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Chapter Three



Fake News, Disinformation and Nigeria's Digital Transformation

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Abstract

This chapter examines the pervasive issue of fake news and disinformation within Nigeria's digital landscape and its implications for the nation's ongoing transformation endeavours. The objectives of the study are to examine: the prevalence of fake news and disinformation in Nigeria's digital landscape, the impacts of fake news and disinformation on the social, political, and economic endeavours in Nigeria's digital landscape, to identify the contributing factors, and evaluate the initiatives and strategies to counter fake news in Nigeria's

digital landscape. Based on the review of relevant literature, the study revealed that factors, such as the dominance of social media, politically motivated content, low literacy, and confirmation bias contributed to the spread of fake news and disinformation in Nigeria. The study further revealed a wide range of consequences of fake news and disinformation which includes the erosion of public trust in the media and organisations, division and social disorder, and manipulation of elections. Furthermore, responsible platform policies, the promotion of media literacy, fact-checking, and responsible journalism were some of the steps highlighted to mitigate the spread of fake news and disinformation in Nigeria's digital landscape.

Keywords: Fake News, Disinformation, Misinformation, Nigeria's Digital Landscape

INTRODUCTION

The spread of fake news and disinformation has become a global challenge. According to the Global Risks Report 2024, fake news and disinformation are the biggest short-term risks. The growth and penetration of the Internet have further compounded the problem, particularly social media which serves as a major channel in the spread of fake news and disinformation in the digital landscape. In the last two decades, Nigeria has witnessed a significant transformation in its digital landscape, and one of the key areas impacted by this change is journalism. The adoption and use of the Internet, especially social media, has significantly accelerated the spread of fake news and disinformation, aided by the expansion of the mobile data subscriber base and the growing availability of affordable smartphones (Leetaru, 2019; & Habib

& Akila, 2021). Smartphones and Social media platforms which are powered by the internet have presented new opportunities for engagement through the ease of two-way communication. These devices are always close to their users, granting users instant access to web content on different issues anywhere and anytime.

More than half of the Nigerian population are Internet users. The *Punch* newspaper reported that the number of internet users stood at 163.8 million as of December 2023. This figure is higher than that of the year 2022 (154.8 million) and the year 2021 (141.9 million). This figure indicated that internet users in the country have witnessed growth as more people have gained access to the internet despite the hardship caused by the removal of fuel subsidies and the floating of the naira (Sulaimon, 2024). Out of this population, Nigeria recorded 193.9 million active cellular mobile connections, covering 87.7 percent of the total population (Kemp, 2023). Michael (2024) added that 36.7 million use social media, this figure grew by 16 percent from 31.6 million reported in January 2023. This clearly shows the large audience the internet and social media pull in Nigeria. These powerful tools can be used to facilitate professional journalism or unprofessionalism.

The rise of fake news and disinformation poses a significant challenge to professional journalism in Nigeria. Many journalists, because they are competing for attention and mindshare, are forced to publish first and verify later, and this is what is hurting our world (Adeleke, 2016). With the advent of social media, information can spread rapidly and reach a wide audience within seconds. This has made it easier for individuals and groups to manipulate facts, spread false narratives, and promote their agendas.

The impact of fake news and disinformation on Nigeria's digital landscape cannot be underestimated. It erodes trust in the

media, undermines the democratic process, and incites violence and social unrest (Ognyanova, *et al.*, 2020). In an interview with Voice of Africa's Peter Clotney, Ajuri Ngelale, the spokesperson to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, said opposition groups use social media platforms to peddle “fake news” to citizens and the international community. Additionally, fake news has the power to damage the reputations of individuals, organizations, and even the nation as a whole (*The Guardian, Nigeria, 2023*). Social media platforms are also increasingly being used as a means for empowering disruptive voices, messages, or ideologies (e.g., xenophobia, neo-Nazism, anti-immigration/ globalization, cultural homogeneity, etc.) (Cook, Waugh, Abdipanah, Hashemi, & Rahman, 2014; Gleason, 2013). In 2021, false information was spread that the Nigerian government had banned the use of Twitter in the country. This disinformation was spread on social media platforms, and it caused confusion and outrage among many Nigerians. While the government did suspend Twitter's operations in the country, this was later lifted after several weeks (*The Guardian, Nigeria, 2023*).

Fake news and disinformation can incite people to violence and lead to the weakening of public confidence in the government. Considering the serious consequences of the dissemination of disinformation, the former Director-General of the National Orientation Agency (NOA), Dr. Garba Abari, has lamented the spread of fake news, and disinformation, especially by political elites before the 2023 general election (Nnabuife, 2022). Unsubstantiated reports were particularly noticeable in the lead-up to Nigeria's February 2023 election when the country's election body, the INEC, expressed concerns that the spread of disinformation and hate speech was a threat to the vote.

“The Nigerian media space is flooded with fake news” (Omoera & Uwalaka 2023, p. 207). To fight fake news and disinformation

in Nigeria, several legislative efforts were introduced by the previous government in the country. In 2015 a bill to regulate social media which was being considered by the National Assembly was publicly rejected. The Protection from Internet Falsehood and Manipulation Bill 2019 was also rejected by lawmakers (*The Guardian*, Nigeria 2023). While these legislative efforts to fight fake news and disinformation may not be the last attempts, it is believed that these legislative actions will be a violation of the fundamental rights of social media users which is not in line with the provision of the 1999 constitution (as amended) and Nigeria's international rights obligations.

However, as technology continues to advance and more Nigerians gain access to the internet and social media platforms, the spread of fake news and disinformation has become a pressing issue. Despite these efforts, including the enlightenment campaign among others, there is a noticeable continuous spread or prevalence and proliferation of these phenomena, which no doubt has their impacts on the national transformation. Furthermore, these scenarios could raise concerns or questions over the initiatives and strategies used to address fake news and disinformation in Nigeria's digital landscape. Therefore, this study examines fake news and disinformation in Nigeria's digital landscape.

The objectives of the paper are to:

- i. examine the causes of the prevalence of fake news and disinformation in Nigeria's digital landscape;
- ii. examine the impact of fake news and disinformation in Nigeria's digital landscape;
- iii. Identify the factors that contribute to the proliferation of fake news and disinformation in Nigeria's digital landscape; and
- iv. evaluate the current initiatives and strategies to counter

fake news and disinformation on Nigeria's digital landscape.

This work employed library research and the use of secondary sources to address these objectives. Library research encompasses a systematic approach to collecting information essential for crafting a paper, developing a presentation, or fulfilling a project's requirements. In this context, secondary sources refer to the scholarly studies and research conducted by other academics and researchers. Secondary sources are materials that discuss, analyze, interpret, or synthesize primary sources or primary data. They are created by individuals or organizations who did not directly participate in the events or research they are writing about. Secondary sources provide context, analysis, and insights into primary sources. Secondary sources consulted by the researchers include Books, Journal Articles, Newspaper Articles, Websites, Reports, and Conference Proceedings. These methods are particularly pertinent to this paper as it is a conceptual work built upon the research findings and insights derived from the works of other scholars and researchers.

Conceptual Clarification

Fake news

Mould (2018) identifies “fake news” as outlets like The Onion, which he describes as fake “through and through,” and the Daily Show, which is described as a “fake news show that airs real stories” (p. 373). McGonagle (2017) noted that fake news is information that has been deliberately fabricated and disseminated to deceive and mislead others into believing falsehoods or doubting verifiable facts. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) explains fake news as “completely false information, photos or videos purposefully created and spread to confuse or disinform (BBC News, 2019

June 29, online).

Spread of fake news and disinformation

Fake news is not new but it poses a more significant challenge now (Vasu *et al.* 2018). The Nigerian media landscape is experiencing a rise in fake news due to the emergence, and access to internet-powered platforms such as social media and blogs. It has created a situation where every person can claim to be a digital journalist and circulate media content instantaneously whether factual or fake (Omoera & Uwalaka 2023).

Impact of Fake news on national endeavours

Udenze, (2021) notes that some adverse impacts of fake news on national endeavours which include, ethno-religious crises, electoral violence, and economic instability, among others. He also identifies the causes of fake news as the mistrust of the ruling class by the masses, social media and affordable data, capitalist motives, late release of information by agencies of government, inadequate capacities of media outlets to verify and release authentic information.

Disinformation

According to the research centre, City University of New York, disinformation is the deliberate dissemination of false or inaccurate information to discredit a person or organization. Disinformation is the deliberate/intentional creation and spread of false and/or misleading content online or offline. While misinformation is the inadvertent spread of such content, disinformation could be spread through a complex network of social media, online news sites, traditional media, and offline spaces (Stepney & Lally, 2024).

Spread of Disinformation

Although Fake news has been around for centuries, the rise of fake news correlates with the advancement in communication technologies. The fake news is created to deceive. It is written with one or two aims, to miss-lead or hurt an opposing side. Globally viewed as a dangerous trend that is out of control, the public finds it increasingly tasking to identify what is real, or fake news, what is fact or fiction, and what is true or lies (Pringle, 2023). In Nigeria, fake news is a big problem. The BBC reported that during the 2023 general elections in Nigeria, serial websites were established to reach thousands of people while spreading false news(Nwonwu, Tukur & Alo (2023). Aside from noting that some people made a lot of profit from fake news during electioneering in the country, it has further divided the country through politics.

Impact of disinformation on national endeavours

The World Economic Forum (WEF) in January 2024, labelled disinformation as the biggest short-term risk globally, due to its perceived potential to undermine democratic elections, promote societal unrest and increase censorship through counter-disinformation initiatives (Stepney & Lally, 2024). The impact of fake news and disinformation on Nigeria's digital landscape is significant and multifaceted. Some studies have shown that the Nigerian media space is flooded with fake news, which has become a major issue in digital journalism, especially with the emergence of online media platforms, and news blogs which has created a situation where misinformation can be spread instantaneously, whether factual or not (Omoera & Uwalak, 2023).

Digital Landscape

The digital landscape is the total collection of hardware, software, and content that interact with digital advertising. This

includes email services, websites, computers, smartphones, videos, blog posts, and so on (Coffey, 2022).

Nigeria Digital Landscape

The digital landscape in Nigeria is considered one of the most vibrant in Africa. The digital landscape in Nigeria refers to the current state and dynamics of digital technologies, online environments, and their associated cultural, social, and regulatory frameworks in the country. It includes the tools, platforms, networks, and interactions that define digital activities and communications in both personal and professional contexts (Kostic, 2024).

Fake news and Disinformation in Nigeria's Digital Landscape

This section explicates fake news and disinformation in Nigeria's digital landscape, with a focus on the objectives of this work. There are several examples of fake news and their source. Some of them are presented in table 1.

S/N	Fake News	Source
1.	FACT CHECK: No, A Nigerian Outlet Did Not Report That Country's President Switched Currencies	https://checkyourfact.com/2023/09/12/fact-check-nigerian-outlet-president-currencies/
2.	Fact Check: Viral Post's Claim That Nigerian President Tinubu Attending G20 Summit Without Any Invitation Is Fake	https://newsmobile.in/articles/2023/09/09/fact-check-did-nigerian-president-bola-tinubu-attend-the-g20-summit-without-an-invitation-heres-the-truth/
3.	No, this video shows neither Nigerien nor Nigerian forces at their shared border	https://www.france24.com/en/tv-shows/truth-or-fake/20230828-no-this-video-shows-neither-nigerien-nor-nigerian-forces-at-their-shared-border

4.	Lampedusa migrant influx leads to surge of misinformation	https://www.france24.com/en/tv-shows/truth-or-fake/20230918-surge-of-misinformation-on-lampedusa-migration-influx
5.	Nigeria elections: Edited video of presidential hopeful Peter Obi goes viral	https://www.france24.com/en/tv-shows/truth-or-fake/20230116-nigeria-elections-2023-edited-video-of-peter-obi-goes-viral
6.	Edited video of BBC news clip shared as President Biden's 'confession' that Buhari died 6 years ago	https://www.logicallyfacts.com/en/fact-check/false-edited-video-of-bbc-news-clip-shared-as-president-biden-s-confession-that-buhari-died-6-years-ago
7.	Did 'people power' really lead to Covid-19 vaccines being destroyed in Nigeria?	https://www.france24.com/en/tv-shows/truth-or-fake/20220125-did-people-power-really-lead-to-vaccines-being-destroyed-in-nigeria
8.	Jibrin of Sudan and the audacity of fake news	https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/11/jibrin-of-sudan-and-the-audacity-of-fake-news/
9.	Are These Images of Tortured Nigerian Slaves in Libya?	https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/tortured-nigerian-slaves-in-libya/
10.	FALSE: Donald Trump Said He Would Deport All Nigerians	https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/donald-trump-nigeria-quote/
11.	Nigerian Women Who Repulsed a Boko Haram Attack	https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/repulse-of-the-nation/

The prevalence and spread of fake news in Nigeria's digital landscape

The spread of the fake news phenomenon on the internet is caused by the internet's ever-connected nature and the preference for speed over accuracy. Because Internet content providers and distributors are in a winner-takes-all battle for attention and advertising revenue, they will do any and everything to boost traffic. Unlike print publications which usually have the luxury of time before reporting a breaking story the next day, online publications are necessitated by the franticness of the world in which they find themselves (Ogbette, *et al.*, 2019).

Unfortunately, social media and other fake news outlets publish and circulate fake news to increase readership and sales of their commodities to generate revenue for economic gains and benefits. Their acclaimed benefit in many cases is a disadvantage to society. The arrival of the Internet in the late 20th century, followed by social media in the 21st century unimaginably escalated the dangers of misinformation, disinformation, propaganda, and hoaxes (Aboyadea, *et al.*, 2022)

Sometimes in 2019, rumour circulated that General Mohammadu Buhari had died during one of his lengthy absences from Nigeria in 2017 on medical grounds and that he had been replaced by a clone called Jubril from Sudan. The supposed death of General Mohammadu Buhari in contrast spread like wildfire on Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, and many other social media platforms so much so that he had to address the claim at a news conference (News Wires, 2019).

Impact of fake news and disinformation in Nigeria's digital landscape on Social, Political and Economic endeavours

The topic of misinformation has been on the rise in Nigeria for the same three reasons it has everywhere else. Many Nigerians now consume news and information through social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp, which are often inundated with false and misleading content (*Guardian Newspaper, 2023*).

The Guardian newspaper noted that in 2019, false information was spread that President Muhammadu Buhari, had died and been replaced by a clone from Sudan. This disinformation was spread on social media platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter, and it caused panic and confusion among huge segments of the populace. One of the biggest ways fake news and disinformation have affected the media landscape in Nigeria is the erosion of trust. When media audiences are exposed to false or misleading information regularly, they become sceptical of the sources they rely on for accurate news and information. This erosion of trust can have profound social, political, and economic implications. Fake news and disinformation have contributed to a general mistrust of media organizations, both traditional and digital. People may question the credibility of news outlets, suspecting bias or manipulation in their reporting. For example, if a news organization inadvertently reports false information, even once, it can lead to a loss of trust. This mistrust can make it difficult for media outlets to fulfil their role as watchdogs in a democratic society.

It is pertinent to note that owners of tech companies, especially social media platforms Facebook, Twitter (now X), and Instagram amongst others - have embarked on moves to combat the phenomenon but with little success as their efforts have not stopped people from sharing misinformation (Wong,

2019). It is difficult to achieve this because the social media space remains the most difficult to censor. Selective policing cannot also be effective as participants on new media forums or users of new media platforms could appear to be anonymous if they so wish (Inobemhe, 2020).

Idayat Hassan, Director of the Abuja-based think-tank of the Centre for Democracy and Development [CDD], told Al Jazeera that misinformation and disinformation are “plaguing this election” as political actors encourage the spread because they see it as a means to an end. (Aljazeera, 2023). Hassan suggests that misinformation and disinformation are particularly rampant during elections. This is a common observation, as elections are sensitive times when political actors may resort to various strategies to gain an advantage or influence public opinion. Political actors have a vested interest in encouraging the spread of misinformation and disinformation during elections. They view it as a means to an end, suggesting that these actors believe that spreading false information can serve their political goals or agendas. The impacts of fake news and disinformation on Nigeria are in different ways. Below are some key ways in which fake news and disinformation have affected Nigeria:

- 1. Division and Social Disorder:** Fake news and disinformation often take advantage of existing loopholes in the country's ethnic, religious, or political divisions. In Nigeria, a diverse country with numerous ethnic and religious groups, false information can exacerbate these divisions and lead to social disorder, division and sometimes violent conflicts. In Nigeria for instance, fake news has been used to incite violence between different ethnic and religious groups.
- 2. Manipulation of Elections:** Fake news and disinformation campaigns have been used to manipulate elections in Nigeria. False news and

disinformation can be spread to discredit candidates or influence voters, which undermines the democratic process and the credibility of elections. In Nigeria for instance, fake information spread on social media showing a contesting political candidate engaging in corrupt activities can damage his/her reputation.

3. **Public Health Risk and Confusion:** It was obvious during the COVID-19 pandemic, in Nigeria for instance, like in other parts of the world; one of the biggest problems the Nigerian government faced was the spread of fake news and misinformation about the origin, prevention, treatment, cure and vaccine. This misinformation can lead to public health risks and confusion. In Nigeria for instance, misinformation about COVID-19 remedies, such as false claims that taking certain herbs or traditional medicines or concoctions could prevent or cure COVID-19 virus led to a lot of people using unproven treatments that certain herbs or traditional medicines could cure the virus, these treatments had harmful consequences on their health (Gambo, *et al.*, 2022).
4. **Economic Impact:** Fake news and disinformation can also have negative economic consequences. False news and disinformation about companies, financial markets, or government policies can lead to panic selling of stocks, currency devaluation, or reduced foreign investment. In Nigeria for instance, False information on the closure of a major international corporation's Nigerian operations could lead to a panic in the stock market, resulting in significant financial losses for investors.
5. **Damage to Reputation:** Fake news and disinformation can damage the reputation or image of individuals, organizations, and even the country as a whole. Fake news, propaganda, and smear campaigns have taken

over the media space in Nigeria. In Nigeria for instance, Fake news and disinformation have damaged the reputation of many individuals, organisations and businesses in the country. Some have recovered and some failed to recover from these sad trends. Some organizations and companies have had their revenues drop drastically, reduced patronage, and businesses closed due to damages to their reputation (Victor, 2022).

- 6. Loss of Trust in Media and Organisations:** Exposure to fake news and disinformation consistently could erode public trust in traditional media and organisations. This lack of trust in the media and organisations has long-term effects on the country, making it difficult for media audiences to distinguish between reliable and unreliable sources of information. In Nigeria for instance, a fake news story published in a reputable media organisation could erode public trust in the media organisation, causing people to question the reliability/credibility of the traditional news media.

Factors contributing to the proliferation of fake news and disinformation

University of Southern California (USC) researchers may have found the biggest influencer in the spread of fake news: social platforms' structure of rewarding users for habitually sharing information. The team's findings, published Monday by Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, upend popular misconceptions that misinformation spreads because users lack the critical thinking skills necessary for discerning truth from falsehood or because their strong political beliefs skew their judgment. Just 15% of the most habitual news sharers in the research were responsible for spreading about 30% to 40% of the fake news.

The research team from the USC Marshall School of Business and the USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts, and Sciences wondered: What motivates these users? As it turns out, much like any video game, social media has a reward system that encourages users to stay on their accounts and keep posting and sharing. Users who post and share frequently, especially sensational, eye-catching information, are likely to attract attention.

The habits of social media users are a bigger driver of misinformation spread than individual attributes. We know from prior research that some people don't process information critically, and others form opinions based on political biases, which also affects their ability to recognize false stories online,” said Gizem Ceylan, who led the study during her doctorate at USC Marshall and is now a postdoctoral researcher at the Yale School of Management. “However, we show that the reward structure of social media platforms plays a bigger role when it comes to misinformation spread.

Research has indicated that social media users consider headlines consistent with their pre-existing beliefs as more credible, even when explicitly flagged as being false (Moravec, Minas & Dennis, 2019). In the context of disinformation, this could make it desirable to target audiences sympathetic to the message content. Work by the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence indicated that it was very easy to purchase high levels of false engagement for social media posts (e.g. sharing of posts by networks of fake accounts) and that there was a significant black market for social media manipulation (Bay & Fredheim, 2019). Evidence suggests that much of the dissemination of fake news is due to human behaviour, since people who come across erroneous materials on social media may negligently propagate it (Rodrigo et al., 2022). Factors contributing to the spread of

fake news and disinformation in Nigeria's landscape can be summarised as follows:

1. **Social Media Platforms:** Social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter (now X) enable the rapid spread of information. Algorithms designed to increase user engagement can inadvertently promote sensational or false content. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, false claims and misleading health information often went viral on social media, creating confusion.
2. **Confirmation Bias:** People tend to seek information that confirms their existing beliefs, making them more susceptible to fake news that aligns with their worldview. For instance, if someone strongly believes in a particular political ideology, they may be more likely to accept and share information that supports that ideology, even if it is false.
3. **Filter Bubbles:** Social media algorithms personalize content based on user preferences, creating filter bubbles where individuals are exposed primarily to information that aligns with their views. This can isolate users from diverse perspectives, reinforcing existing biases and making them susceptible to disinformation within their bubble.
4. **Anonymity and Pseudonymity:** Online anonymity allow individuals to create and spread false information without facing personal consequences. For example, anonymous users on social media platforms can easily create fake accounts and spread disinformation without being identified.
5. **Financial Incentives:** Some websites generate revenue through clickbait articles and sensational headlines. They profit from ad revenue generated by increased traffic, incentivizing the creation and spread of false or misleading content.

- 6. Political Motivations:** Political actors and interest groups may use disinformation to achieve specific goals. For instance, during election campaigns, fake news may be disseminated to damage the reputation of opponents or influence voters' opinions.
- 7. Lack of Media Literacy:** Many individuals lack education and awareness about critical thinking, media literacy, and fact-checking. This leaves them ill-equipped to discern credible information from disinformation, making them easy targets for false claims.
- 8. Technological Advances:** Advanced technologies like deepfakes and sophisticated image and video editing tools make it easier to create convincing fake content. For example, deepfake videos can be created to make it seem like a public figure said or did something they never did.
- 9. Lack of Trust in Institutions:** Distrust in traditional media, government, and other institutions can lead individuals to rely on alternative, often less reputable sources of information. This distrust can make people more susceptible to believing and sharing disinformation.
- 10. Amplification by Traditional Media:** Sometimes, traditional media outlets report on disinformation without adequate fact-checking or verification. This can inadvertently amplify false claims and give them credibility.
- 11. Foreign Influence:** State-sponsored disinformation campaigns from foreign governments can target specific countries to sow discord, influence political processes, or advance geopolitical agendas. For example, foreign actors may spread false information to exploit existing divisions within a country.

12. Regulatory Challenges: Regulating fake news and disinformation in Nigeria's digital landscape is challenging. Striking a balance between protecting freedom of speech and curbing harmful content is an ongoing debate in Nigeria and many other countries around the world. In Nigeria for instance, balancing between freedom of expression and tackling harmful content is a big problem: In 2019, the Federal Government of Nigeria proposed a plan to regulate social media, and a bill was sent to the National Assembly, but the outcry from the Nigerian public ensured the bill was suspended, as it was considered an attempt to gag the media and deny free speech as a fundamental human right.

Current initiatives and strategies to counter fake news and disinformation in Nigeria's Digital landscape

Addressing these factors requires a concerted effort from various stakeholders, including governments, tech companies, fact-checking organizations, and individuals. Promoting media literacy, responsible platform policies, and critical thinking skills are essential steps toward mitigating the spread of fake news and disinformation. Nigeria has been making efforts to address the issue of fake news and disinformation. The journalists' initiative is called CrossCheck Nigeria and is one of several fact-checking organisations dedicated to exposing fake news and preserving **the reputation and credibility** of well-researched and honest journalism. Another is FactCheck Nigeria. CrossCheck says its method is simple: to identify claims and posts it thinks are fake, investigate them, and then publish the real version (**ISPIonline, 2023**). The government has introduced legislation to deter the spread of false information and has collaborated with social media platforms to curb the circulation of fake news. Media literacy campaigns and fact-checking initiatives have also

been launched to educate the public and promote critical thinking (Stepney & Lally, 2024).

In response, Singapore has implemented a slew of measures against fake news, such as introducing legislation (Mokhtar & Lim, 2019), creating fact-checking websites (Soon & Goh, 2017), raising public awareness through education (National Library Board, n.d.), etc. While these are important government-led initiatives to combat the spread of fake news, it is equally essential to also involve the community as part of the solution in the fight against fake news. One of the recommendations by the Select Committee on Deliberate Online Falsehoods was to support and conduct research to understand the community's vulnerabilities towards fake news (Parliament of Singapore, 2018). Wenzel (2019), individuals tend to avoid fake news by muting or blocking those who spread fake news.

However, despite these transformation challenges caused by fake news and disinformation such as lack of trust, division and social disorder, reputational damage, and public health risk and confusion are still obvious in Nigeria's digital landscape. It may be difficult to eliminate fake news in Nigeria. As long as people are willing to buy tabloids, but read blogs that they already know contain lies and half-truths, and as long as there are uneducated people who are unable to differentiate between real and fake news, fake news will continue to sell (Ogbette et al., 2019). Also, the sheer volume and speed at which misinformation can spread make it difficult to contain. Additionally, the line between genuine news and fake news can sometimes be blurred, making it challenging for readers to differentiate between factual reporting and false narratives and in Nigeria and the world at large. Most people don't always confirm the source of information before believing and sharing the information which most times turn out to be fake. It was

discovered that fake news generated online and offline most times are to create traffic and relevance (Ogbette et al., 2019).

Conclusion

This paper has examined the prevalence and impact of fake news and disinformation within Nigeria's digital landscape. It has highlighted that the digital sphere in Nigeria, like many other parts of the world, is not immune to the pervasive spread of false information. The intertwining factors contributing to the proliferation of fake news, such as social media platforms, political motivations, and low digital literacy, have created a challenging environment that demands urgent attention. Nigeria's transformation efforts are inextricably linked to the need for effective measures to combat the damaging consequences of misinformation and disinformation. This paper underscores the far-reaching impacts of fake news and disinformation on the Nigerian society. From eroding trust in media and institutions to deepening social and political divisions, these phenomena pose significant threats to the nation's democratic processes, public safety, and overall well-being. The erosion of trust, in particular, has emerged as a concerning outcome, as it can hinder progress, dialogue, and cooperation in a rapidly evolving digital age.

As Nigeria continues its transformation efforts, it is imperative that strategies and interventions are developed to mitigate the influence of fake news and disinformation. Media literacy initiatives, responsible social media policies, and fact-checking efforts must be at the forefront of these measures. Additionally, fostering a culture of critical thinking and information verification among citizens is essential. By addressing these challenges head-on, Nigeria can harness the power of its digital landscape for positive growth and development while safeguarding the integrity of its information ecosystem. Ultimately, the fight against fake news and disinformation is a

collective endeavour that requires the collaboration of government, civil society, technology platforms, and the public to secure a more informed, resilient, and trustworthy digital future for Nigeria.

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