions to these tools, identify challenges associated with fact-checking, and propose actionable recommendations for improvement. The research was anchored on three theoretical frameworks; Agenda-Setting Theory, Framing Theory, and Uses and Gratifications Theory which provided insights into how misinformation spreads, how users interpret fact-checks, and what drives their engagement or apathy. A descriptive survey design was adopted, and data were collected from 200 purposively selected respondents in the University of Benin using structured questionnaires. The responses were analyzed using frequency tables and simple percentages to reveal user perceptions, engagement patterns, and credibility assessments related to fact-checking mechanisms on X. Findings revealed that while a vast majority (76.5%) of respondents used X daily, only 24.5% were aware of fact-checking tools like Community Notes. Though 71.5% trusted fact-check labels and 68.5% agreed these tools help reduce misinformation, engagement remained passive. Notably, 100% of respondents agreed that misinformation spreads faster than fact-checks, highlighting a significant challenge in curbing digital falsehoods. The study concludes that although users trust fact-checking efforts and acknowledge their relevance, the effectiveness of these mechanisms is hindered by low awareness, limited visibility, and inconsistent application. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that combines user education, platform policy reforms, and technological innovation. Two key recommendations are: (1) Increase awareness of fact-checking tools on X through targeted user education and interface redesigns to improve visibility; and (2) Ensure transparency and neutrality in the deployment of fact-checks by fostering collaboration with verified and independent organizations.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Social media has become a fundamental source of information dissemination, with platforms like X playing a critical role in shaping public discourse. Launched in 2006, X has evolved from a microblogging platform to a global communication tool that influences news reporting, fact-checking, and even public policy (Vasileiadou, 2025). Its influence has expanded significantly over the years, particularly in the dissemination of news and information related to global events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, political elections, and social movements (Siwakoti, Yadav, & Bariletto, 2021). The rapid proliferation of social media platforms has transformed how information is disseminated, consumed, and verified. X has emerged as a prominent tool for news sharing and public discourse since its launch in 2006. Its simplicity, which allows users to post short messages known as "tweets", has made it a powerful medium for real-time information dissemination. However, as its reach expanded, concerns regarding the accuracy of information shared on the platform have also grown. This background section delves into the evolution of X as a news-sharing platform, its role in spreading misinformation, the concept of fact-checking, and how fact-checking practices have adapted to the challenges presented by X.

Initially designed as a microblogging site, X quickly became popular for breaking news and real-time updates. Its unique features, such as hashtags, trending topics, and retweet functions, have allowed users to share news and opinions rapidly. Studies have shown that during major events like natural disasters, political elections, and global health crises, X serves as a primary platform for sharing both verified and unverified information (Siwakoti, Yadav, & Bariletto, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic exemplified the platform's dual-edged influence on information dissemination. On one hand, X facilitated the dissemination of accurate health information from credible organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). On the other hand, it also became a conduit for spreading misinformation related to the pandemic, such as false claims about vaccines, conspiracy theories, and unverified treatments (Sharifpoor & Okhovati, 2025). As the platform's influence expanded, so did its relevance in news reporting. Journalists increasingly use X as a tool for sourcing stories, engaging with audiences, and sharing breaking news. Moreover, governmental agencies and news organizations frequently use X to issue statements and provide real-time updates on ongoing situations. However, the ease with which information can be shared on X has also made it susceptible to manipulation by malicious actors, misinformation campaigns, and the unintentional spread of falsehoods.

Misinformation, defined as false or misleading information shared without harmful intent, and disinformation, which refers to deliberately deceptive information spread to cause harm or manipulate public perception, are pervasive on X (Borenstein,

Warren, & Elliott, 2025). The speed at which information spreads on X presents a significant challenge for fact-checkers. Unlike traditional media platforms where gatekeeping practices are rigorously applied, X provides an open space where anyone can contribute to the public discourse. Research by Vasileiadou (2025) emphasizes that the absence of stringent editorial controls on X has allowed misinformation to proliferate unchecked. This issue became particularly evident during politically charged events, where coordinated misinformation campaigns were designed to influence public opinion and even electoral outcomes. Moreover, the algorithmic structure of X, which prioritizes engagement over accuracy, exacerbates the problem. Studies have shown that emotionally charged and sensational content is more likely to be retweeted and shared, thereby increasing the visibility of false information (Lelo, 2023). This dynamic has raised questions about X's role as a platform for genuine discourse and its potential to distort the public's understanding of important issues.

Fact-checking emerged as a critical response mechanism to combat misinformation on social media platforms like X. The process involves verifying claims, debunking false information, and providing accurate corrections to the public. Organizations such as PolitiFact, FactCheck.org, and Africa Check have established themselves as reputable entities dedicated to fact-checking content across various media, including social networks. The efficacy of fact-checking efforts on X, however, remains a contentious issue. Borenstein, Warren, & Elliott (2025) argue that while X's introduction of Community Notes (formerly known as Birdwatch) aims to democratize the fact-

checking process, it cannot fully replace the work of professional fact-checkers. Community Notes allow users to annotate misleading tweets, but concerns about bias, scalability, and reliability persist. Kumar (2024) highlights the importance of transparency in fact-checking methodologies, noting that audiences are more likely to trust fact-checking entities that disclose their sources and provide clear explanations of their processes. This is particularly relevant on X, where misinformation often spreads more rapidly than corrections. X's approach to fact-checking has evolved over the years. Initially, the platform's strategy focused on labeling tweets that were deemed misleading. However, the introduction of Community Notes marked a shift towards a more decentralized approach, allowing users themselves to participate in the fact-checking process. While this model provides a scalable solution to monitoring misinformation, it also raises concerns about the quality and consistency of the fact-checking efforts.

Lelo (2023) notes that fact-checking on X is often reactive rather than proactive. Misinformation typically circulates widely before being addressed, resulting in potential harm before corrective measures are implemented. Additionally, X's policies regarding misinformation are inconsistent, particularly when it comes to politically sensitive topics. As the volume of misinformation on X continued to grow, efforts to combat falsehoods through fact-checking also intensified. Fact-checking organizations such as PolitiFact, Snopes, and FactCheck.org expanded their operations to monitor social media platforms, including X. However, the scale of misinformation often outpaces the capacity of these organizations to respond effectively (Kumar, 2024).

The introduction of Community Notes (formerly Birdwatch) by X aimed to provide a decentralized approach to fact-checking, allowing users to annotate misleading tweets with context and additional information. While the initiative demonstrated a commitment to addressing misinformation, its implementation faced criticism. Critics argue that Community Notes, despite its potential for democratizing fact-checking, suffers from issues related to bias, inadequate oversight, and limited reach (Borenstein, Warren, & Elliott, 2025). Furthermore, the platform's algorithmic structure continues to present challenges for effective fact-checking. As engagement-driven algorithms prioritize content likely to attract attention, corrections and fact-checks often struggle to reach the same audience as the original false claims (Lelo, 2023).

Fact-checking on X faces numerous challenges. First, the sheer volume of information shared daily makes it difficult for fact-checkers to keep up. Automated tools are increasingly being used to identify misinformation, but these technologies are not foolproof. Second, the virality of misleading information poses a significant hurdle. As Sharifpoor & Okhovati (2025) explain, false claims are often more engaging than factual corrections, making it difficult for fact-checking efforts to gain traction. This challenge is exacerbated by the platform's algorithmic emphasis on content that generates high engagement. Finally, there is the issue of user perception. Research shows that individuals who are already predisposed to believe certain false claims are likely to dismiss fact-checks as biased or unreliable (Vasileiadou, 2025). This creates a cycle in which misinformation continues to spread despite efforts to counteract it. The rise of X as

a dominant platform for news dissemination presents both opportunities and challenges for fact-checkers. While it allows for the rapid spread of accurate information, it also provides fertile ground for misinformation. As X continues to evolve, understanding its impact on fact-checking practices is crucial for developing more effective strategies to combat the spread of false information.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The unprecedented growth of social media platforms has redefined how information is produced, disseminated, and consumed. Among these platforms, X has emerged as a central tool for real-time information sharing, especially during critical events such as political elections, natural disasters, and global health crises (Borenstein, Warren, & Elliott, 2025). While the platform has enabled users to access information rapidly, it has also become a major source of misinformation and disinformation, raising concerns about its role in promoting accurate information and the challenges it poses for fact-checkers and news organizations. The spread of misinformation and disinformation on X is not a new phenomenon, but its scale and potential impact have grown exponentially. Misinformation, often shared inadvertently, and disinformation, deliberately crafted to mislead or manipulate, have become pervasive issues (Lelo, 2023). The problem is further exacerbated by the platform's algorithmic structure, which favors sensational and emotionally charged content over factual accuracy (Sharifpoor & Okhovati, 2025).

Moreover, X's decentralized nature makes it difficult for fact-checkers to identify and address false information promptly. Even when corrections are made, they often fail to reach the same audience that encountered the original falsehoods. Studies have shown that corrections rarely achieve the same level of visibility as the misinformation they aim to counter (Borenstein, Warren, & Elliott, 2025). The virality of misinformation on X also poses a challenge to credibility and trust. When false information is repeatedly encountered, it can be perceived as accurate, a phenomenon known as the "illusory truth effect." The repetition of misinformation, even when debunked, can influence public opinion and decision-making processes (Lelo, 2023). Although X has introduced initiatives aimed at combating misinformation, such as Community Notes (previously known as Birdwatch), their effectiveness remains questionable. Community Notes allows users to annotate misleading tweets with additional context, but the decentralized nature of the system has raised concerns about bias, credibility, and scalability (Borenstein, Warren, & Elliott, 2025).

The problems outlined above form the basis of this study, which seeks to examine the influence of X on news fact-checking, evaluate the effectiveness of existing mechanisms, and propose recommendations for improving the fact-checking process. The spread of misinformation on X presents a complex challenge that requires innovative solutions. Understanding the limitations of current fact-checking mechanisms and the reasons why misinformation continues to thrive is essential for developing more effective strategies to combat falsehoods.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this study is to investigate the influence of X on news fact-checking in contemporary times. The study sought to explore how X contributes to the spread of misinformation, how fact-checking mechanisms are employed to address these challenges, and how users perceive and respond to fact-checking efforts on the platform.

The objectives of this study are:

1. Examine the Influence of X on News Fact-Checking Process.
2. Evaluate the Effectiveness of Fact-Checking Mechanisms on X.
3. Assess User Awareness of Misinformation and Their Reactions to Fact-Checking on X.
4. Identify Challenges Associated with Fact-Checking on X.
5. Propose Recommendations for Improving Fact-Checking Mechanisms on X.

1.4 Research Questions

The research questions are designed to guide this study in systematically exploring the influence of X on news fact-checking.

1. What are the influences of X on news fact-checking process?
2. What mechanisms are used on X to combat misinformation?
3. What are the effects of fact-checking mechanism on X to users?
4. What challenges are associated with fact-checking on X?
5. What recommendations can improve the fact-checking mechanisms on X?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its potential to contribute to the broader understanding of how social media platforms, specifically X, influence the process of news fact-checking. The findings of this research are expected to provide valuable insights to journalists, fact-checkers, researchers, policymakers, and platform developers in their efforts to combat misinformation and enhance the reliability of information disseminated on X. The study's relevance extends across various domains, including journalism, social media governance, information literacy, and public policy.

Journalists and news organizations have increasingly relied on X as a tool for sourcing stories, disseminating news, and engaging with their audiences. However, the platform's vulnerability to misinformation presents challenges to journalistic integrity and credibility. This study would provide journalists with: A deeper understanding of how misinformation spreads on X and the challenges associated with verifying content in real-time, Insights into how fact-checking mechanisms, such as Community Notes, can be integrated into journalistic practices to improve accuracy, Recommendations for developing strategies to counter misinformation more effectively thereby enhancing the credibility of news organizations on X, Awareness of the psychological barriers users face when confronted with fact-checks, allowing journalists to craft more persuasive and accessible corrections. This study would provide news organizations with guidelines for effectively utilizing X as a tool for fact-checking and disseminating credible information (Sharifpoor & Okhovati, 2025).

Fact-checking organizations, such as PolitiFact, FactCheck.org, and Africa Check, play a critical role in identifying and debunking false information. However, their efforts are often hindered by the speed at which misinformation spreads on X. This study would benefit fact-checkers by: Evaluating the effectiveness of various fact-checking mechanisms employed on X, Identifying gaps in current fact-checking practices, such as inconsistency in labeling and delayed responses to viral misinformation, Offering recommendations for improving collaboration between fact-checkers, journalists, and platform developers to enhance credibility and reach, Proposing strategies for addressing biases and limitations inherent in decentralized fact-checking tools like Community Notes (Borenstein, Warren, & Elliott, 2025). Example: Research by Kumar (2024) emphasizes the importance of transparency and consistency in fact-checking methodologies. This study aims to provide fact-checking organizations with practical guidelines for enhancing their processes, thereby increasing public trust in their work.

Governments and regulatory bodies have a vested interest in ensuring that social media platforms do not become tools for spreading harmful misinformation. Effective policies are needed to address the challenges posed by platforms like X, particularly in relation to public health, political integrity, and social cohesion. This study would: Provide policymakers with evidence-based insights into how misinformation spreads on X and the limitations of current fact-checking efforts, Highlight the potential for collaboration between governments, social media companies, and independent fact-checkers, Suggest policy frameworks aimed at promoting transparency, accountability,

and standardization in fact-checking practices (Lelo, 2023), Address ethical concerns associated with content moderation and the balance between free expression and public safety. Example: During the U.S. Presidential Elections of 2020, misinformation aimed at discrediting the electoral process was widely circulated on X. This study's findings could help policymakers develop guidelines for improving the detection and correction of political misinformation on social media platforms (Cazzamatta & Sarisakaloglu, 2025).

The developers of X have introduced tools such as Community Notes to combat misinformation. However, questions remain about the effectiveness of these mechanisms and their ability to keep pace with the spread of falsehoods. This study would: Provide insights into the strengths and weaknesses of existing fact-checking tools on X, Suggest improvements to Community Notes and other automated systems to enhance their efficiency and accuracy, Recommend the development of standardized protocols for verifying information and disseminating corrections, Offer guidelines for enhancing collaboration with independent fact-checkers and news organizations to improve the credibility of content on X. Example: As highlighted by Borenstein, Warren, & Elliott (2025), Community Notes remains an experimental feature with significant potential but also notable limitations. This study would propose enhancements to such tools, thereby contributing to the ongoing efforts of X to address misinformation.

The academic community has shown a growing interest in understanding how social media platforms influence public discourse and information integrity. This study would: Contribute to the body of knowledge on the interaction between social media

platforms and fact-checking processes, Provide a framework for future research on misinformation and fact-checking across different platforms, Encourage interdisciplinary collaboration between researchers in journalism, communication studies, computer science, and public policy, Highlight gaps in existing literature and suggest avenues for further investigation. Example: Studies by Vasileiadou (2025) and Kumar (2024) have emphasized the need for standardized methodologies in assessing the effectiveness of fact-checking mechanisms. This research aims to build upon existing work by providing a comprehensive analysis of how X influences news fact-checking.

Ultimately, the findings of this study would benefit the general public by: Raising awareness of the prevalence of misinformation on X, Encouraging users to engage more critically with information shared on social media platforms, Providing guidelines for identifying credible sources and distinguishing between verified information and misinformation, Promoting digital media literacy and encouraging responsible online behavior. Example: The general public's awareness of fact-checking mechanisms and their ability to distinguish between credible and false information can have a significant impact on mitigating the spread of misinformation (Lelo, 2023).

1.6 Scope of Study

This study focused on examining the influence of X on news fact-checking in contemporary times. Specifically, it investigates how X contributes to the dissemination of misinformation, how fact-checking mechanisms are implemented to address misinformation, and how users respond to such efforts. The study also evaluated the

effectiveness of existing fact-checking mechanisms such as Community Notes (previously known as Birdwatch), third-party fact-checking organizations, and automated fact-checking tools.

The study's thematic focus is categorized into three main areas: Misinformation and Disinformation , Fact-Checking Mechanisms (Evaluating the tools, methodologies, and strategies used by X and independent organizations to combat misinformation) and User Perception and Response (Analyzing how users react to fact-checking efforts, including their awareness, trust, and engagement with fact-checking labels and corrections).

The scope of this study is justified by the need to understand how a widely used social media platform like X influences news fact-checking.

1.7 Operational Definition of Terms

This section provides clear definitions of key terms used throughout this study to enhance clarity and understanding. The terms are defined within the context of the research topic: "Influence of X on News Fact-Checking in Contemporary Times."

Algorithm: A set of rules or computational processes used by X to sort, prioritize, and recommend content to users. Algorithms influence what content appears on users' feeds, often prioritizing highly engaging posts over accurate or verified information. This study investigates how X's algorithms contribute to the spread of misinformation.

Community Notes (formerly Birdwatch): A decentralized fact-checking tool introduced by X that allows users to add contextual notes to potentially misleading tweets.

Community Notes is intended to enhance transparency and provide additional information to help users make informed judgments about the credibility of content.

Content Moderation: The process of monitoring and managing user-generated content on social media platforms to enforce policies against harmful or misleading information. This includes actions such as labeling tweets, suspending accounts, and removing false or harmful content.

Fact-Checking: The process of investigating and verifying the accuracy of claims, statements, and content to establish their truthfulness. Fact-checking involves assessing evidence, cross-referencing reliable sources, and providing corrections or clarifications when false information is identified. This study examines how fact-checking is implemented on X through tools like Community Notes and third-party organizations.

Gatekeeping: A theoretical concept describing the process by which information is filtered and controlled by individuals, organizations, or technological systems before reaching the public. On X, gatekeeping occurs through user-driven moderation (e.g., Community Notes), algorithmic filtering, and platform policies.

Information Disorder: A broad term encompassing **misinformation**, **disinformation**, and **malinformation**. Misinformation is false or inaccurate information shared without harmful intent. Disinformation is deliberately false or misleading information spread with the intent to deceive or manipulate audiences. Unlike misinformation, disinformation is purposely crafted to achieve political, economic, or social objectives. While malinformation refers to information that is accurate but deliberately shared to cause

harm. The concept of information disorder is essential for understanding the complexity of fact-checking on X.

Social Responsibility Theory: A theory in mass communication that emphasizes the ethical obligation of media platforms to provide accurate, unbiased, and reliable information to the public. This study explores how X addresses its social responsibility through fact-checking mechanisms and content moderation policies.

X: A social media platform launched in 2006 that allows users to share short messages called “tweets.” It is widely used for news dissemination, public discourse, and social networking. In this study, X refers to the platform’s rebranded identity, and its role in the spread of information and misinformation.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive review of existing literature related to the influence of X on news fact-checking. It begins by outlining the conceptual framework, which includes the definition of key concepts such as misinformation, disinformation, and fact-checking. This is followed by a discussion of relevant theoretical frameworks, including Agenda-Setting Theory, Framing Theory, and Uses and Gratifications Theory, which provide valuable insights into how X influences public discourse and information consumption. Additionally, this chapter reviews empirical studies examining the effectiveness of various fact-checking mechanisms employed on X, including those developed by independent organizations and X itself. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the gaps in existing literature and the need for further research to improve the reliability and scalability of fact-checking efforts on X.

2.2 Conceptual Review

2.2.1 Social Media

Social media platforms are digital technologies that facilitate the creation, sharing, and dissemination of information through virtual communities and networks. Unlike traditional media, social media platforms such as X provide users with the ability to publish content instantly, reaching vast audiences with minimal oversight (Borenstein, Warren, & Elliott, 2025).

X, specifically, has gained prominence as a real-time information-sharing platform where users can broadcast their thoughts, news, and opinions to followers globally. Its features, including hashtags, trending topics, retweets, likes, and algorithmic content prioritization, make it a powerful tool for disseminating information during critical events like political elections, natural disasters, and public health crises (Vasileiadou, 2025). While this democratization of information dissemination offers benefits such as instant access to news and diverse perspectives, it also poses significant challenges in ensuring the accuracy, credibility, and reliability of information. The absence of rigorous editorial oversight on X makes it particularly susceptible to misinformation and disinformation (Lelo, 2023).

Since its inception in 2006, X has evolved from a microblogging site into a global communication platform. Its influence on news reporting and public discourse has expanded rapidly, with journalists, politicians, organizations, and everyday users leveraging the platform to share information (Sharifpoor & Okhovati, 2025). The platform's design promotes user-generated content, allowing individuals to act as both content creators and consumers. As a result, X has become a vital tool for breaking news dissemination and live event coverage. However, the same features that make X a valuable information-sharing platform also contribute to the rapid spread of misinformation and disinformation. Unlike traditional news outlets, which typically apply editorial processes to verify information before publication, X allows anyone to publish content without prior scrutiny. Consequently, false or misleading information can gain

traction quickly through mechanisms such as retweets and trending topics (Kumar, 2024). Additionally, X's algorithmic structure prioritizes content based on engagement metrics rather than credibility. Posts that attract high levels of likes, retweets, and comments are more likely to appear on users' timelines, regardless of their factual accuracy. This engagement-driven model often promotes sensational content over reliable information (Vasileiadou, 2025).

2.2.2 Misinformation and Disinformation

Misinformation and disinformation continue to challenge media systems worldwide. Misinformation refers to inaccurate or false information shared without harmful intent, while disinformation is deliberately fabricated to mislead or manipulate audiences (Bakir & McStay, 2021). As both spread rapidly online, especially via social media, the task of verifying and correcting false claims—fact-checking—has gained renewed urgency. However, social media platforms complicate this task due to their structure, speed, and scale (Marwick & Lewis, 2020).

Recent studies show that social media's algorithm-driven content delivery prioritizes sensationalism and virality over factual integrity (Buchanan, 2022). Misinformation gains traction more easily when it confirms preexisting biases, leading to echo chambers and filter bubbles (Cinelli et al., 2021). Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok have been linked to the rapid dissemination of false information during critical periods such as elections, pandemics, and wars (Newton & Lazer, 2022). Furthermore, the shift from professional journalism to user-generated content on these

platforms dilutes the gatekeeping function once held by traditional media. This enables the amplification of unchecked claims, especially when influencers or bots drive engagement (Guess et al., 2020).

Despite the proliferation of fact-checking organizations and tools, research reveals several limitations. First, the reactive nature of most fact-checking efforts means that misinformation has often gone viral by the time it is corrected (Walter et al., 2021). Second, even when corrections are issued, they often fail to dislodge the initial belief due to belief perseverance and motivated reasoning (Porter & Wood, 2021). Additionally, fact-checkers must contend with the distrust of mainstream media and accusations of bias, especially in polarized environments (Pennycook & Rand, 2021). As a result, some audiences may dismiss fact-checks outright or interpret them as partisan.

Both misinformation and disinformation are prevalent on X, particularly during high-profile events where unverified information spreads rapidly. Studies have shown that emotionally charged or sensational content tends to be shared more frequently, contributing to the rapid dissemination of falsehoods (Borenstein, Warren, & Elliott, 2025). The proliferation of misinformation on X highlights the need for effective fact-checking mechanisms capable of countering false narratives in real-time. However, the decentralized nature of the platform complicates efforts to identify, verify, and correct misleading information (Sharifpoor & Okhovati, 2025).

2.2.3 Fact-Checking on Social Media

Fact-checking refers to the process of investigating and verifying the accuracy of claims, statements, and information (Graves, 2016). It aims to ensure that audiences are provided with truthful, credible, and reliable content. On X, fact-checking mechanisms include both institutional efforts and user-driven initiatives. Organizations such as PolitiFact, FactCheck.org, Snopes, and Africa Check have developed frameworks for monitoring and verifying content shared on X. These entities often collaborate with social media companies to provide accurate information to users (Kumar, 2024).

Introduced by X as a decentralized fact-checking tool, Community Notes (formerly Birdwatch) allows users to annotate misleading tweets by providing additional context or corrections. While the tool represents an attempt to democratize the fact-checking process, concerns about bias, scalability, and credibility remain (Borenstein, Warren, & Elliott, 2025). Understanding how users interact with fact-checking mechanisms is crucial for evaluating their effectiveness. Research has shown that users' perceptions, biases, and cognitive factors play a significant role in how they respond to fact-checks.

- ❖ Confirmation Bias: The tendency to accept information that aligns with pre-existing beliefs while rejecting contradictory information.
- ❖ Motivated Reasoning: The inclination to process information in a way that supports desired conclusions.

- ❖ **Backfire Effect:** When fact-checking attempts reinforce rather than correct false beliefs (Lelo, 2023).

These psychological factors can undermine the effectiveness of fact-checking efforts, particularly when users view corrections as politically motivated or ideologically biased. The way X's algorithms prioritize content based on engagement metrics rather than credibility is a critical concern in the fight against misinformation. Research indicates that emotionally charged content tends to be promoted over factual information, contributing to the rapid spread of falsehoods (Vasileiadou, 2025). Efforts to adjust algorithms to promote credible information have been implemented but remain inadequate, as misinformation often spreads faster than corrections can be applied (Sharifpoor & Okhovati, 2025). The conceptual framework highlights the interplay between X's structural features, misinformation, disinformation, fact-checking mechanisms, user behavior, and algorithmic influence. Understanding these elements is essential for evaluating the effectiveness of fact-checking mechanisms on X and proposing improvements to enhance their credibility and reach.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework serves as the foundation upon which this study is built, providing insights into the relationship between X, news fact-checking, and the dissemination of information. The selected theories are critical in understanding how information is created, spread, and perceived by audiences on X. This section discusses three key theories: Agenda-Setting Theory, Framing Theory, and Uses and Gratifications

Theory are examined to provide a comprehensive understanding of how information flows and interacts with users on X.

2.3.1 Agenda-Setting Theory

Developed by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in the 1970s, the Agenda-Setting Theory proposes that the media plays a powerful role in shaping public perception by influencing what issues are considered important. According to this theory, media outlets do not necessarily tell people what to think but rather what to think about by highlighting specific topics and giving them prominence over others (McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

Application to X:

- ❖ On X, the trending topics feature and retweet mechanisms function as agenda-setting tools by prioritizing certain narratives.
- ❖ Content that garners high engagement often receives more visibility, which shapes public discourse.
- ❖ The platform's algorithm-driven structure amplifies topics based on popularity rather than credibility, making it susceptible to misinformation and disinformation (Lelo, 2023).

Relevance to Fact-Checking:

- ❖ Fact-checking efforts on X are influenced by what issues gain traction on the platform.

- ❖ High-profile misinformation incidents are more likely to be addressed due to their visibility, while less popular but equally harmful content may go unchecked.
- ❖ The prioritization of sensational or emotionally charged content over accurate information complicates the agenda-setting process.

2.3.2 Framing Theory

Introduced by Erving Goffman (1974) and later expanded by scholars like Robert Entman (1993), Framing Theory focuses on how information is presented and structured to influence audience interpretation. Unlike agenda-setting, which emphasizes the prominence of topics, framing emphasizes how topics are contextualized, emphasized, or downplayed.

Application to X:

- ❖ Content creators on X often frame information to elicit specific emotional responses or to support ideological positions.
- ❖ The use of hashtags, memes, and selective reporting serves as framing tools to guide audience interpretation.
- ❖ News organizations, activists, and influential users often frame issues to gain support or provoke reactions from their followers (Borenstein, Warren, & Elliott, 2025).

Relevance to Fact-Checking:

- ❖ Fact-checking itself involves framing. The presentation of corrective information, such as labels, annotations, and explanations, influences how users perceive the credibility of the correction.
- ❖ Bias in fact-checking can emerge if the framing of corrections aligns with particular ideological or political positions.
- ❖ The framing of misinformation as “fake news” or “alternative facts” can undermine public trust in legitimate fact-checking efforts (Kumar, 2024).

2.3.3 Uses and Gratifications Theory

The Uses and Gratifications Theory, developed by Blumler and Katz (1974), suggests that individuals actively select media channels to satisfy specific needs and desires. Unlike passive audience theories, this approach views users as active participants who seek content for purposes such as information, entertainment, social interaction, personal identity, and escapism.

Application to X:

- Users engage with X to receive immediate news updates, interact with others, express opinions, and gain social validation.
- The platform’s interactive nature allows users to participate in discussions, share information, and contribute to public discourse.
- User-generated content is influenced by personal interests, social affiliations, and cultural preferences (Vasileiadou, 2025).

Relevance to Fact-Checking:

- Users may ignore fact-checking mechanisms if they do not align with their personal interests or beliefs.
- The effectiveness of fact-checking is influenced by users' motivations for using the platform (e.g., entertainment vs. seeking factual information).
- Some users may deliberately spread misinformation to gain attention, validation, or social status.

2.4 Empirical Review

The empirical review explores various studies conducted between 2020 and 2025 that examine the influence of X on news fact-checking. These studies provide insights into the effectiveness, limitations, and challenges associated with fact-checking mechanisms on the platform.

Several studies have attempted to evaluate the effectiveness of fact-checking efforts on X, particularly during critical events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, political elections, and social movements. Ejaz, Altay & Ittefaq (2025) examined the effectiveness of fact-checks in Pakistan and user engagement with them. Their findings indicated that users are more likely to interact with fact-checks that are presented concisely and supported by credible sources. However, they also noted that emotional biases significantly affect how users perceive fact-checking content. Marcondes et al. (2024) conducted a study on emotional and cognitive reinforcement techniques aimed at enhancing the dissemination of fact-checks. Their research highlighted the importance of

framing and contextualizing corrections to reduce resistance and enhance credibility. Sharifpoor & Okhovati (2025) focused on classifying and fact-checking health-related information about COVID-19 using machine learning and deep learning models. They found that automated systems, while effective in identifying misinformation, struggled with contextual nuances.

Kanozia (2025) argues that the decentralized nature of X's fact-checking systems, such as Community Notes (formerly Birdwatch), often leads to inconsistent moderation. Users' contributions to fact-checking are susceptible to biases, particularly during politically sensitive events. Siwakoti, Yadav & Bariletto (2021) studied how the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the evolution of fact-checking mechanisms. Their findings suggest that the speed at which misinformation spreads on X often outpaces the response capacity of fact-checking organizations. Aruguete & Calvo (2024) explored the sharing of fact-checking corrections in polarized political environments. They found that users are less likely to accept corrections that challenge their political beliefs, a phenomenon consistent with cognitive dissonance theory.

Research has also focused on identifying effective strategies for enhancing fact-checking on X. Cazzamatta & Sarisakaloğlu (2025) examined the use of AI-supported fact-checking tools in journalism. They concluded that while AI systems can efficiently detect misinformation, their ability to provide accurate corrections is often limited by inadequate contextual understanding. Bhuiyan & Sultana (2025) reviewed 21 case studies related to fake news classification using natural language processing (NLP). Their

findings indicate that while NLP tools can identify misleading content, they require continuous updates to address evolving misinformation tactics. How users perceive and engage with fact-checking efforts plays a crucial role in determining their effectiveness. Lelo (2023) examined the consistency of fact-checking in political debates. His findings suggest that the effectiveness of fact-checks is often undermined by users' cognitive biases and the framing of corrective messages. Yousuf (2025) studied the influence of traditional news media fact-checking on X, noting that mainstream media's corrections often fail to reach audiences exposed to misinformation.

Nwabuokei (2025) examined the role of digital influencers in shaping political and cultural narratives on X, highlighting their influence in spreading both accurate and misleading information. The study emphasizes the need for collaborative fact-checking networks involving influencers to enhance credibility. Hill (2022) from the OECD highlights the challenges of regulating misinformation on X and the role of fact-checking organizations like NewsGuard. The study proposes standardized policy frameworks for verifying digital content, including tools for generating fact-checking boxes and labels.

Chambers (2023) investigated the impact of news literacy programs aimed at enhancing users' ability to distinguish between factual and false information on X. The findings suggest that educational interventions significantly improve critical thinking skills, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of fact-checking mechanisms. Szakacs & Bognar (2021) explored the use of fact-checking tools in monitoring misinformation related to migrants and minority groups. Their study highlights the difficulty of

distinguishing between genuine misinformation and exaggerated claims that exploit sensitive topics for propaganda.

Loh & Mustaffa (2022) analyzed social media discourse on the Russia-Ukraine conflict and how fact-checking was employed to counter propaganda. They found that fact-checking efforts were often overshadowed by highly emotional narratives that gained more visibility. Bhattacharya, Agarwal & Poudel (2024) examined the use of AI in detecting misinformation on X. While AI models showed proficiency in identifying false claims, their ability to provide accurate explanations was limited, necessitating human oversight. Soprano, Roitero & Gadiraju (2024) studied the effectiveness of community-driven fact-checking initiatives and found that users' willingness to participate is heavily influenced by their belief systems and ideological leanings.

The studies reviewed demonstrate various aspects of fact-checking on X, including the role of digital influencers, user perceptions, AI systems, policy frameworks, and community-driven initiatives. The challenges posed by user biases, algorithmic amplification of sensational content, and the inconsistent application of fact-checking tools highlight the complexity of combating misinformation on the platform. Additionally, the studies suggest that integrating technological advancements with educational programs, collaborative networks, and enhanced policy frameworks is essential for improving the efficacy of fact-checking mechanisms. The effectiveness of these mechanisms depends not only on technological improvements but also on addressing the social and cognitive factors that influence how users interact with fact-checks.

2.5 Summary of Literature Review

This chapter has reviewed the conceptualization of X as a news dissemination platform, the definition of misinformation and disinformation, and the theories relevant to understanding the spread of false information on X. Additionally, empirical studies on fact-checking mechanisms and their effectiveness have been discussed. The next chapter will present the research methodology employed for this study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the research methodology that will be adopted for the study on the influence of X on news fact-checking in contemporary times. It describes the research design, population of the study, sampling technique, method of data collection, and data analysis procedures. The methodology is designed to ensure a systematic and objective approach in gathering, analysing, and interpreting data relevant to the study. By adopting appropriate research techniques, this chapter aims to provide reliable and valid findings that contribute to a deeper understanding of the subject matter. The details are presented under the following sub-headings:

- ❖ Research Design
- ❖ Population of the study
- ❖ Sample size
- ❖ Sampling technique
- ❖ Instrument of data collection
- ❖ Validity of the instrument
- ❖ Reliability of the instrument
- ❖ Method of data collection
- ❖ Method of data analysis

3.1 Research Design

The research design serves as the blueprint for systematically conducting the study, guiding the processes of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. The researcher adopted a Descriptive Survey Design, which is commonly used to collect quantitative and qualitative data from a target population to describe existing conditions, opinions, perceptions, and practices (Kumar, 2020).

Descriptive survey design is suitable for investigating the influence of X on news fact-checking because it allows for the collection of diverse data from a wide range of participants, including general users, fact-checkers, journalists, digital influencers, and policymakers. According to Creswell (2014), descriptive research aims to provide accurate descriptions of phenomena as they naturally occur, without manipulating variables. The design also facilitated the use of multiple data collection methods, such as questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis, to gather comprehensive insights into user interactions with fact-checking mechanisms, the effectiveness of decentralized tools like Community Notes, and the challenges associated with combating misinformation on X (Borenstein, Warren, & Elliott, 2025).

Furthermore, the descriptive survey design enabled the researcher to generate both numerical and descriptive data, which were analyzed statistically and thematically. This approach ensured that the research findings were robust, reliable, and relevant to the objectives of the study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

3.2 Population of the Study

The population of a study refers to the entire group of individuals or entities that possess the characteristics relevant to the research problem (Kumar, 2020). In this study, the target population comprised various stakeholders involved in the dissemination, consumption, and verification of news on X in University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State. The population of this study was drawn from the undergraduate students of University of Benin which amount to 77,000.

3.3 Sample Size

Due to the impossible factor of examining the whole element of the population, the Cochran sample size determination formula which is used to calculate and determine the sample size of a larger population was adopted which is:

Formula: $N = n / [1 + (n/p)]$

N= sample size, n= estimated sample, and p = population of study

The estimated sample for this sample is 200

Therefore;

$$N = 200 / [1 + (200/77,000)]$$

$$N = 200 / [1 + 0.0025974026]$$

$$N = 200 / 1.0025974$$

$$N = 199.5$$

$$N = 200$$

Therefore for the purpose of this study, the sample size used for this research is 200.

The sample size was determined based on the need to obtain a balanced representation of the various stakeholders involved. A total of 200 participants were selected for this study, distributed as follows:

Category	Number of Respondents
General Users of X	120
Fact-Checkers and Researchers	40
Journalists and Digital Influencers	20
Policymakers	20
Total	200

Source: Online survey, 2025.

The selection of 200 participants is intended to provide a comprehensive perspective on the influence of X on news fact-checking, ensuring that both qualitative and quantitative data can be effectively collected and analyzed.

3.4 Sampling Techniques

According to Nwana (2005), sampling techniques are procedures adopted to systematically select the chosen sample in a specified way under controls.

This study employed a Purposive Sampling Technique, which is a type of non-probability sampling that involves selecting participants based on their relevance, experience, and knowledge of the research topic. Purposive sampling is suitable for this study because it allows the researcher to intentionally target individuals who are actively involved in news dissemination, fact-checking, or public discourse on X (Creswell, 2014).

The rationale for choosing this technique is to gather information from participants who are directly impacted by fact-checking mechanisms on X.

3.5 Instruments of Data Collection

For this study, questionnaire was employed to collect comprehensive data on the influence of X on news fact-checking. Research instruments are the tools and techniques used to gather data from participants to answer the research questions and achieve the research objectives. The choice of instruments was determined by the research design, nature of the study, and the type of data needed (Kumar, 2020).

3.6 Validity of Instrument

Validity refers to the extent to which an instrument measures what it is intended to measure (Creswell, 2014; Asemah, 2009). An instrument is valid to the extent that it is tailored to achieve the research objectives. The researcher constructed the questionnaire for the study and submitted it to the project supervisor who used his intellectual knowledge to critically, analytically and logically examine the instruments, relevance of the contents and statements and then made the instrument valid for the study.

3.7 Reliability of Instrument

To ensure the internal consistency of the research instrument, a pilot study was conducted involving 20 randomly selected participants who were not part of the final sample. Their responses were analyzed using the Cronbach's Alpha reliability test. The results of the analysis produced a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.84, indicating a high level of internal consistency and reliability of the questionnaire. According to Nunnally

(1978), a reliability coefficient of 0.70 or above is considered acceptable in social science research. Therefore, the instrument was deemed reliable for full-scale administration.

3.8 Method of Data Collection

For the study, the researcher shared questionnaire directly with the respondents. The survey asked pertinent questions about demographics and section on the influence of X on news fact-checking. Some were completed immediately, while others were returned later.

3.9 Method of Data Analysis

The method of data analysis refers to the systematic process of examining, organizing, and interpreting collected data to address the research questions and achieve the study's objectives. In this study, data collected from respondents were analyzed through the use of frequency tables and simple percentages. Frequency tables were used to enhance easy and comprehensive interpretation of Data collected and collated, so as to show findings in a simplified form. Also, frequency tables were used to statistically present data in a less complex form.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, statistical data collected from respondents were collated, classified, and presented in the simplest form to make the key feature of the study easily grasped and interpreted.

4.1 Data Presentation

Section A: Respondents' Demographics

Variable	Category	Frequency	Estimated Score (Out of 200)
Sex	Male	39%	78
	Female	61%	122
Age	18 – 25	81%	162
	26 – 35	15%	30
	36 – 45	2.5%	5
	46 and above	1.5%	3
Occupation	Student	84%	168
	Journalist	3.5%	7
	Fact-checker	8%	16
	Digital Influencer	2%	4
	Policy maker	2.5%	5
Education Level	Secondary School Certificate	11%	22
	Diploma/OND/NCE	2%	4

Bachelor's Degree	78%	156
Master's Degree	6.5%	13
Doctorate (PhD)	2.5%	5

Source: Online survey, 2025.

Section B: Respondents' Psychographic Data

Variable	Category	Frequency	Estimated Score (Out of 200)
Frequency of X Usage	Daily	76.5%	153
	Weekly	12%	24
	Monthly	1.5%	3
	Rarely	6%	12
	Never	4%	8
Awareness of Fact-checking mechanisms on X	Yes	24.5%	49
	No	75.5%	151
Frequency of Misinformation or Unverified Information on X	Very Often	1%	2
	Often	6.5%	13
	Occasionally	16.5%	33
	Rarely	56.5%	113
	Never	19.5%	39

Frequency of Engagement with Fact-checking content on X	Very frequently	10.5%	21
	Frequently	73.5%	147
	Occasionally	8.5%	17
	Rarely	6%	12
	Never	1.5%	3
Credibility of Fact-checking mechanisms on X	Very Credible	56%	112
	Credible	28.5%	57
	Neutral	12%	24
	Not Credible	3.5%	7
Effectiveness of Community Note in Combating Misinformation	Very Effective	8.5%	17
	Effective	30.5%	61
	Moderately Effective	54.5%	109
	Ineffective	5.5%	11
	Very Ineffective	1%	2
Fact-checking tools on X reduce Misinformation	Strongly Agree	68.5%	137
	Agree	21%	42
	Neutral	8.5%	17
	Disagree	1.5%	3

I trust Fact-checking Labels and Warnings on X	Strongly Disagree	0.5%	1
	Strongly Agree	23%	46
	Agree	71.5%	143
	Neutral	4.5%	9
	Disagree	1%	2
Misinformation spreads faster than Fact-checks	Strongly Agree	100%	200
Community Notes are useful for providing context to Misleading Posts	Strongly Agree	96.5%	193
Users actively engage with fact-checking efforts on X	Agree	2%	4
	Neutral	1.5%	3
	Strongly Agree	11.5%	23
	Agree	13.5%	27
	Neutral	67%	134
	Disagree	5.5%	11
	Strongly Disagree	2.5%	5
	Strongly Agree	34.5%	69
I am more likely to believe a fact-check when it comes from verified account	Agree	36%	72
	Neutral	18.5%	37
	Disagree	6.5%	13

Emotional and sensational content affects the credibility of fact-checking	Strongly Disagree	4.5%	9
	Strongly Agree	9.5%	19
	Agree	16.5%	33
	Neutral	6%	12
	Disagree	13.5%	27
Misinformation on X influences public opinion on critical issues	Strongly Disagree	54.5%	109
	Strongly Agree	75.5%	151
	Agree	13%	26
	Neutral	7.5%	15
	Disagree	2.5%	5
Challenges encountered with fact-checking on X	Strongly Disagree	1.5%	3
	Lack of awareness	4%	8
	Bias in Fact-checking	1.5%	3
	Inconsistent application of Fact-checking tools	3.5%	7
	Misinformation spreads faster than corrections	70.5%	141
	Limited accessibility of fact-checks	19.5%	39

Recommendations to improve the effectiveness of fact-checking mechanisms on X	Lack of Trust in Fact-checking organizations	1%	2
	Enhancing user education on fact-checking tools	30.5%	61
	Improving the visibility of fact-checks	9.5%	19
	Ensuring neutrality and transparency in fact-checking	49.5%	99
	Collaborating with reliable fact-checking organizations	6%	12
	Using artificial intelligence for real-time fact-checking	4.5%	9

Source: Online survey, 2025.

4.2 Data Analysis

The data reveals that the majority of respondents (61%) are female and a significant portion (81%) fall within the 18–25 age bracket. Most of them (84%) are students, and 78% possess a bachelor's degree. This youthful, educated demographic is highly active online and represents a generation that heavily engages with digital platforms like X. The dominance of young, educated users implies a digitally literate population, making them ideal subjects for studying misinformation and fact-checking

trends. Their academic orientation may also influence their attitudes toward information credibility.

About 76.5% of the respondents use X daily, while 12% use it weekly. Only a small fraction rarely or never use the platform. High daily usage indicates that X is a major channel of communication and information among the target audience. The platform is deeply embedded in their daily routines, making it a significant vector for both credible news and misinformation.

Only 24.5% of the participants are aware of fact-checking tools like Community Notes, while a striking 75.5% are not. Despite frequent use of X, awareness of available fact-checking mechanisms is alarmingly low. This reflects a significant information literacy gap, indicating that even active users may not know how to verify the information they consume.

Most respondents (56.5%) believe misinformation occurs rarely on X, while 19.5% believe it never occurs. This perception contrasts with research findings that emphasize the rampant nature of misinformation on social media. The discrepancy suggests that users may not always recognize false information or may underestimate its prevalence.

A large portion (73.5%) report frequently engaging with fact-checking content, though only 10.5% do so very frequently. While users encounter fact-checking content, their engagement is mostly passive. They are likely to read or acknowledge it but not actively participate in or contribute to fact-checking efforts.

Approximately 71.5% of respondents trust fact-checking labels and warnings on X, and 56% consider these tools “very credible.” Trust in fact-checking tools is high among users, reinforcing the idea that enhancing visibility and accessibility could significantly improve misinformation mitigation.

While 96.5% believe Community Notes are useful, only 8.5% consider them “very effective,” with 54.5% rating them as only moderately effective. The usefulness of Community Notes is acknowledged, but users are unsure of its impact. This may stem from inconsistent exposure to these tools or their limited visibility on the platform.

All respondents (100%) agree that misinformation spreads faster than fact-checks. This unanimous response confirms the challenge of delayed corrections. It highlights the need for proactive strategies to detect and counter misinformation before it goes viral.

A large majority (96.5%) believe Community Notes provide useful context to misleading posts. When fact-checking tools are visible and contextual, they are appreciated by users. The problem lies not in acceptance, but in distribution and reach.

A majority of respondents (67%) remain neutral toward actively engaging in fact-checking initiatives on X. There is a notable gap between trust in fact-checks and willingness to participate in the process. This passivity could be due to time constraints, perceived irrelevance, or lack of knowledge about how to contribute.

Over 70% of users stated they are more likely to believe fact-checks when they come from verified accounts. The source of a fact-check heavily influences its perceived

credibility. Verified profiles are trusted more, implying that partnerships with reputable institutions and verified users could boost fact-checking acceptance.

Surprisingly, 54.5% strongly disagreed that emotional or sensational content undermines the credibility of fact-checking. This contradicts existing literature, which shows emotional content often distorts factual perception. The finding may be due to the academic nature of the sample, suggesting a population more resilient to emotionally manipulative content.

About 75.5% strongly agree that misinformation on X shapes public opinion. Users recognize the power of X in influencing public discourse and decision-making. This makes fact-checking more critical in managing narratives during elections, health crises, and other sensitive periods.

The leading challenge identified (70.5%) is the faster spread of misinformation compared to corrections. Others include limited accessibility, inconsistent enforcement, and bias in fact-checking. The effectiveness of fact-checking is undermined by both technical (e.g., algorithmic delays) and structural (e.g., lack of standardization) barriers. These must be addressed systematically to make any long-term impact.

The data reveals that while users trust and occasionally engage with fact-checking content on X, there is a significant lack of awareness about available tools like Community Notes. Despite the trust in credible fact-checking sources, most engagement is passive. Misinformation continues to spread at a faster rate than corrections, and while users are aware of its influence, they rarely take active roles in curbing it. Therefore,

increasing awareness, improving visibility, encouraging user participation, and ensuring neutrality and transparency are essential for strengthening fact-checking efforts on the platform.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

4.3.1 RESEARCH QUESTION 1: What are the influences of X on the news fact-checking process?

The study found that 100% of respondents agreed that misinformation spreads faster than fact-checks, and 75.5% believed that misinformation on X shapes public opinion. This supports Siwakoti, Yadav, and Bariletto (2021), who emphasized that misinformation gains momentum faster than corrections, particularly during public emergencies. Lelo (2023) also argued that X's algorithm prioritizes emotional content, accelerating the spread of misleading information. From a theoretical perspective, Agenda-Setting Theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) explains how X influences what users consider important. The virality of misinformation allows it to dominate public discourse, thereby setting the agenda. Additionally, Framing Theory (Entman, 1993) illustrates how misleading content can shape how users interpret events, especially when it is emotionally charged or ideologically driven.

4.3.2 RESEARCH QUESTION 2: What mechanisms are used on X to combat misinformation?

Only 24.5% of respondents were aware of Community Notes, but 96.5% found it helpful. However, only 8.5% considered it very effective. This finding aligns with Ejaz et al. (2025), who found that decentralized fact-checking is often poorly understood and underutilized. Similarly, Kanozia (2025) observed that user-driven moderation suffers from inconsistency and limited reach. Uses and Gratifications Theory helps explain this pattern many users are not actively seeking factual content but rather entertainment or social interaction. This disconnect reduces their engagement with fact-checking tools. Gatekeeping Theory also sheds light on how X's decentralized information environment makes it difficult to enforce uniform standards of accuracy.

4.3.3 RESEARCH QUESTION 3: What are the effects of fact-checking mechanisms on users?

While 68.5% agreed that fact-checking reduces misinformation, and 71.5% trust fact-checking labels, only a small proportion actively engage in fact-checking. Pennycook and Rand (2021) assert that trust in the source is crucial for effectiveness. Similarly, Chambers (2023) highlighted the importance of media literacy in increasing user interaction with fact-checking. Framing Theory supports the notion that the presentation of a fact-check significantly affects how users interpret and accept it. Meanwhile, Uses and Gratifications Theory explains the neutrality or passivity among

users; they may trust fact-checks but are not personally motivated to verify information unless it aligns with their needs or beliefs.

4.3.4 RESEARCH QUESTION 4: What challenges are associated with fact-checking on X?

The main challenge, as identified by 70.5% of respondents, is the speed at which misinformation spreads. Other issues include inconsistent application, limited accessibility, bias, and lack of awareness. These challenges are consistent with findings by Bhattacharya et al. (2024) and Marwick and Lewis (2020), who noted that algorithmic amplification and belief perseverance hinder the correction of falsehoods. From a theoretical standpoint, Agenda-Setting Theory indicates that only high-profile falsehoods receive correctional focus, allowing smaller-scale misinformation to persist. Framing Theory suggests that corrections perceived as biased can damage public trust, thus reducing their effectiveness.

4.3.5 RESEARCH QUESTION 5: What recommendations can improve the fact-checking mechanisms on X?

Recommendations include promoting neutrality and transparency (49.5%), educating users (30.5%), enhancing visibility, and integrating AI. These suggestions support Kumar (2024), who emphasized the role of transparent protocols in building public trust. Cazzamatta and Sarisakaloğlu (2025) also advocated for using AI for quicker misinformation detection but warned against losing context in automation. Gatekeeping Theory and Framing Theory support these recommendations, emphasizing the need for

standardized, impartial, and accessible corrections. Uses and Gratifications Theory implies that tools must be more user-oriented, serving users' specific informational needs to ensure active engagement.

The discussion of findings demonstrates a strong correlation between this study and existing literature and theories. The findings support the Agenda-Setting and Framing Theories by highlighting how misinformation not only dominates attention but also shapes perception. Uses and Gratifications Theory and Gatekeeping Theory offer further insight into why users might ignore or distrust fact-checking mechanisms. Overall, effective combat against misinformation on X requires a multi-dimensional approach: transparent systems, algorithmic fairness, improved digital literacy, and user-centered fact-checking tools.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

This study set out to investigate the influence of X (formerly Twitter) on news fact-checking in contemporary times, particularly among students of the University of Benin. The research aimed to assess the level of awareness, perception, and engagement of users with fact-checking mechanisms on X.

The major findings of the study are as follows:

1. **High Usage but Low Awareness:** A significant number of respondents use X daily (76.5%), indicating its role as a primary source of information. However, awareness of fact-checking tools such as Community Notes is relatively low (24.5%).
2. **Moderate Exposure to Misinformation:** Although misinformation is prevalent, most users (56.5%) believe they rarely encounter it, which may be due to a lack of recognition or underestimation of misinformation.
3. **Passive Engagement with Fact-Checking:** While 73.5% claim to engage with fact-checking content, this engagement is largely passive. Active participation in identifying and reporting misinformation remains low.
4. **High Trust in Fact-Checking Mechanisms:** The majority of respondents trust fact-checking content, especially when it comes from verified or credible sources.

About 71.5% expressed confidence in the accuracy of fact-checking labels on the platform.

5. **Community Notes and Credibility:** Most users who are aware of Community Notes consider them useful and moderately effective, even though visibility and consistency of these tools remain challenges.
6. **Challenges Identified:** Key challenges include the rapid spread of misinformation, limited user awareness, inconsistent application of fact-checks, and concerns over neutrality.
7. **Recommendations by Respondents:** Suggestions included promoting transparency and neutrality, increasing awareness and education on digital literacy, improving the visibility of fact-checking content, and deploying real-time AI tools to detect misinformation.

5.2 Conclusion

The findings of this study show that while X is a major hub for information consumption among young Nigerians, its fact-checking features are underutilized and not well-known among users. There is a general willingness to trust fact-checking content, but the mechanisms remain limited in visibility and impact. Misinformation continues to thrive largely because it spreads faster than corrections can be made, and because many users either do not recognize false content or do not know how to verify it.

Therefore, the influence of X on news fact-checking is twofold: while it has the tools and potential to combat misinformation, its effectiveness is hindered by structural,

educational, and technological gaps. There is a need to bridge these gaps through awareness campaigns, platform improvements, and user involvement in fact-checking initiatives.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Increase Awareness of Fact-Checking Tools:** X should invest in user education by promoting the existence and purpose of tools like Community Notes more visibly on users' timelines.
2. **Improve Accessibility and Visibility:** Fact-checks and corrections should be made more prominent and timely. Algorithms should prioritize verified fact-checking content, especially for trending misinformation.
3. **Encourage User Participation:** X should create incentives for users to report or contribute to fact-checking, thereby increasing engagement and the speed of corrections.
4. **Ensure Neutrality and Transparency:** To build trust, X must enforce policies that guarantee unbiased application of fact-checking tools, regardless of political or social leaning.
5. **Integrate AI for Real-Time Detection:** Advanced AI tools should be deployed to flag and correct misinformation in real-time before it goes viral.

6. **Digital Media Literacy Education:** Institutions like the University of Benin should incorporate digital media literacy into their curriculum to help students critically evaluate online content.
7. **Collaboration with Verified Institutions:** Fact-checking collaborations with credible organizations and experts should be encouraged to increase content legitimacy and user trust.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Studies

Future researchers could explore:

- The psychological factors that influence whether users accept or reject fact-checks on X.
- A comparative study between X and other social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, TikTok) in terms of misinformation and fact-checking engagement.
- The impact of misinformation on real-life events such as elections, health behaviors, or public protests.
- An evaluation of how regional and cultural factors affect the effectiveness of digital fact-checking in Nigeria.

5.5 Contribution to Knowledge

This study makes several important contributions to the existing body of knowledge on misinformation, digital journalism, and media ethics in the age of social media. First and foremost, it adds empirical evidence to the discourse on the efficacy and perception of decentralized fact-checking tools, particularly Community Notes on X.

While previous studies have explored fact-checking generally, this research specifically highlights user trust levels, engagement rates, and perceived effectiveness within the context of a rapidly evolving platform environment.

Secondly, the study contributes to the understanding of user awareness and behavioral patterns related to misinformation. The finding that a majority of respondents trust fact-checking labels but remain neutral toward active engagement with them points to a behavioral gap that has been underexplored in current literature. This insight provides a foundation for designing user-centered interventions aimed at encouraging proactive verification behavior.

Thirdly, this research illuminates the importance of credibility and source trust, with respondents indicating a preference for fact-checks that originate from verified accounts. This finding advances theoretical discussions around framing and gatekeeping on digital platforms, reinforcing the notion that trust in information is heavily influenced by the perceived authority of its source.

Additionally, the study offers practical and policy-relevant recommendations grounded in user feedback, including the need for neutrality, transparency, and enhanced education. These contributions extend beyond academia and can inform the strategic decisions of platform developers, journalists, fact-checking organizations, and policymakers seeking to combat misinformation more effectively.

Lastly, by situating its analysis within the Nigerian context, this study contributes valuable regional data to a field often dominated by research from Western countries. It

provides a culturally specific perspective on misinformation, digital literacy, and public discourse, thereby enriching the global conversation on media ethics and democratic communication in the digital age.

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APPENDIX

Department of Mass Communication,
Faculty of Arts,
University of Benin,
Benin City.

Dear Respondent,

I am a researcher conducting a study on the **THE INFLUENCE OF X ON NEWS FACT-CHECKING IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES**. This questionnaire is designed to gather information about your experiences, perceptions, and interactions with fact-checking mechanisms on X. Your responses will be treated **confidentially** and used solely for academic purposes. Kindly respond to the questions as accurately as possible.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours faithfully,

Augustine Agu CHRISTOPHER
Researcher

QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION A: Demographic Information (Please tick [✓] where appropriate)

1. **Gender:**

☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Others

2. **Age:**

☐ 18–25 years ☐ 26 – 35 years ☐ 36 – 45 years ☐ 46 years and above

3. **Occupation:**

☐ Student ☐ Journalist ☐ Fact-Checker ☐ Digital Influencer

☐ Policymaker ☐ General User of X ☐ Others (Specify):

4. **Educational Level:**

☐ Secondary School Certificate

☐ Diploma/OND/NCE

☐ Bachelor's Degree

☐ Master's Degree

☐ Doctorate (PhD)

☐ Others (Specify): _____

5. **Frequency of X (Formerly Twitter) Usage:**

☐ Daily

☐ Weekly

☐ Monthly

☐ Rarely

☐ Never

SECTION B: User Perception and Engagement

(Please tick [✓] the option that best describes your opinion)

6. **Are you aware of fact-checking mechanisms on X (e.g., Community Notes, fact-checking labels, etc.)?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

7. **How often do you encounter misinformation or unverified information on X?**

☐ Very Often

☐ Often

☐ Occasionally

☐ Rarely

☐ Never

8. **How frequently do you engage with fact-checking content on X?**

☐ Very Frequently

☐ Frequently

☐ Occasionally

☐ Rarely

☐ Never

9. **How credible do you find fact-checking mechanisms on X?**

☐ Very Credible

- ☐ Credible
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Not Credible
- ☐ Very Not Credible

10. To what extent do you believe that Community Notes (formerly Birdwatch) is effective in combating misinformation?

- ☐ Very Effective
- ☐ Effective
- ☐ Moderately Effective
- ☐ Ineffective
- ☐ Very Ineffective

SECTION C: Effectiveness of Fact-Checking Mechanisms

(Use the scale: Strongly Agree [SA], Agree [A], Neutral [N], Disagree [D], Strongly Disagree [SD])

Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
11. Fact-checking tools on X help reduce misinformation.					
12. I trust fact-checking labels and warnings on X.					
13. Misinformation spreads faster than fact-checks.					
14. Community Notes are useful for providing context to misleading posts.					
15. Users actively engage with fact-checking efforts on X.					
16. I am more likely to believe a fact-check when it comes from verified accounts.					
17. Emotional and sensational content affects the credibility of fact-checking.					

18. Misinformation on X influences public opinion on critical issues.					
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SECTION D: Challenges and Recommendations

(Please tick [✓] where appropriate)

19. What are the major challenges you encounter with fact-checking on X? (You can select more than one option)

- ☐ Lack of Awareness
- ☐ Bias in Fact-Checking
- ☐ Inconsistent Application of Fact-Checking Tools
- ☐ Misinformation Spreads Faster Than Corrections
- ☐ Limited Accessibility of Fact-Checks
- ☐ Lack of Trust in Fact-Checking Organizations
- ☐ Others (Specify): _____

20. What recommendations do you have for improving the effectiveness of fact-checking mechanisms on X? (You can select more than one option)

- ☐ Enhancing User Education on Fact-Checking Tools
- ☐ Improving the Visibility of Fact-Checks
- ☐ Ensuring Neutrality and Transparency in Fact-Checking
- ☐ Collaborating with Reliable Fact-Checking Organizations
- ☐ Using Artificial Intelligence for Real-Time Fact-Checking
- ☐ Others (Specify): _____

21. Would you like to participate in an interview to provide more detailed insights?

☐ Yes (Provide your email/phone number): _____

☐ No

Thank you for your participation!