Fake News Its Implication for National Security in Nigeria

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Abstract: This study examines fake news and its implication for national security in Nigeria. The study made use of a survey research design in which 125 respondents were selected using cluster sampling. The respondents were selected from Ibadan North Local Government Area of Oyo State. Three research questions and one hypothesis were used in this study. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire designed by the researcher and data analysis was done using SPSS version 21. The result of the finding showed that self promotion (X = 2.49, SD = 1.08), gaining more followers on social media (X = 2.06, SD = 1.15) and intention to create panic among the public (X = 1.87, SD = 0.82) are some of the factors that triggers fake news. Furthermore, results of the study showed that Fake news create panic in the society , it can lead to ethnic and religious in the society and can result into jungle justice in the society. The result of the hypothesis of the study revealed a positive correlation between fake news and national security (r = .381, p<.05) which indicated that increase in fake news gives rise to high level of insecurity in the society.

Keywords: Fake news, Insecurity, social media, general public

Introduction

Freedom of expression is an important human right in a democratic dispensation which is essential for society to be autonomous. It was guaranteed in the Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948. It empowers the free exchange of ideas, opinions and information and also allows members of society to form their own opinion from happenings in public sphere. The common debate within and outside intellectual arenas have always been about its existence and the level at which citizens are allowed to exercise it in line with constitutional provision at hand. No doubt, the battle for freedom of expression has gained momentum in Nigeria and the world at large.

Social media channels have remained an invaluable tool for disseminating information, communicating, and exchanging ideas. Over the last couple of years, advancements and improvements have increased their accessibility and user-friendliness. Social media channels allow users to share and circulate information via the internet. Simply put, social media are internet-based channels that facilitate collaboration, conversation, sharing, collaborative effort, and linking (Okafor & Onyenekwe, 2020).Such platforms have become one of the most popular ways for individuals of all ages, genders, and nationalities to communicate and share information. Social media channels are undoubtedly among the most effective way to convey information and sophisticated tools for public education, mobilization, communication, and exchange (Okafor & Onyenekwe, 2020).

Before the emergence of social media, people in Nigeria relied on traditional media as a trustworthy and credible source of information. This is because traditional media outlets provide the masses with well-researched reports that has been gate-kept and scrutinized. The democracy flourished admirably under this model. Admittedly, social media provides the public with the freedom to create and disseminate information on their own terms. This is a current model that has been misused for a variety of selfish and casual reasons. It gives the public confidentiality and protection from the order. As a consequence, some disreputable elements with ulterior motives use social media to publish and disseminate fake news. Such news has caused public chaos, communal conflicts, political turmoil, and economic threats, all of which are essential components of a democratic regime. As a result, it can be concluded that fake news is a threat to Nigeria's growing democracy, not just as a nation with a substantial population, but also as a nation with a wide range of differences and diversity.

Statement of the Problem

Fake news is not a new phenomenon. It has been around for as long as anyone can remember. Notwithstanding, it has become more intense in recent times as a result of widespread internet use and low-cost access to social media channels, competitive politics and intensifying poverty, and ethno-religious rivalry. Nigeria is a nation in turmoil, with security concerns in various parts of the country. Such threats materialize as multiple conflicts, systemic and massive corruption, crippling poverty, weak governance, secession threats and perceived marginalisation, anxiety, hostility, and economic crises in an era when priority for untrue information is increasing - i.e., the post-truth era (Harsin, 2018). These issues are rigorously, gradually, and ruthlessly destroying relationships, inflaming enmities across societies, and endangering the nation's democratic preservation (Pate, 2018). The nation's political climate has shifted quickly in recent years, indicating novel developments and unusual difficulties to the nation's democratic system. In

general, the nation's current political culture is intrinsically tied to the rapid development of information and communication technologies (ICT) (Audu, 2018). Fake news can deceive the general public and add to an already strained political climate by inciting communal and retaliatory security breaches here and there. Nevertheless, the spread of fake news can be curtailed if the media cultivates a culture of fact checking and verifying information prior to going to press. Therefore, this study examines fake news and its implication on national security in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

i. To examine the factors that lead people to spread fake news via social media.
ii. To examine the perception of media audience on fake news
iii. To find out the negative impact of fake news on national security in Nigeria.

Research Questions

i. What are the factors that lead people to spread fake news via social media?
ii. What is the perception of media audience on fake news?
iii. What is the negative impact of fake news on national security in Nigeria?

Hypothesis

H_{01}: Fakes news does not have a significant impact on the level of insecurity

Literature Review

Concept of Fake News

According to McGonagle (2017), fake news is information that has been deliberately fabricated and disseminated with the intention to deceive and mislead others into believing falsehoods or doubting verifiable facts. In this regard, it is disinformation that is presented as, or is likely to be perceived as news. Alawode, Olorede and Azeez (2018) view fake news as news articles that are intentionally and verifiably false and could mislead readers. The authors explained that, fake news includes false information that can be verified as such, created with dishonest intention to mislead readers. The Wikipedia (2019) defines fake news as a type of yellow journalism or propaganda that consists of deliberate disinformation or hoaxes spread via traditional media or online social media.

So far, the core deducible elements of fake news are the 'falsefulness' of news content and the intent to deceive or mislead. Therefore, a false content that is created in error and circulated without the intention of misleading the consumers may be dismissible since no human system is immune to mistakes. It is against this background that ClaireWardle cited in Ogbette, Idam, Kareem and Ogbette (2019), identifies seven types of fake news;

- Satire or Parody - no intention to cause harm, but has potential to fool
- False Connection -when headlines, visuals or captions do not support the content
- Misleading Content - misleading use of information to frame an issue or an individual
- Imposter Content - when genuine sources are impersonated with false and made-up sources
- Manipulated Content – when genuine information or imagery is manipulated to deceive, as with doctored photo
- Fabricated Content – when news content is 100% false, designed to deceive and do harm.

From the foregoing, it is clear that fake news takes different forms, from the harmless to the harmful. This understanding is needful in discussing 'fake news' as a societal vice. Therefore, we define fake news as deliberately manipulated or fabricated information or news content carefully disseminated with the intent of causing anxiety, uproar, incitement and harm at either individual or communal scale.

National Security

As indicated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), human security involves persistent threats like hunger, disease, and subjugation. Safety from hidden and harmful disruptions in everyday life trends in homes, offices, or societies is what security entails. Security can also be described as the state of being protected from danger, etc. Security may also be outlined as safety against a situation that could occur in the future or as the events associated with safeguarding a nation, a building or people against dangers hazard, etc. (Wehmeier and Ashby, 2002).

Principally, security must be associated with the existence of peace, protection, happiness, and the safety of physical assets, as opposed to the absence of crisis, dangers to potential harm, and so on. The existence of peace may aid progress. In quantitative terms, security is not a fractional or quantifiable variable. However, if security spending is efficient, it can be utilized as a proxy to evaluate

the intensity of security. At the start of each and every government, the President or Governor takes an oath to protect life and property, among other things. As a result, security is a top priority for the Nigerian government (at all levels).

Implications of Fake News to National Security.

That Nigeria is presently facing diverse and grievous security challenges is no longer news. Several factors have been advanced as the causes of insecurity in Nigeria. Oderinu, Zubair and Bakare (2019) identify weak security system, porous border, persuasive material inequalities and unfairness, unemployment/poverty, corruption and ethno-religious conflicts. Additionally, Salami, Adeyemo and Olawoyin (2018) summarize the causative factors of insecurity in Nigeria to include; absence of institutional capacity resulting in government failure; disconnection between the people and government; weak and poorly funded military establishment, and non-prosecution of perpetrators of violence in Nigeria. As a result of all these, the country has continued to witness a surge in banditry, terrorism, armed robbery, insurgency, kidnapping, militancy, herdsmen/farmers clashes among others. According to Robert MC Namara, the former American Secretary of Defence, security is development and development is security, hence, all hands must be on deck in the promotion of national security.

National security is the decision making process concerned with the identification of potential and actual threats, and the mobilization of resources in frame that properly ensures the safety and stability of the nation state, while simultaneously enhancing the promotion of national development. The dynamics of our society has since altered the configuration of security to now include consideration for societally generated crises such as terrorism, riots, demonstrations, secret cult-related criminal acts, drug trafficking, inter and intra-ethnic strife, religious intolerance, armed robberies, kidnapping, advance fee fraud and a host of others that threaten lives and property, and indeed the peace and tranquility in the society (Oloyede & Esimokha, 2018). At the moment, nothing seems to threaten the peace and tranquility of the Nigeria State like the menace of fake news because it has emerged as the propeller to the forces that engender insecurity. This position was acknowledged by Nigerian former Minister of Information Lia Mohammed who submitted that fake news threatens the peace, security and corporate existence of Nigeria, describing it as a time bomb waiting to explode.

Uses and Gratifications Theory

The study is centered on the uses and gratifications theory (Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch, 1974), which describes the relationship between a group of people and how they use media. It offers a cutting-edge philosophical perspective in the early stages of each new mass medium of communication, including newspapers, radio, and television, and now the Internet. The theory asserts that the audience is active and that its media use is goal-oriented; media users seek out media that meets their needs rather than being passive (Diddi and LaRose, 2006).

People are logical, self-aware creatures who actively influence the media's impact on them while also unintentionally trying to make sense of media content in their own context. The theory also holds that users have other options for fulfilling their needs, and their use or selection of a particular form of media or a specific program (e.g., newspaper column, radio show, television channel, or blog) is to meet their needs, wants, or intentions.

Research Methodology

The research adopted the descriptive survey design. The reason why descriptive survey research design was used is because data was collected using a structured questionnaire which does not involve any manipulation of variables in the study.

The study was conducted in Ibadan North Local Government Area of Oyo State. The study used a cluster sampling technique to select the respondents used for the study. A total number of 125 respondents were selected randomly for this study.

A structured questionnaire was used for data collection. Section A of the questionnaire consists of respondent demographic characteristics such as age, gender and educational qualification. The second part of the questionnaire was on Fake news and National Security.

Analysis of Result

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	66	52.8
Female	59	47.2
Age (Years)		

18-25 years	10	8.0
26-35 years	69	55.2
36-45 years	40	32.0
46-55 years	6	4.8
Educational Qualification		
Primary School Cert	9	7.2
O'Level/SSCE	18	14.4
OND/NCE	66	52.8
BSC/HND	32	25.6
Total	**125**	**100.0**

From the demographic characteristics of respondents, 66 (52.8%) are male while 59 (47.2%) are female which implies that there are more males compared to female respondents in this study. Also, 69 (55.2%) of the respondents are within the age bracket of 26-35 years, 40 (32.0%) are within the age bracket of 36-45 years, 10 (8.0%) are within 18-25 years while 6 (4.8%) are within the age bracket of 46-55 years. Concerning educational qualification, 66 (52.8%) have OND/NCE qualification, 32 (25.6%) have BSC/HND qualification, 18 (14.4%) had O'Level/SSCE certificate while 9 (7.2%) have Primary School certificate and this implies that majority of the respondents have OND/NCE certificate.

Factors Responsible for spreading of fake news via social media

Table 2: Factors Responsible for spreading of fake news via social media

Factors	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Stand Dev
For Self promotion	33 (26.4%)	51 (40.8%)	23 (18.4%)	18 (14.4%)	2.49	1.08
Gaining more followers on social media	29 (23.2%)	59 (47.2%)	29 (23.2%)	18 (14.4%)	2.06	1.15
To create panic among the public	48 (38.4%)	48 (38.4%)	26 (20.8%)	3 (2.4%)	1.87	0.82
Haste to break news	40 (32.0%)	83 (66.4%)	2 (1.6%)	-	1.70	0.49

Based on the factors responsible for spreading of fake news via social media, 33 (26.4%) of the respondents strongly agree, 51 (40.8%) agree, 23 (18.4%) disagree while 18 (14.4%) strongly disagree that one of the factors is for self promotion, 29 (23.2%) of the respondents strongly agree, 59 (47.2%) agree, 29 (23.2%) disagree while 18 (14.4%) strongly disagree that it is for gaining more followers on social media, 48 (38.4%) of the respondents strongly agree and agree respectively, 26 (20.8%) disagree while 3 (2.4%) strongly disagree that one of the main reason is to create panic among the public. Furthermore, 3 (2.4%) of the respondents strongly agree, 83 (66.4%) agree while 2 (1.6%) disagree that one of the main reason is haste to break news. The statement self promotion has the highest mean score (X = 2.49, SD = 1.08) followed by gaining more followers on social media (X = 2.06, SD = 1.15) and to create panic among the public (X = 1.87, SD = 0.82).

The perception of media audience on fake news

Table 3: perception of media audience on fake news

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Stand Dev
Fake news is a common feature in the media environment today	58 (46.4%)	65 (52.0%)	2 (1.6%)	-	2.02	0.93
Perceived lack of credibility of media information is eroding the trust of media audiences	67 (53.6%)	50 (40.0%)	8 (6.4%)	-	1.26	0.98
Media audiences usually rely on their own critical thinking to sift information to determine whether to accept a story as true or false	60 (48.0%)	62 (49.6%)	3 (2.4%)	-	1.63	0.69

Based on the perception of media audience on fake news, 58 (46.4%) of the respondents strongly agree, 65 (52.0%) agree while 2 (1.6%) disagree that Fake news is a common feature in the media environment today, 67 (53.6%) of the respondents strongly agree, 50 (40.0%) agree while 8 (6.4%) disagree that Perceived lack of credibility of media information is eroding the trust of media audiences, 60 (48.0%) of the respondents strongly agree, 62 (49.6%) agree while 3 (2.4%) disagree that Media audiences usually rely on their own critical thinking to sift information to determine whether to accept a story as true or false. The statement Fake news is a common feature in the media environment today has the highest mean score (X = 2.02, SD = 0.93) followed by the statement, Media audiences usually rely on their own critical thinking to sift information to determine whether to accept a story as true or false (X = 1.63, SD = 0.69).

The negative effect of fake news on national security in Nigeria

Table 4: The negative effect of fake news on national security in Nigeria

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Stand Dev
Fake news create panic in the society	38 (30.4%)	74 (59.2%)	9 (7.2%)	4 (3.2%)	1.83	0.69
Fake news can lead to ethnic and religious in the society	94 (75.2%)	19 (15.2%)	8 (6.4%)	4 (3.2%)	1.78	0.75
Fake news can result into jungle justice in the society	77 (61.6%)	25 (20.0%)	18 (14.4%)	5 (4.0%)	1.66	0.93

Table 4 showed that 38 (30.4%) of the respondents strongly agree, 74 (59.2%) agree, 9 (7.2%) disagree while 4 (3.2%) strongly disagree that Fake news create panic in the society, 94 (75.2%) of the respondents strongly agree, 19 (15.2%) agree, 8 (6.4%) disagree while 4 (3.2%) strongly disagree that Fake news can lead to ethnic and religious in the society, 77 (61.6%) of the respondents strongly agree, 25 (20.0%) agree, 18 (14.4%) disagree while 5 (4.0%) strongly disagree that Fake news can result into jungle justice in the society. The statement Fake news create panic in the society had the highest mean score (X = 1.83, SD = 0.69) followed by Fake news can lead to ethnic and religious in the society (X = 1.78, SD = 0.75).

Hypothesis Testing

H₀: Fake news has no significant impact on level insecurity

Table 3: Pearson Correlations

		Fake news	insecurity
Fake news	Pearson Correlation	1	.381*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.028
	N	125	125
insecurity	Pearson Correlation	.381*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.028	
	N	125	125

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The hypothesis was tested using Pearson correlation. The result of the correlation shows that there was a positive correlation between fake news and national security (r = .381, p<.05). This implies that increase in fake news gives rise to high level of insecurity in the society.

Discussion of Findings

The result of this study showed that factors responsible for spreading fake news are self promotion (X = 2.49, SD = 1.08), gaining more followers on social media (X = 2.06, SD = 1.15) and intention to create panic among the public (X = 1.87, SD = 0.82). Also, findings in this study showed that some of the negative effect of fake news include creation of panic in the society (X = 1.83, SD = 0.69), ethnic and religious in the society (X = 1.78, SD = 0.75). The result of the hypothesis showed The result of the correlation showed a positive correlation between fake news and national security (r = .381, p<.05) which indicated that increase in fake news gives rise to high level of insecurity in the society. This finding supports the study of Audu (2018) who reported that Fake news can

deceive the general public and add to an already strained political climate by inciting communal and retaliatory security breaches here and there.

Conclusion

The study made use of a survey research design in which 125 respondents were selected using cluster sampling. The respondents were selected from Ibadan North Local Government Area of Oyo State. The result of the finding showed that self promotion, gaining more followers on social media and intention to create panic among the public are some of the factors that triggers fake news. Furthermore, results of the study showed that Fake news create panic in the society , it can lead to ethnic and religious in the society and can result into jungle justice in the society. The dissemination of fake news has been accelerated by the introduction and dominance of information and communication technologies, particularly social media, in the twenty-first-century information environment. Undoubtedly, the general pattern of fake news may be difficult to eradicate, but its adverse effects can be curtailed or managed if all stakeholders commit to doing everything possible.

Recommendations

  i.   The media should make a concerted effort to promote media literacy so that the general public can distinguish between facts and fiction.
  ii. Government agencies such as the Ministry of Information and the National Orientation Agency (NOA) should step up campaigns against fake news in Nigeria, especially when it comes to national security.

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