

ROLE OF NIGERIAN JOURNALISTS IN COMBATING FAKE NEWS AND MISINFORMATION IN THE DIGITAL AGE: A STUDY OF DITV, KADUNA AND NAGARTA RADIO, KADUNA

Buhari Yunusa

Department Of Journalism And Media Studies
Nuhu Bamalli Polytechnic, Zaria
08039246086

Buharinzazzau@gmail.com

&

Tinat Elizabeth Zugwai

Department Of Journalism And Media Studies
Nuhu Bamalli Polytechnic, Zaria

Abstract

The spread of fake news and misinformation has become a serious challenge in today's digital world, especially in Nigeria where social media is widely used for news consumption. This study investigates the role of Nigerian journalists in combating fake news and misinformation in the digital age, with focus on journalists working at DITV, Kaduna and Nagarta Radio Kaduna. The study adopted a Survey research design, using structured questionnaire to collect data. A census sampling technique was used, involving 43 journalists from DITV, Kaduna and Nagarta Radio, Kaduna. Data were analyzed using simple percentage and frequency. The findings revealed that 90.7% of the respondents identified fake news and misinformation as a major problem in Nigeria. The study further discovered that 95.3% of the journalists use social media in their work, making them highly exposed to unverified information. To address this challenge, 97.3% of them reported using fact-checking tools before broadcasting news. Among these tools, News Guard (48.8%) was the most frequently used. Fact-checking was considered crucial, as 48.8% of the respondents rated it as most important in their journalistic practice. In addition, 51.1% of them agreed that the spread of fake news and misinformation negatively affects the credibility of journalism in Nigeria. The study also found that journalists rely heavily on professional verification strategies, with 53.5% using multiple credible sources to confirm information before dissemination. Despite these efforts, major challenges were identified, including the rapid spread of misinformation on social media (62.7%). Furthermore, 76.7% of the respondents had received training on fact-checking tools. However, 100% agreed that there is need for more training and capacity-building programs to strengthen journalists' ability to combat fake news effectively. Regular training,

improved access to digital verification tools, collaboration with fact-checking organizations and increased efforts to promote media literacy among the public were recommended. The theories adopted were Gatekeeping Theory and Agenda Setting Theory.

Keywords: Nigerian Journalists, Fake News, Misinformation, Digital Age

Introduction

The spread of fake news and misinformation is a big problem in today's digital world (Allcott & Gentile, 2017). Social media has made it easy for false information to spread quickly, which can harm journalism and democracy (UNESCO, 2018). According to a report by the Reuters Institute, fake news and misinformation are also a problem, with many people getting their news from social media (Adeyanju, 2020). The Nigerian Press Council has warned that fake news and misinformation can damage the credibility of journalism in the country (NPC, 2020).

The digital age has revolutionized the way information is created, disseminated and consumed. The proliferation of social media platforms, online news outlets and blogs have democratized access to information, allowing anyone to become a content creator. However, this freedom has led to proliferation of fake news and misinformation which can spread rapidly and have far-reaching consequences (Vosoughi *et al.*, 2018).

Fake news and misinformation can have serious effects on individuals, communities, and societies. They manipulate public opinion, influence elections, and even incite violence. In this context, the role of journalists in combating fake news and misinformation has become more crucial than ever, journalists have long been the gate keepers of information, responsible for verifying facts, providing context and holding those in power accountable. In the digital age, their roles have evolved to include not only reporting news but also combating fake news and misinformation (Wardle & Derakhshon, 2017).

This study will explore the role of Nigerian journalists in combating fake news and misinformation. The strategies they use to verify information, and the importance of media literacy in the digital age. According to Wojcieszak *et al*, (2020) the proliferation of fake news and misinformation has become a pressing concern globally, with far-reaching consequences for individuals, communities and society as a whole.

The digital age has enabled the rapid dissemination of information, making it easier for false information to spread quickly and widely (Agbaje, 2017). In Nigeria, the spread of fake news and misinformation has been linked to various social, economic and political problems, including electoral violence, public health crises and social unrest (Adeyanju, 2019). The role of journalists in combating fake news and misinformation is crucial particularly in a country like Nigeria where the media play a significant role in shaping public discourse (Lukito, 2020). Journalists have a unique position in the information ecosystem, with the public opinion (Shoemake & Reese, 1996).

The role of journalists in combating fake news and misinformation is crucial, particularly in a country like Nigeria where the media plays a significant role in shaping public discourse (Lukito, 2020). Journalists have a unique position in the information ecosystem, with the ability to reach wide audiences and influence public opinion (Shoe Maker & Reese, 1996). However, the spread of fake news and misinformation poses significant challenges to journalists, including the need to verify information, identify credible sources, and navigate the complexities of digital media (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017).

Despite these challenges, Nigerian journalists have a critical role in promoting fact-based reporting and reducing the spread of fake news and misinformation, by leveraging their expertise, skills and influence, journalists can help to shape public discourse, promote media literacy and

foster a culture of critical thinking (Mihailidis & Viotty, 2017). Therefore, this study explores the role of Nigerian journalists in combating fake news and misinformation in the digital age with a special focus on the journalists working with DITV, Kaduna and Nagarta Radio, Kaduna.

Statement of the Problem

Fake news and misinformation are spreading quickly in Nigeria, many people get false information from social media, which can lead to confusion, fear and wrong decisions. Journalists who are supposed to report the truth, are facing challenges in stopping the spread of fake news. Nigerian journalists are struggling to combat fake news because they lack the necessary skills, resources, and support they often have to undergo pressure to meet deadlines, which can lead to mistakes and inaccuracies in their reporting. Moreover, the rise of social media has made it easier for fake news to spread quickly making it harder for journalists to keep up.

Based on the above background, this study investigates the role of Nigerian journalists in combating fake news and misinformation with special focus on the journalists working at DITV, Kaduna and Nagarta Radio, Kaduna. The study therefore examines the challenges faced by Journalists and the strategies they use to combat fake news and misinformation as well as its impact on journalism practice in Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What are the challenges faced by Nigerian journalists in identifying and combating fake news and misinformation?
2. How do Nigerian journalists verify information and ensure accuracy in their reporting?
3. What impact does fake news and misinformation have on the credibility of journalism practice in Nigeria?
4. What are the strategies adopted by Nigerian journalists in promoting truth, accuracy and accountability in their reporting?

Review of Related Literature

The role of journalists in combating fake news and misinformation has been extensively studied in recent years by many scholars. David *et al.* (2018) conducted a comprehensive study on the science of fake news, emphasizing the need for a multidisciplinary approach to understanding fake news. The researchers identify several key factors that contribute to the spread of fake news, including social media algorithms, echo chamber and the lack of media literacy. They highlighted the importance of fact-checking and verification in combating fake news. The study suggested that journalists and other stakeholders can play a crucial role in promoting fact-based reporting and reducing the spread of fake news.

Mcintyre (2018) conducted a study on the effects of fake news on democracy. The researcher found that fake news can have significant consequences for democracy including the erosion of trust in institutions and the manipulation of public opinion. The study highlights the needs for more research on the impact of fake news on democracy and the role of journalists in promoting fact-based reporting. The study suggests that journalists and other stakeholders need to take steps to mitigate the impacts of fake news on democracy.

Wassermam & Madrid-morales (2019) conducted a study on the relationship between fake news and media trust in three African countries. The researchers found that fake news can erode media trust and that journalists need to take step to promote transparency and accountability. They highlighted the need for more research on the impacts of fake news on media trust and the roles of journalists in promoting fact-based reporting. The study recommends that journalists and other stake holders need to be aware of the political consequences of fake news and the steps to mitigate its impact.

Freelon & Wells (2020) conducted a study on disinformation as a form of political communication. The researchers found that disinformation

can be used as a tool for political manipulation and that social media plays a significant role in spreading disinformation. They highlighted the need for more research on the role of social media in spreading disinformation and the impact of disinformation on democracy. The study's findings suggest that journalists and other stakeholders need to be aware of the political consequences of disinformation and take steps to mitigate its impacts.

Balod & Hameteers (2021) conducted a study on the role of perception of Filipino journalists in an era of misinformation and disinformation. The researcher found that journalists believe they have crucial role to play in combating fake news and promoting fact-based reporting. They highlighted the need for journalists to take active roles in fact checking and verification and to promote media literacy among their audiences. The study suggests that journalists can play a crucial role in promoting fact-based reporting and reducing the spread of fake news.

Ha *et al.* (2021) conducted a study to map the recent development in scholarship of fake news and misinformation. The researcher found that the field is interdisciplinary with contributions from communications studies, psychology, computer science and other disciplines. They highlighted the need for more research on solutions to combat fake news and misinformation, including the development of effective fact checking strategies and the promotion of media literacy. The study recommends that journalists and other stakeholders can play a crucial role in promoting fact-based reporting and reducing the spread of fake news.

Di Domenico *et al.* (2021) conducted a systematic review on fake news and misinformation. The researchers identified several key research gaps including the need for more studies on the prevalence of disinformation and misinformation. They also highlighted the importance of understanding the role of social media in spreading fake news and the need for more research and the impact of fake news on democracy. The study's findings suggest that journalists and other stakeholders need to be aware of the political consequences of fake news and take step to mitigate its impact.

Researchers Elena Broda & Jasper Stromback (2024) conducted a systematic literature review to understand the differences between misinformation, disinformation and fake news. Their study highlights the importance of understanding these concepts and the need for a multidisciplinary approach to combat these issues. The researchers found that misinformation refers to false or inaccurate information and disinformation refers to intentionally false or misleading information, and fake news refers to a fabricated information that is presented as factual. They emphasize the need for journalists, policy makers and other stakeholders to work together to develop effective strategies to combat fake news and misinformation.

It's important to note some of the gaps identified in the literature reviewed. Consequently, many studies focus on the impact of fake news on audiences, but fewer explore the experiences and challenges faced by journalists in combating fake news and misinformation and many studies identified the problems of fake news and misinformation. Fewer propose and evaluate effective solutions including strategies for journalists to combat fake news and misinformation in the digital age. More research is needed on how contextual factors, such as cultural, social and political environment influence the spread of fake news and the role of journalists in combating it. More researches are also needed to understand the potential benefits and challenges of collaboration and coordination between journalists, fact checkers and other stakeholders in combating fake news. Therefore, this study intends to fill this gap by examining the role of Nigerian journalists in combating fake news and misinformation in the digital age with a special focus on the journalists working at DITV, Kaduna and Nagarta Radio, Kaduna.

Theoretical Framework

Gate Keeping Theory

Gate Keeping Theory developed by Kurt Lewin (1947) and later expanded by David Manning White suggests that Journalists act as gatekeepers of information, deciding what to publish or broadcast and what to discard. This theory is relevant to the role of Journalists in combating fake news and misinformation because it highlights the importance of journalists' judgement and decision-making in selecting and presenting information to the public. In the context of fake news and misinformation, Gate Keeping Theory can help us understand how journalists can:

- a. Evaluate the credibility of sources and information
- b. Identify and filter out misinformation
- c. Prioritize fact-based reporting and fact-checking
- d. Make decisions about what information to publish or broadcast, and how to present it.

By applying Gate Keeping Theory, journalists can take a more intentional and critical approach to selecting and presenting information, which can help us reduce the spread of fake news and misinformation.

Basic Assumptions of the Theory

1. Information filtering: Gate keepers filter and select information based on their own criteria, values, and biases.
2. Gate keeping process: The gatekeeping process involved multiple stages, including selection, editing, and dissemination of information.
3. Influence on public discourse: Gate keepers play a significant role in shaping public discourse by determining what information is presented to the public.

Relation of the Gatekeeping Theory to the Topic of Study

The role of journalists in combating fake news and misinformation in the digital age, the gate keeping theory is highly relevant. Journalists act as gate

keepers who can:

1. Filter out information: By verifying information and sources, journalists can filter out fake news and misinformation and prevent it spread.
2. Select credible sources: Journalists can prioritize credible sources and fact-check information to ensure accuracy and trustworthiness.
3. Shape public discourse: By selecting and presenting accurate information, journalists can shape public discourse and promote informed decision-making.

Implications:

1. Journalists must be aware of their gatekeeping role and take responsibility for ensuring the accuracy and credibility of the information they present.
2. The gatekeeping process can be influenced by various factors, including personal biases, organizational pressures and technological constraints.
3. In the digital age, gatekeeping is more complex with multiple sources and platforms competing for attention.

Agenda Setting Theory

Agenda Setting Theory developed by Maxwell Mc Combs and Donald Shaw (1972/1973) suggests that media outlets have the power to influence public agenda by selecting which issues to cover and how much attention to give them. This theory is relevant to the role of journalists in combating fake news and misinformation because it highlights the potential for journalists to shape public discourse and influence what issues are considered important. In the context of fake news and misinformation, Agenda Setting Theory can help us to understand how journalists can:

- a. Prioritize coverage of fact- checking and debunking misinformation.
- b. Highlight the importance of fact-based reporting and critical thinking.

- c. Influence public discourse and shape the agenda around issues related to fake news and misinformation.
- d. Use their platforms to promote media literacy and critical thinking skills among audiences.

By applying Agenda Setting Theory, journalists can take a more proactive approach in shaping public discourse and promoting fact-based reporting, which can help to reduce the spread of fake news and misinformation.

Basic Assumptions of Agenda Setting Theory

1. Media influence: The media has the power to shape public opinion and set the agenda for public discourse.
2. Selection and emphasis: media outlets select and emphasize certain issues or topics, thereby influencing what the public considers important.
3. Transfer of salience: the media's emphasis on certain issues or topics transfers to the public's perception of their importance.

Relation of Agenda Setting Theory to the topic of study

The role of journalists in combating fake news and misinformation in the digital age, the Agenda Setting Theory is relevant in the following ways:

- 1) Setting the Agenda: journalists play a crucial role in setting the agenda by selecting and emphasizing certain issues or topics, which can help combat fake news and misinformation.
- 2) Prioritizing accuracy: by prioritizing accurate and trustworthy information, journalists can set an agenda that promotes fact-based discourse and reduces the spread of misinformation.
- 3) Countering fake news: journalists can use their agenda-setting power to counter fake news and misinformation by highlighting credible sources and fact-checking information.

Implications

1. Journalists must be aware of their agenda-setting power and use it responsibly to promote accurate and trustworthy information.

2. The media's agenda- setting power can be used to raise awareness about the importance of fact-checking and media literacy.
3. By setting a responsible agenda, journalists can help shape public discourse and promote informed decision making.

These two theories can provide a useful framework for understanding the role of journalists in combating fake news and misinformation and can inform strategies for promoting truth and accuracy in the media.

Methodology

This study employed a Survey Research Method utilizing questionnaire to gather data from journalists working at DITV, Kaduna and Nagarta Radio, Kaduna. The questionnaire was designed to collect information on their perceptions, experiences and strategies in combating fake news and misinformation in the digital age (Oppenheim, 2000).

The population of the study consists of 43 journalists from DITV, Kaduna (16) and Nagarta Radio, Kaduna (27). Given the small size of the population, a Census approach was employed, whereby all the 43 journalists were included in the study to gather comprehensive insights on their role in combating fake news and misinformation in the digital age (Creswell, 2014).

The sample size of this study was 43 journalists, which represents the entire population of journalists from DITV, Kaduna (16) and Nagarta Radio, Kaduna (27). This approach is supported by Scholars who argue that a Census approach can provide more accurate results when the population is small and well defined (Fink, 2003). A Census approach was employed where all members of the population were included in the study. This involves identifying and contacting all 43 journalists from the selected media organizations to participate in the study, ensuring a comprehensive understanding on the role of journalists in combating fake news and misinformation in the digital age. As noted by Creswell (2014), a Census approach can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the population, reducing sample bias and increasing the validity of findings. For

the purpose of this study, questionnaires were used as instruments of data collection and 43 questionnaires were distributed.

The data were analyzed and interpreted in the light of the conditions under which it was based for future use. In addition, consistency of results was taken into consideration in arriving at the conclusion. Data analysis involved:

- i. Descriptive Statistics: Frequencies, percentages and means were used to summarize responses to questionnaire items (Field, 2013)
- ii. Data visualization: Tables were used to present findings in clear and concise manner (Tufle, 2001).

Data Analysis, Presentation and Interpretation

Table 1: Do you use any fact-checking tools or resources in your work?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	42	97.7%
No	1	2.3%
Total	43	100%

Table 1 indicates that 42 respondents (97.7%) use fact checking tools or resources in their work, while only 1 respondent (2.3%) does not use it. It could be understood that majority of the respondents (97.7%) use fact checking tools in their work probably because they want to maintain accuracy and accountability in their reports which will translate to maintaining highest standard of journalism practice among the Nigerian journalists.

Table 2: Which of the fact-checking tools do you use often to detect fake news and misinformation?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Snopes	2	4.7%
Politfact	5	11.6%
Google fact Checker	13	30.2%
News Guard	21	48.8%
Others	2	4.7%
Total	43	100%

Table 2 indicates that 21 respondents (48.8) use news guard, 13 respondents (30.2%) use Google fact checker, 5 respondents (11.6%) use politifact, 2 respondents (4.7%) use snopes, while 2 respondents (4.7%) other fact checking tools. This shows that majority of the respondents (48.8%) use news guard as their fact-checking tool probably because it is the most popular and simple tool to verify news and information.

Table 3: How Important is Fact-Checking in your Work?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Not important	-	-
Important	6	14%
Very Important	16	37.2%
Most Important	21	48.8%
Total	43	100%

Table 3 indicates that 21 respondents (48.8%) see fact-checking as most important in their work, 16 respondents (37.2%) see fact checking as very important in their work, then 6 respondents (14%) see fact checking as important in their work. This reveals that majority of the respondents (48.8%) see fact-checking as most important in their work probably because it helps them maintain the standard of journalism practice such as truth, accuracy and credibility. Fact checking also prevent the spread of false information before they go viral.

Table 4: Do you agree that the spread of fake news and misinformation affects the credibility of journalism practice in Nigeria?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agreed	18	41.9%
Agreed	22	51.1%
Disagreed	2	4.7%
Strongly Disagreed	1	2.3%
Total	43	100%

Table 4 indicates that 22 respondents (51.1%) agreed that the spread of fake news and misinformation affects the credibility of journalism practice in Nigeria, while 18 respondents (41.9%) strongly agreed, 2 respondents (4.7%) disagreed and only 1 respondent (2.3%) strongly disagreed. This shows that the majority of the respondents (51.1%) agreed that the spread of fake news and misinformation affect the credibility of journalism practice in Nigeria probably because when false stories goes viral people/audience will lose confidence in the media.

Table 5: Do you agree that social media platforms can be used in combating fake news and misinformation?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agreed	14	32.6%
Agreed	26	60.4%
Disagreed	2	4.7%
Strongly Disagreed	1	2.3%
Total	43	100%

Table 5 indicates that 26 respondents (60.4%) agreed that social media platforms can be used in combating fake news and misinformation, 14 respondents (32.6%) strongly agreed, 2 respondents (4.7%) disagreed, while only 1 respondent (2.3%) strongly disagreed. This signifies that majority of the respondents (60.4%) agreed that social media can be used in combating fake news and misinformation probably because news on social media platforms spreads faster so journalists can also use the same platform to counter the spread of fake news and misinformation.

Table 6: Have you received any training on fact-checking tools that aid in combating fake news and misinformation?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	33	76.7%
No	10	23.3%
Total	43	100%

Table 6 indicates that 33 respondents (76.7%) have received training on fact-checking tools that aid in combating fake news and misinformation, while 10 respondents (23.3%) didn't receive any training. This shows that majority of the respondents (76.7%) received training on fact-checking tools which aid them in combating fake news and misinformation probably because the media in Nigeria see it (the spread of fake news and misinformation) as a major threat to journalism practice.

Table 7: Do you think there is need for more training and capacity building for journalists on how to combat fake news and misinformation?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	43	100%
No	-	-
Total	43	100%

Table 7 indicates that all the 43 respondents (100%) think there is need for more training and capacity building for journalists on how to combat fake news and misinformation. This reveals that all the respondents (100%) agree that there is need for more training on capacity building for journalists on how to combat fake news and misinformation. This will help to equip more journalists in Nigeria with the requisite knowledge to combat fake news and misinformation particularly in this digital age.

Table 8: What strategies do you use to verify information before broadcasting?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Use Multiple Credible Sources	23	53.5%
Use Analytics to track and correct misinformation spread	10	23.3%
Attend Training on Data Journalism	7	16.2%
Others	1	2.3%
No Response	2	4.7%
Total	43	100%

Table 8 indicates that 23 respondents (53.5%) use multiple credible sources, 10 respondents (23.3%) use Analytics to track and correct misinformation spread, 7 respondents (16.2%) attend Training on Data Journalism, 1 respondent (2.3%) use other strategies and 2 respondents (4.7%) didn't respond. This shows that majority of the respondents (53.5%) use multiple credible sources probably because they want the public to trust and have confidence in every news that comes from them because misinformation can lead to crisis in a Nation.

Table 9: What are the biggest challenges you face in combating fake news and misinformation?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Social Media	27	62.7%
Limited Time frame	10	23.3%
Lack of Digital Equipment	4	9.3%
No Response	2	4.7%
Total	43	100%

Table 9 indicates that 27 respondents (62.7%) see social media as their biggest challenge in combating fake news and misinformation, 10 respondents (23.3%) see limited time frame as their major challenge, 4 respondents (9.3%) see lack of digital equipment as their biggest challenge, while only 2 respondents (4.7%) didn't respond to the question. This reveals

that majority of the respondents (62.7%) see social media as their biggest challenge in combating fake news and misinformation probably because fake news travel faster on platforms like WhatsApp, Twitter and Facebook which are all social media and they are easily accessible to young people.

Table 10: What role do you think journalists can play in promoting Media literacy and critical thinking among Nigerian public to combat fake news and misinformation?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Evaluate information and source	10	23.3%
Verify Information before Publishing	25	58.1%
Teaching the public how to verify information	8	18.6%
Total	43	100%

Table 10 indicates that 25 respondents (58.1%) think journalists should verify information before publishing. 10 respondents (23.3%) think journalists should evaluate information and their sources, while 8 respondents (18.6%) think journalists should teach people on how to verify Information. This indicates that majority of the respondents (58.1%) thinks journalists can play a role in promoting media literacy and critical thinking among Nigerian public to combat fake news and misinformation by verifying information before publishing probably because if they share wrong information they will be held responsible because the public believe whatever comes from them (they will lose credibility).

Discussion of Findings

Research question one: What are the challenges faced by journalists in identifying and combating fake news and misinformation?

To answer this question, table 9 was analyzed which shows that 27 respondents (62.7%) see social media as their biggest challenge, 10 respondents (23.3%) see limited time frame as their major challenge, 4 respondents (9.3%) see lack of digital equipment as their biggest challenge,

while only 2 respondents (4.7%) didn't respond to the question. This reveals that majority of the respondents (62.7%) see social media as their biggest challenge in combating fake news and misinformation probably because fake news travel faster on platforms like WhatsApp, Twitter and Facebook which are all social media and they are easily accessible to young people. This result is in line with a study conducted by Freelon and Wells (2020) who found that disinformation can be used as a tool for political manipulation and that social media plays a significant role in spreading disinformation. David et al. (2018) also identify several key factors that contribute to the spread of fake news, including social media algorithms.

Research question two: How do Nigerian journalists verify information and ensure accuracy in their reporting?

To answer this question, table 2 was analyzed which shows that 21 respondents (48.8%) use news guard to verify information and ensure accuracy in their report, 13 respondents (30.2%) use the Google fact checker, 5 respondents (11.61%) use the polifact, 2 respondents (4.7%) use other fact checking tools. This signifies that majority of the respondents (48.8%) use news guard as their fact-checking tool to verify information and ensure accuracy in their reporting probably because it is the most popular and simple tool to verify news/Information. Further explanation in table 3 indicates that 21 respondents (48.8%) see fact checking as the most important in their work, 16 respondents (37.2%) see fact checking as very important in their work, then 6 respondents (14%) see fact checking as important in their work. This indicates that majority of the respondents (48.8%) see fact checking as most important in their work probably because it upholds truth and credibility. Fact-checking prevent the spread of false information before they go viral. In line with this David et al, (2018) highlighted the importance of fact-checking and verification in combating fake news. Their study suggested that journalists and other stakeholders can play a crucial role in promoting fact-based reporting and reducing the spread of fake news. Also Balad and

Hameteers (2021) highlighted the need for journalists to take active roles in fact checking and verification and to promote media literacy among their audiences. They suggested that journalists can play a crucial role in promoting fact-based reporting and reducing the spread of fake news.

Research questions three: what impact does fake news and misinformation have on the credibility of journalism in Nigeria?

To answer this question, table 4 indicates that 22 respondents (51.1%) agreed that the spread of fake news and misinformation affects the credibility of journalism practice in Nigeria, while 18 respondents (41.9%) strongly agreed, 2 respondents (4.7%) disagreed and only 1 respondent (2.3%) strongly disagreed. This shows that majority of the respondents (51.1%) agreed that the spread of fake news and misinformation affects the credibility of journalism practice in Nigeria probably because when false news goes viral, people tend to lose confidence on the Media and in particular the journalists. In line with this McIntyre (2018) conducted a study on the effects of fake news on democracy. The researcher found that fake news can have significant consequences for democracy including the erosion of trust in institutions and the manipulation of public opinion. The study highlights the needs for more research on the impact of fake news on democracy and the role of journalists in promoting fact-based reporting. Wassermam & Madrid-morales (2019) also in a study found that fake news can erode media trust and that journalists need to take step to promote transparency and accountability. They highlighted the need for more research on the impacts of fake news on media trust and the roles of journalists in promoting fact-based reporting.

Research question four: what strategies can the Nigerian journalists use to promote truth, accuracy and accountability in their reporting?

To answer this question, Table 8 shows that 23 respondents (53.5%) use multiple credible sources to promote truth, accuracy and accountability in their reporting, 10 respondents (23.3%) use Analytics to track and correct

misinformation spread, 7 respondents (16.2%) attend Training on Data Journalism, 2 respondents (4.7%) didn't respond to the question, then only 1 respondent (2.3%) use other strategies. This reveals that majority of the respondents (53.48%) use multiple credible sources. probably because they want the public to trust and believe every news that comes from them because misinformation can lead to crisis in a Nation. Table 10 also reveals that 25 respondents (58.1%) suggested journalists should verify information before publishing. 10 respondents (23.3) suggested journalists should evaluate information and their sources, while 8 respondents (18.6%) suggested journalists should teach people on how to verify Information. This indicates that majority of the respondents (58.1%) suggested that journalists can play a great role in promoting media literacy and critical thinking among Nigerian public to combat fake news and misinformation by verifying information before publishing probably because if they share wrong information they will be held responsible because the public believe whatever comes from them (they will lose credibility). On this note, Ha *et al.* (2021) highlighted the need for more research on solutions to combat fake news and misinformation, including the development of effective fact checking strategies and the promotion of media literacy. They recommended that journalists and other stakeholders can play a crucial role in promoting fact-based reporting and reducing the spread of fake news.

Conclusion

The study examines the Role of Nigerian Journalists in combating Fake News and Misinformation in the Digital Age with a special focus on the journalists working with DITV, Kaduna and Nagarta Radio, Kaduna. The study reveals that majority of journalists use fact checking tools to verify information before publication. The evidence is clear that majority of the journalists received training on fact checking tools that aid them in combating fake news and misinformation. The findings also indicate that Nigerian

journalists use multiple credible sources to promote truth, accuracy and accountability in their reporting. The study further reveals that fake news and misinformation are a major problem in Nigeria journalism. In other words, majority of journalists use social media platforms to combat fake news and misinformation.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were offered by the researcher:

1. There is also the need for media organisations in Nigeria to constantly embark on training and retraining of journalists by organising workshops and other programmes to educate them on how to detect/counter the spread of fake news on social media, which always serve as a challenge to conventional media in Nigeria.
2. There is need for journalists and media organisations in Nigeria to use other fact-checking tools like Google Fact-Checker, Politi-Fact etc, in verifying information as the findings of this study show that majority of the Nigerian journalists heavily rely on NewsGuard. Journalists and media outlets should also invest in fact checking tools and training to enhance their ability to verify information.
3. Furthermore, there is the need for media organisations to organise more training on professional ethics and capacity building workshops on AI and other digital media for journalists in Nigeria to combat the impact of fake news and misinformation on the credibility of journalism. This will ensure accuracy and credibility of journalism practice in Nigeria, which the findings of this study indicates that the fake news and misinformation have serious/negative impact on the credibility of journalism practice in Nigeria. In line with this, Government and regulatory bodies should develop policies and regulations that support fact based reporting and combat fake news and misinformation.

4. There is the need for more research on the most effective strategies to combat fake news and misinformation, including the development of effective fact checking strategies and the promotion of media literacy. There is also the need for journalists and other stakeholders to play a crucial role in promoting fact-based reporting and reducing the spread of fake news.

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