

Research Article

An Analysis of Facebook News Feed and Fake News in Nigeria: A Case Study of Jos South Plateau State - Nigeria

Chioma Nkemakonam¹, Solomon Obidah Yamma^{2,*}

¹Department of Television Journalism, NTA Television College, Jos, Nigeria

²Department of Theatre Arts, Plateau State University, Bokkos, Nigeria

Abstract

Fake news has over the years constituted a serious problem to Journalism and the society at large. The problem of fake news was excreted by the advent of social media which changed the dynamics of information dissemination and sharing. This paper is an analysis of Facebook newsfeed and fake news in Nigeria. The paper was anchored on the Technological Determinism Theory and The Gatekeeping Theory respectively. The former presupposes that, communication technology has exceedingly changed the way we send out messages and receive them from the opposite while the latter presupposes that, unwanted, sensible and controversial information are removed by gatekeepers in communication process which helps to control the society or a group and letting them in a right path. The data generated was collected using mix-method survey that combines the questionnaire and interview methods to elicit responses from two hundred and seventy-nine (279) respondents who were randomly and purposively sampled among social media users in Jos South metropolis and three (3) journalists from NUJ (Nigerian Union of Journalists) Plateau State Chapter. The data generated were analysed using simple percentage and narrative analysis respectively. The outcome of the study reveals that lack of regulatory and gatekeeping mechanisms as well as activities of untrained journalists are the reasons for the prevalence of fake news on Facebook hence fact checking is still not being considered by Facebook users. The study recommends that NUJ should develop a comprehensive digital database for bloggers and online journalists. This will enable easy tracking of online news sources and decontamination of Facebook from misinformation and disinformation.

Keywords

Facebook, Fake News, News Feed

1. Introduction

The dissemination of misinformation has always been a feature of society. However, the ubiquity and potential damage that such misinformation, or *fake news* can have, has been elevated significantly by the emergence of social media platforms such as Facebook, which engages a global audience. According to Otulugbu, the term *news* in its ideal form stands for verifiable information in the public interest, this is why

any information that does not meet these aforementioned standards does not deserve the label of news [1]. What this implies is that whenever there is a mention of the term, *fake news* it would simply pass as an oxymoron, that where two words of opposite meaning are used together, an attempt aimed at simply undermining the credibility of information which does indeed meet the threshold of verifiability and

*Corresponding author: solomonobidah@plasu.edu.ng (Solomon Obidah Yamma)

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public interest that is real news.

As defined by Bode and Vraga, *fake news* is a situation when misinformation takes the form of a news story to approximate the legitimacy which society associates with real news [2]. Many scholars focus on the intention behind fake news when defining the term, it is also defined as information that has been deliberately fabricated and disseminated with the intention to deceive and mislead others into believing falsehoods or doubting verifiable facts. Allcott and Gentzkow view fake news as news articles that are intentionally and verifiably false and could mislead readers [3]. Visentin, Pizzi and Pichierri regard *fake news* as fabricated stories that are intentionally false, realistically portrayed, and potentially verifiable [4].

Geeng, Yee and Roesner posit that there is a high spread of the fake news phenomenon on the internet; this is so because of the internet's ever connected nature and a major function of the masses preference for speed over accuracy [5]. Thus, since those who provide content on the internet are a Zero sum, winner-takes-all battle for attention and for of course the revenue that comes with advertising, they do not mind doing any and everything to boost traffic in which one of these platforms is Facebook. As internet use in Nigeria increased in the last five years, so has the use and popularity of social media platforms. Kazeem says Facebook remains a popular choice for Nigerians as 20 million people in Africa's most populous country visit the social media platform every month [6]. Nigeria already has one of the continent's highest smartphone penetration rates and that number will get even higher as smartphone subscriptions are expected to reach 97 million by 2021. Facebook said it has 8 million daily users from Nigeria with 97% of them accessing the platform via mobile phones. This has brought a significant paradigm shift in information dissemination lately due to the robustness of Facebook in connection people from across the globe as well as the volume of users the platform has. Therefore, this study is an analysis of Facebook newsfeed and fake news in Nigeria, with focus on Jos south local government area of Plateau State.

1.1. Exploring the of Problem

Fake news is currently an issue of global interest right now; this is so because globally discussions about fake news and its impact on global affairs are being held. This century sadly has seen the use of information as a weapon in rather unprecedented scale. Geary asserts that, the spread of false or misleading news stories on Facebook has become a seemingly unstoppable problem in today's society thus the shift from print to digital media news disseminators has created new credibility assessment issues, leaving many consumers unable to decipher legitimate from illegitimate news stories. According to Otulugbu in Nigeria, there are a bulk of new sites and blogs that publish contents without properly authenticating their sources. Fake news stories are usually thrilling in

nature and by this factor, are very likely to spread quickly; since these blogs or platforms by their nature contain a high level of followers, making the news possess an existing number of massive reader base that have their notification on, looking up to them for second to second information. For instance, the *Covid-19* pandemic and the *End-SARS* protest were exacerbated and blown out of proportion as a result of the information from different sources that awash *Facebook*. In this the public finds it difficult to distinguish reliable news from an unreliable one. Therefore, this study intends to investigate among other things, factors that enable the prevalence of fake news on *Facebook*.

The paper clearly sets out to achieve the following: 1) To ascertain why fake news is prevalent on Facebook. 2) To determine the extent at which Facebook users are exposed to fake news by untrained journalists. 3) To ascertain how Facebook users authenticate the credibility of information they come across on Facebook News feed.

An Analysis of Literature on Fake News

Fake news has been defined as disinformation spread through the media and then propagated through peer-to-peer communication (Albright p. 87.) [7] According to Alvaro and Oliviera, fake news is a term that has come to mean different things to different people [8]. At its core, we are defining *fake news* as those news stories that are false: the story itself is fabricated, with no verifiable facts, sources or quotes. Sometimes these stories may be propaganda that is intentionally designed to mislead the reader or may be designed as *clickbait* written for economic incentives (the writer profits on the number of people who click on the story).

Preston, Anderson, Robertson, Shephard and Huhe aver that, fake news can take several forms, ranging from instances in which visual or textual information is inserted into an article in order to subtly bias an argument one way or the other, to wholly fabricated content, often including extraordinary claims, which is created and shared systematically with the sole intention to deceive [9]. Fake content captures attention and spreads rapidly in comparison to real news and such items often employ emotionally charged language.

Facebook is a social media tool which was started in Feb 2004. Its founder is Mark Zuckerberg who was a student of Harvard University. From the beginning, Facebook was available only for the students of Harvard and then after some time it was available for everyone. In 2010, Facebook had about five hundred million consumers. Facebook was nominated as a frequently used social network website in Jan 2009. It was announced by search engine Google that more and more people visited Facebook in the world daily as compared to any other website. Features of Facebook include making bio data, adding other people as friends and transformation of messages, videos, pictures and giving point of views. Apart from this, its consumers can create and join different groups of common interest i.e. office places, educational institutions etc.

After presenting a conceptual overview of the term of fake

news, it is important to discuss the motivations behind the production and circulation of fake news on social media. According to Allcott and Gentzkow, there appear to be two main motivations for providing fake news. The first is pecuniary: news articles and posts that become viral on social media can draw significant advertising revenue when users click on the original website. Based on this conclusion, it comes as no surprise that pecuniary appears to have been the main motivation for most of the producers whose identities have been revealed (Mavridis, p. 16.) [10]. The second motivation, as Allcott and Gentzkow describe in their study about the spread of fake news during the US presidential elections, is ideological. In fact, some fake news providers seek to advance specific political points of views and distribute their propaganda by using misleading facts and data within their articles.

Compared with print, nearly twice as many adults often get news online, either from news apps or websites, on social media or both. Even though TV still continues to be the most widely used and preferred news platform, its audience is also shrinking. The changes can mainly be explained through demographics. Alternatively, the younger groups of adults are much more likely than older adults to turn to online platforms for news (Sydell, p. 8) [11]. Therefore, social media plays a crucial role in these trends. Social media users not only read their news online, they also participate in the spreading of news by sharing news stories, images or videos or discussing a news issue or event.

According to Bernal, Facebook not only aids those wishing to spread *fake news* but provides them with tools and incentives to do so [12]. The starting point is the creation of fake news. In the past this was relatively difficult. Neither printing presses nor paper were cheap or easily available until comparatively recently. They were often large and hard to conceal government censors could find dissident printers and destroy their presses. Sophr posits that, the stage-by-stage technological developments, from commonly available computers to desktop publishing to webpages to Facebook pages has made this progressively easier mostly in ways distinctly beneficial to freedom of speech, but also enabling the production of fake news [13]

Fake news stories are usually sensational and very likely to spread quickly. Because the platforms containing the news already have a massive reader base that awaits their information, the stories will most likely be believed by the people that read them.

These people will, in turn, share the story on social media (because who doesn't like to pride themselves on being one of the first to know), and the show, sadly, goes on and on. Sometimes, even after the story has been debunked, the fake news still prevails (Adeleke, para. 6.) [14]. Also, as regards to fake news, the Federal Government in Abuja launched a national campaign against fake news. According to the Minister of Information and Culture, Alhaji Lai Mohammed at the formal launching of the campaign stated that fake news was

becoming a huge threat to global peace, including Nigeria, that if left unchecked, could endanger not just Nigerians but human existence at large. The minister also described fake news as a dangerous threat to democracy and added that fake news when mixed with hate speech would amount to a disaster waiting to happen (Elebeke, para. 4.) [15].

On 5th July, 2018, the front-page headline of a national newspaper was: *Court orders National Assembly to begin impeachment of Buhari*. The problem with that news item is that it is fake news. According to the certified true copy of the order, the Presiding Judge of the Federal High Court in Oshogbo ordered that the applicants were hereby granted leave to issue and bring an Application for the order of Mandamus to compel 1st to 3rd Respondents to start impeachment proceedings against the 4th Respondent, the president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. This was manipulated to read that the court has given the go-ahead for the National Assembly to commence impeachment proceedings against the President. In 2017, a fake report circulated on the social media claimed that five students of the College of Education, GidanWaya, were ambushed and killed by Fulani herdsmen in Southern Kaduna. That report turned out to be false. No student was killed (Elebeke, 2018, para. 9.) [16].

1.2. Theoretical Underpinning

The study is anchored on the Technological Determinism Theory and also the Gatekeeping Theory respectively.

1.3. Technological Determinism Theory

According to Hess Technological determinism is a reductionist theory propounded by McLuhan's theory in 1963 which presumes that a society's technology drives the development of its social structure and cultural values [17]. The term is believed to have been coined by Thorstein Veblen, an American sociologist. Technological determinism has been defined as an approach that identifies technology, or technological advances, as the central causal element in processes of social change thus as a technology is stabilised, its design tends to dictate users' behaviours, consequently diminishing human agency (Philippe, p. 3.) [18]

This theory is relevant because social media exactly plays the same role attributed by McLuhan with number, game, and money along with traditional media of radio and television. Social Media users make use of identical applications and undertake almost similar activities that turn them into a homogeneous mass Likewise, online profiles reflect identity features and most of them consume social media to have fun. Social media platforms like Facebook connect people across cultures, religions, and boundaries and let them feel members of a single community. The platform has not only converted the world into a small village but also shaped every aspect of human social life. The prevalence of fake news on Facebook is attributed to the fact that Facebook is now an important

communication channel and source of news hence any information posted on the platform has a tendency of going viral.

1.4. Analysis

Gatekeeping Theory

The Theory was propounded by Kurt Zadek Lewin (1890-1947) Kurt Lewin coined the word called *Gate keeping*. It's nothing but to block unwanted or useless things by using a gate. Here the person who makes a decision is called *Gate-keeper*. Gatekeeping also sets a specific standard for information value. Through this process the unwanted, sensible and controversial information are removed by the gate keeper which helps to control the society or a group and letting them in a right path.

The application of Gatekeeping theory in this study is premised on how users can play a role in curtailing the prevalence of fake news on Facebook peddled by citizen journalists. The high level of participation assured by Facebook as a means of communication and information source, makes all users partake in some level of gatekeeping. When the users become the makers of information, the gatekeeper function changes significantly. As Ferreira submits, the gatekeeping theory in social media conditions ceases to make sense, as there is no understood gate [19].

2. Methodology

Mixed-method design was adopted in this study. The study combined two techniques which are; Survey and In-depth interview in gathering quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously. (300) questionnaires were used to gather quantitative data from Facebook users both males and females within the age range of 18 years and above from Rayfield, Miadiko and Zarmaganda areas of Jos South Local Government Area. (279) were retrieved and (21) were invalid. For the purpose of supplementing the data obtained from Facebook users on the topic under discuss which is not comprehensive enough to address the research questions raised, (3) journalists from the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) Jos chapter were interviewed to generate qualitative data which aided in arriving at a more conclusive outcome.

Table 1. Prevalence of Fake News on Facebook.

Question	Yes	No	Undecided	Total
6 Do you use Facebook?	263 (95%)	4 (1%)	12 (4%)	279 (100%)
Yes No Undecided Total				
7 Do you often come across fake news on Facebook Yes?	238 (85%)	8 (3%)	33 (12%)	279 (100%)
Yes No Undecided Total				
8 Facebook is the major source of fake news in	246 (88%)	18 (7%)		

Question Yes No Undecided Total

15 (5%) 279 (100%) 4

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Question Yes No Undecided Total Nigeria.

Yes No Undecided Total

9 Fake news is prevalent on Facebook because there are no gate-keeping mechanisms. 158 (57%) 31 (11%) 90 (32%) 279 (100%)
Yes No Undecided Total

10 Lack of regulation contributes to the prevalence of fake news on Facebook. 173 (62%) 21 (8%) 85 (30%) 279 (100%)
Yes No Undecided Total

11 There is need for a regulatory system to checkmate the spread of fake news on Facebook. 216 (77%) 56 (20%) 7 (3%) 279 (100%)
Yes No Undecided Total

12 The prevalence of fake news on Facebook can be attributed to the activities of citizen journalism. 198 (71%) 19 (7%) 62 (22%) 279 (100%)
Source: Survey, Jos-South 2022

The data presented in Table 1 above ascertains why fake news is prevalent on Facebook. Out of the two hundred and seventy-nine (279) respondents, 95% ($n=263$) affirmed that they are Facebook users, 1% ($n=4$) said they are not Facebook users while 4% ($n=12$) were undecided on whether they are Facebook users or not. Also, out of the two hundred and seventy-nine (279) respondents, 85% ($n=238$) affirmed that, they come across fake news on Facebook, 3% ($n=8$) said they do not come across fake news on Facebook while 12% ($n=33$) were undecided as to whether they come across fake news on Facebook or not.

The respondents were also asked if Facebook is the main source of fake news in Nigeria. Out of two hundred and seventy-nine (279) respondents, 88% ($n=246$) affirmed that, Facebook is the major source of fake news in Nigeria, 7% ($n=18$) said Facebook is not the main source of fake news in Nigeria while 5% ($n=15$) were undecided as to whether Facebook is the major source of fake news in Nigeria or not. Further findings show that, out of the two hundred and seventy-nine (279) respondents, 57% ($n=158$) affirmed that, fake news is prevalent on Facebook because there are no gate-keeping mechanisms, 11% ($n=31$) differed that, fake news is prevalent on Facebook because there are no gatekeeping mechanisms while 32% ($n=90$) were undecided as to whether fake news is prevalent on Facebook because there are no gatekeeping mechanisms or not. Also, out of the two hundred and seventy-nine (279) respondents, 62% ($n=173$) affirmed that lack of regulation contributes to the prevalent of fake news on Facebook, 8% ($n=21$) differed that lack of regulation contributes to prevalent of fake news on Facebook while 30% ($n=85$) were undecided as to whether lack regulation contributes to the prevalent of fake news on Facebook or not.

When asked if there need for a regulatory system to

checkmate the spread of fake news on Facebook, out of the two hundred and seventy-nine (279) respondents, 77% (n=216) affirmed that, there is need for a regulatory mechanism to checkmate the spread of fake news on Facebook, 20% (n=56) differed that there is need for a regulatory mechanism to checkmate the spread of news on Facebook. Further findings show that, out of the two hundred and seventy-nine (279) respondents, 71%(n=198) affirmed that, the prevalent of fake news on Facebook is attributed to the activities of citizen journalism, 7%(n=19) differed that, the prevalent of fake news on Facebook is attributed to the activities of citizen journalism, while 22%(n=62) were undecided as to whether, the prevalent of fake news on Facebook is attributed to the activities of citizen journalism or not.

These findings imply that Facebook is one of the mostly used social media platform forms among social media users hence lack of regulatory and gatekeeping mechanisms as well as activities of untrained journalists are the reasons for the prevalence of fake news on Facebook.

Table 2. Users Exposure to Fake News on Facebook.

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Question	Great Extent	Some Extent	Little Extent	No Extent	Total
13 To what extent do you get exposed to fake news on Facebook?	101 (36%)	96 (34%)	64 (23%)	18 (7%)	279 (100%)
	Great Extent	Some Extent	Little Extent	No Extent	Total
To what extent are information					
14 mostly sourced from Facebook news feed authentic?					
	31 (11%)	44 (16%)	97 (35%)	107 (38%)	279 (100%)
	Maximum	Moderate	Minimum	Slight	Total
15 What degree of exposure to fake news do you get on Facebook?	118 (42%)	67 (24%)	51 (18%)	43 (16%)	279 (100%)
	Yes	No	Un-		
	decided	Total			
16 Information on Facebook are mostly accurate and credible.	65 (23%)	122 (44%)	92 (33%)	279 (100%)	
	According to the respondents, most information on Facebook	Tend to be rumours,			
17 If No: Why?					

Source: Survey, Jos-South 2022 unverified, manipulated, and untrue. They also said, they are mostly misrepresented facts and deceptions

The data presented in Table 2 above ascertains the extent to which users are exposed to fake news on Facebook. Out of the two hundred and seventy-nine (279) respondents, 36% (n=101) said they get exposed to fake news on Facebook to a *Great Extent*, 34% (n=96) said they get exposed to fake news on Facebook to *Some Extent*, 23% (n=64) said they get exposed to fake news on Facebook to a *Little Extent* while 7% (n=18) said they get exposed to fake news on Facebook to *No*

Extent. Also, out of the two hundred and seventy-nine (279) respondents, 11% (n=31) said most information sourced from Facebook are authentic to a *Great Extent*, 16% (n=44) said most information sourced from Facebook are authentic to *Some Extent*, 35% (n=97) said most information sourced from Facebook are authentic to a *Little Extent* while 38% (n=107) said most information sourced from Facebook are authentic *No Extent*.

The respondents were also asked the degree of exposure to fake news they get on Facebook. Findings show that, out of the two hundred and seventy-nine (279) respondents, 42% (n=118) said degree of exposure to fake news they get on Facebook is *Maximum*, 24% (n=67) said degree of exposure to fake news they get on Facebook is *Moderate*, 18% (n=51) said degree of exposure to fake news they get on Facebook is *Minimum* while 16% (n=43) said degree of exposure to fake news they get on Facebook is *Slightly*. Furthermore, out of the two hundred and seventy-nine respondents, 23% (n=65) affirmed that information on Facebook are mostly credible, 44% (n=122) differed that information on Facebook are mostly credible while 33% (n=92) were Undecided as to whether information on Facebook are mostly credible or not. Consequently, those who differed identified; unverified sources, rumours, manipulation and misrepresentation facts, as reasons why information on Facebook are mostly not credible.

These findings imply that; Facebook users are exposed to fake news on Facebook to a great extent. This is due to fact that most information on Facebook news feed are to a great extent from unauthentic sources which in turn subject users to maximum exposure to incredible and inaccurate information.

Table 3. How Users Authenticate the Credibility of News on Facebook.

Question Yes No Undecided Total

18 Do you factcheck information you come across on Facebook?
109 (39%) 84 (30%) 86 (31%) 279 (100%) Check Media Check Online Others Total

How do you verify news stories

19 you come across on Facebook news feed?

126 (45%) 101 (36%) 52 (19%) 279 (100%) 6

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Question Yes No Undecided Total

Very Consistent Consistent Not Very Consistent Not Consistent
Total

20 How consistent do you use the method (as indicated above)? 59 (21%) 79 (28%) 80 (29%) 61 (22%) 279 (100%) Source: Survey, Jos-South 2022

The data presented in Table 3 above ascertains how Face-

book users verify and authenticate the credibility of news on Facebook. Out of the two hundred and seventy-nine (279) respondents, 39% ($n=109$) said they factcheck information they come across on Facebook, 30% ($n=84$) said they do not factcheck information they come across on Facebook while 31% ($n=86$) were undecided as to whether they fact check information they come across on Facebook or not. Also, out of the two hundred and seventy-nine (279) respondents, 45% ($n=126$) said they verify news stories they come across on Facebook news feed by checking it up in the mainstream media, 36% ($n=101$) said they verify news stories they come across on Facebook news feed by checking it up in other online sources while 19% ($n=52$) said they verify news stories they come across on Facebook news feed by employing methods such as: social media handles of news outlets, websites, google and eye witness.

Finally, the respondents were asked how consistent they used the method they used in verifying the news they come across on Facebook news feed. Out of the two hundred and seventy-nine (279) respondents, 21% ($n=59$) said they use the verification method *Very Consistent*, 28% ($n=79$) said they *Consistently* use the verification method, 29% ($n=80$) said they *Not Very Consistent* in using the verification method, while 22% ($n=61$) said they *Not Consistent* in using the verification method.

These findings imply that fact checking is still not being considered by Facebook users. However, in order to authenticate the credibility of the information they come across on Facebook, users check mainstream media, credible online sources, websites as well as seek confirmation from eye witness.

Analysis of Qualitative Data Gathered Through In-Depth Interview

In answering the first research question, which seeks to ascertain why fake news is prevalent on Facebook, the respondents said economic gain is one of the major factors responsible for the prevalence of fake news on Facebook.

According to the respondents, some people purposefully transmit fake news on Facebook because users follow, share, like and comment on such posts which at the end the poster is paid by Facebook for traffic generation. Furthermore, the respondents submit that people fabricate sensational headlines and stories on Facebook just to get users to read their contents and gain more followership without minding the consequences of such information on the larger society. Second to that, is political motivation. According to the respondents, political players make use of facebook to disseminate propagandas meant to dent the image of political opponents. During political campaigns, a lot of bloggers and other social media users use Facebook to transmit fake news in order to discredit their perceived political opponents. Lastly, fake news is prevalent on Facebook because people want to be popular. One of the fastest ways of becoming popular is by consistently posting contents on Facebook, as such the users are not usually mindful of the quality of information they are

sending out on Facebook.

In addressing the question; what strategies should be adopted to curb the prevalence of fake news on Facebook. The respondents said Facebook should develop a system that analyses the authenticity of any information shared by an unverified account. If such information is discovered to be fake, the account should be blocked, restricted. Orientation is another way of curtailing the prevalence of fake news on Facebook.

In addressing the question; Is there a need for a regulatory system to checkmate the spread of fake news on Facebook and how. The respondents posit that the regulation should come from the company and not the government because there is a lack of trust between the government and the general public. If the government should regulate Facebook, then users' freedom of expression will be infringed upon due to governments tendency of being authoritarian.

3. Discussion

From the findings of the study, it has been deduced that the lack of an efficient gatekeeping and regulatory mechanism is the principal reason why Facebook has become littered with fake news. The prevalence of fake news on Facebook has been phenomenal. Even though the platform has enhanced communication and information sharing, the proliferation of fake news has one of its downsides. Several reasons and factors have been identified as to why Facebook is a breeding ground for fake news. Apart from its information sharing agility which aids fast spread of fake news, lack of gatekeeping and regulatory mechanisms as well as activities of journalism are the other salient factors that significantly contribute to the prevalent of fake news on Facebook, as seen in 57% of the sampled population affirmed that, fake news is prevalent on Facebook because there are no gatekeeping mechanisms while 62% affirmed that, lack of regulation contributes to the prevalent of fake news on Facebook.

From the findings of the study, it has also been deduced that Facebook users are significantly exposed to fake news. Facebook as a company set standards which have provided some level of regulation. However, the regulatory and gatekeeping mechanism adopted by Facebook, is significantly inefficient and does not prevent Facebook users from being exposed to fake news as seen in Table 2. 36% of the sampled population said they get exposed to fake news on Facebook to a *Great Extent*, 34% said they get exposed to fake news on Facebook to *Some Extent* and 23% said they get exposed to fake news on Facebook to a *Little Extent*. The standards employed by Facebook only shield users from abusive and violent language, racism, bully, and so on. These standards are primarily put in place to promote diversity and equality in all virtual communities domiciled in Facebook, as such their scope does not cover the prevention of fake news as seen in Table 2, 42% of the sampled population said degree of exposure to fake news

they get on Facebook is *Maximum*, 24% said degree of exposure to fake news they get on Facebook is *Moderate*, 18% said degree of exposure to fake news they get on Facebook is *Minimum* while 16% said degree of exposure to fake news they get on Facebook is *Slightly*. Any information that has the element of abusive and violent language, racism, bully and so on can be easily flagged off or taken down by Facebook. In some cases, posters of such information are banned or given other form of penalty depending on the regulation breached. Even with this provision in place, Facebook users are still being misinformed and uninformed.

4. Conclusion

From the findings of the study, there is a strong connection between the activities of citizen journalists, political motivation as well as economic gains and the prevalence of fake news on Facebook which underlines the need for an effective regulatory system. Facebook users have a significant role to play in checkmating fake news on Facebook. This can be done by fact checking which has not been considered by most Facebook users. The importance of fact checking in curtailing the spread of fake news cannot be overemphasised. Once users become familiar with the various fact checking techniques and begin to apply them before sharing any news on Facebook it places them as the gatekeepers on the platform and the tendency of fast spread of disinformation, rumours, exaggerated and bias information diminishes significantly. In line with the findings of this study, the following recommendations have been made:

- 1) The government through Nigerian Broadcasting Commission (NBC (Nigerian Broadcasting Commission)) should come up with Online Journalism Codes and should have a unit that regulates the activities of online Journalists.
- 2) Mainstream media outfits that have Facebook accounts should synergise with Facebook and develop a social media monitoring system that identifies and isolates any news that has the elements of disinformation and misinformation.
- 3) The Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) should develop a comprehensive digital database for bloggers and online journalists. This will enable easy tracking of online news sources.
- 4) Facebook users should imbibe the culture of fact checking information before sharing them with family and friends.
- 5) Lastly, future researchers should consider using a different methodology content analysis to be precise. This will widen the empirical depth of the study.

Abbreviations

BMI Body Mass Index

NUJ Nigerian Union of Journalists
NBC Nigerian Broadcasting Commission

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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