



ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
FUCULTY OF HUMANITIES, LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATIONS

**AN ASSESSMENT OF USERS' RESPONSE TO FAKE NEWS ON
SOCIAL MEDIA: THE CASE OF POPULAR BLOGGERS AND
SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS**

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**An assessment of users' response to fake news on social media: The case of
popular bloggers and social media influencers**

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Declaration

I, hereby, declare that the thesis entitled, “An assessment of users’ response to fake news on social media: The case of popular bloggers and social media influencers” is my original work and that all sources of materials that have been used for this research have been duly acknowledged.

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Abstract

Today's news production and consumption are not the same as in the past. The growth of media technology is one of the key drivers of this transition. Social media, for example, allows us to freely communicate and share any message we have with friends via Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, among others, in text, audio, and video formats. The goal of this study is to examine or measure Ethiopian social media users' reactions to fake news. This study's specific purpose is to identify the most common false news topics. Examine the types of responses provided by users. Describe how bloggers and social media influencers contribute to the propagation of fake news. Investigate the influence of bogus news on customer trust in social media. The researcher mostly adopts a mixed method approach. It is the design and observation of quantitative and qualitative research. The researcher sent a request to Ethiopian prominent bloggers, activists, and random social media users who have a large following and are active in social media activism to provide information and do face-to-face interviews. Many other social media users and participants respond to the questions posed online. Based on data from questionnaires, social media posts, and interviews, the findings indicate that fake news is widespread in Ethiopia. Politically motivated false information is the most common type of fake news among Ethiopians. The next most popular sort of fake news practiced by Ethiopians is religious-based fake news. Ethnicity, hurting a person's or entity's reputation, false pages of well-known people fake news are all significant among Ethiopians. According to the data, ethnic politics, a tense political climate, political suppression, low levels of digital literacy among users, the advent of social media, fake news providers produce fake news to promote ideas or people they favor, often by discrediting others, elites with political motives, a lack of professionalism among the media, and religious foundations lacking strength are all factors. Activists circulated hate speech and bogus news that might cause ethnic strife; some did so purposefully to attract attention. The research recommends that to build a better news ecosystem, with a well-informed audience, quality, and accuracy in journalism, we need to construct and follow a strategy with an aim at educating the users on spotting and curbing fake news. Empowering users with the tools and the knowledge to very information distributed online could lead to a better online society with the less fake news.

Keywords: Fake news, social media, Ethiopian users, disinformation, social media influencers, bloggers, Traditional media, Platform, technological determinism.

CHAPTER ONE

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

According to World internet world states usage and statistic, (2021) Ethiopia has one of the lowest internet penetration rates in the world, at roughly 18 percent – a pitiful figure even by African standards. However, Facebook, the most popular social networking platform, has roughly 3.7 million active users, and that figure is rapidly increasing. While Telegram and Twitter are also popular platforms, many in the country of more than 100 million people consider Facebook to be synonymous with the internet.

As European Institute of Peace report, (2021) Ethiopia is home to a thriving internet news environment. Despite the fact that Ethiopia has just 21.14 million internet users, numerous individuals and groups have well over a million Facebook followers. It should be underlined that it was hard to separate Ethiopian supporters from those who live overseas or are part of the Ethiopian diaspora. It is likely, particularly in rural settings, that phone and internet usage will be shared. Where this is the case, it is expected and plausible that multiple people will receive their news from the filter of a single account. Similarly, no study was done to detect false or bot accounts that may be utilized to show a larger number of followers and higher levels of popularity, which is a frequent practice around the world.

As European Institute of Peace report, (2021) In Ethiopia's media ecosystem, particularly online, fake news, disinformation, and hate speech have thrived. This is strongly linked to serious, terrible real-world repercussions, intensified pre-existing tensions, and fueled violence and war. To date, the Ethiopian government's response to the spread of fake news, misinformation, and hate speech has been heavy-handed, and with the go-to response to escalation being to turn off the internet for the entire country. The amount of violence in Ethiopia has increased. Political differences, ethnic rivalries, and/or religious extremism, as well as a variety of disputes over land, borders, and other resources, have resulted in individuals fighting and killing one another. Hate speech has flourished, both online and offline. Ethiopia was thrown into some difficult situations as a result of this.

Many types of content, ranging from personal to political, are used to fuel social media. Many examples have been manufactured overtly or covertly by governments and/or an industry of public relations firms working for political or commercial interests. As a result, a slew of bloggers, Instagram influencers, and YouTube celebrities endorse companies and politicians without disclosing that they are paid to do so. Indirect payments and covert payments are also made to In Ethiopia's public debate, online media plays a vital role. Many prominent Facebook sites incorporating news and entertainment operate from outside the country and are administered by individuals in the diaspora, indicating that the internet media system is largely unregulated (Abreham, 2019).

Because of the country's poor media literacy levels, people have a tendency to assume anything they read on social media is factual. And, according to Elias Meseret (2001), there are virtually few fact-checking efforts. It must change, and it must change quickly. Otherwise, it may have a significant impact on the forthcoming election. The rising distribution of user-generated information continues to be aided by social media.

The issue of fake news and its impact has become very prominent in recent years in Ethiopia. Despite the fact that fake news is not a new phenomenon, of fake news, it is important to study the way social media operates, how fake news is produced and spread through social network sites and what is the role user's play. Fake news has a negative impact on public beliefs about various social and political issues, which include health and vaccines; government and ethnicity; culture and religion, among many others.

1.2 Problem Statement

Some of the literatures stated the negative impacts of social media networks such as disseminating fake news from fake accounts, rumors, individual opinions and ethnic-based information that leads the community to unrest, challenge the current political and social environment in Ethiopia. The government is enacting legislation to regulate negative actors on social media. Fake news rumors from fake accounts, individual opinions, ethnic-based information, false allegations, hate speeches, misrepresentations, and inciting ethnic violence are all examples of information posted on social media that has a negative impact on the political and social landscape (Wanyama, 2019).

Spreading/disseminating/ fake news from phony accounts is one of the most serious negative effects of social media in Ethiopian politics and society. Political concerns that are disseminated on the internet are altered by each report, whether true or not. On the internet, distinguishing real news from fake news is becoming increasingly difficult. The constant flow of images, connections, and rumors about political leaders is a mix of truths and lies. Unknown persons have built a large number of fake news websites and pages that routinely disseminate rumors and false information (Adamu, 2021).

The lack of media literacy, particularly of the online media literacy, among the vast majority of Facebook users in our country would also mean that our society lacks the competitive advantage which is necessary to be part of the fast-changing information age. Lack of online media literacy would indicate citizens' lack of the ability to select and distribute messages that promote their nation. Hence, in this information age, without media literacy, citizens cannot understand how reality is constructed through the media in general and social media platforms, such as Facebook, in particular. This, in turn, can be equated with lack of competence to be part of the globalized world where media play a vital role in ideological and political issues (Kibrom Berhane, 2019).

According to European Institute of Peace, (2021) the societal impact of fake news can be immense as it creates information pollution. In Ethiopia it creates that the long-term implications of dis-information movements are designed specifically to spread mistrust and confusion and to sharpen existing socio-cultural divisions using nationalistic, ethnic, racial and religious tensions. Since no one controls the content of information shared in social media platforms, it has a

dangerous natural propensity to unleash chaos and instability, and these uncontrolled social medias have caused significant problems many times and places in Ethiopia, especially in this time.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1.3.1 General Objective

The purpose of this study is to evaluate or assess users' response to fake news on social media.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

Specifically, this study aims to;

- Identify dominant fake issues presented in the form of news.
- Assess the nature of responses users are giving.
- Describe the role of bloggers or social media influencers in dissemination of fake news.
- Analyze the effect of fake news on consumer trust in social media

1.4 Research Questions

Based on the above objectives this study aims to answer the following research questions.

1. What are dominant fake issues presented in the form of news?
2. What are the natures of responses users are giving?
3. How bloggers or social media influencers disseminate fake news?
4. What are the effects of fake news on consumer trust in social media?

1.5. Significance of the Study

The outcome of the study may help as an input in general for government and privet media owners. It also enables social media influencers as an input to craft their social media usage. Moreover, this study is a review for tools and techniques of social media. The paper also helps an individual researcher as a reference of similar projects.

The study can also contribute to assess users 'response to fake news on social media in Ethiopian context. It also provides information on fake news, its impact in the day-to-day lives of social media users in Ethiopia.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The study mainly focuses on users' response to fake news on social media. The scope of the study is restricted to selected social media platforms, specifically Face book, Twitter and You Tube.

The scope of this study is limited to Ethiopian and more specifically to those current popular bloggers and writers.

1.7 Limitation of the Study

The study will focus on a certain graphics, audio and texts because the deeper and richer qualitative and quantitative analysis can be very time-consuming task. And also, the size and the unstructured nature of the data of social media are another factor to delimit the study.

The limitation of this study includes: first, the collected data may not be sufficient to conclude for all kind of social media users; second, the participants may not give the response on time; third, most of the respondents are social media users who lived in the capital city.

1.8 Organization of the Study

Briefly describing the structure of this study, the thesis will comprise five chapters. The first chapter presents the general introduction of the study. Chapter two presents a literature review, where the term of fake news is presented in detail, is used to provide a broader image about this debatable issue. The role social media plays in the spread of fake news are also studied. Chapter three will discuss the research design & methodology of the study deals with the mainly qualitative research methods used to generate data for the study. In the light of methods which will be used in chapter three, chapter four will analyze and present findings in attempt to address the research questions and objectives. The last chapter, chapter five, based on the findings, will comprise recommendations, summary and conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1. Fake News in History

We all know that the fake news phenomenon is not new. However, the tools or methods employed currently are different. Deformation of facts, biased information, advertising and information used to discredit beliefs and values have always been part of society. What could be similar, in ancient times, to what is currently called fake news, may have served as a political maneuver even in Roman times, in 44 BC (Posetti & Matthews, 2018). There is various evidence over the centuries that fake news may have always existed. For example, in Rome, there was a person well known since the 16th century as Pasquino, that was used to disseminate false information and unpleasant rumors to discredit and defame public figures and politicians (Burkhardt, 2017). Additionally, in France, around the 17th century, there was a kind of newspaper, “Canard”, which sold fake news on the streets of the French capital (Darnton, 2017). Fake news was also spread in Germany in the 19th century.

Mcgillen (2017) investigated the techniques used by the creators of fake news during this period, and argued that the misinformation could be related to the creation of fake foreign correspondents in the press to deal with an increasingly competitive market. As sending correspondents abroad was very expensive, there were fake reporters who made up attractive stories. This reason may indicate that, as it happens today, in the 19th century the motivation for the creation of fake news was also economically and financially based.

Being nor recent, nor invented by Donald Trump, fake news has attained an unprecedented influence and reach due to the current media ecosystem. Burkhardt (2017) divides the history of Fake news into four eras: Pre-printing press era, post-printing press era, mass media era and internet era. The author says that in the first era (the pre-printing press), fake news was about information control, where knowledge is also power. It gives the example of Procopius of Caesarea who used the spread of false information to discredit Emperor Justianian in the sixth century. The Canard in France and Pasquino in Italy characterize the post-printing press era. In the mass media era, the radio show “Broadcasting the Barricades” broadcasted fake news as a

parody in 1926, alarming the unknowing population, stands as an example. Finally, in the internet age category, fake news has been spread and widely shared, with the most known episodes being the “Pizzagate conspiracy” and the Pope’s endorsement of Donald Trump candidacy.

2. 2. What is fake news?

2.2.1 Definition and meaning of fake news

In this section we will try to create a definition of fake news based on an analysis of the definitions in the literature, taking into account the context and the importance of the term. Most authors consider fake news to be an article that mimics the format of a news story or report, with fake content that was created with the intent to deceive. In fact, it is the intention to deceive that makes it possible to distinguish between fake news and false news. (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017).

False news is not intended to mislead the reader. The false content of a report or piece of news may result from journalistic error or the journalist’s lack of professionalism in verifying its sources (Graves, 2017). The very word “fake” refers us to the intention to deceive and to lie. “Fake” is associated with counterfeiting, imitating the real. Fake news seeks to be credible and gain legitimacy by imitating the format of the reports or news, in order to manipulate and deceive the reader and make the fake content look real. It is important to highlight that we approach contemporary fake news, that is, in an online context, in which false statements are widely shared in the digital universe, namely in social media. The goal of contemporary fake news is to go viral (Fallis et al., 2019). For these reasons, fake news can take the form of a news feed post (in the case of Facebook) or a tweet (in the case of Twitter), just like the real news is presented on these social media (headline, image, signature/source). In addition, fake news links to sites that mimic real news sites (Silverman, 2016).

We consider fake news to be “a type of online disinformation, with totally or partially false content, created intentionally to deceive and/or manipulate a specific audience, through a format that imitates a news or report (acquiring credibility), through false information that may or may not be associated with real events, with an opportunistic structure (title, image, content) to attract the readers’ attention and to persuade them to believe in falsehood, in order to obtain more clicks (Fallis et al., 2019).

2.2.2 Types of Fake News

There are seven forms of fake news: - satire or parody (no intent to cause damage, but has the ability to deceive). Misleading connection (where headlines, images, or captions do not reflect the content) and spread via traditional media, social media, and websites. False content (false use of information to frame an issue or an individual); false context (when legitimate content is presented with misleading contextual information); imposter content (when genuine sources are impersonated with false, made-up sources). Manipulated content (where actual information or imagery is manipulated to deceive, such as a doctored photograph); and fabricated content (new content is 100 percent false, designed to deceive and do harm (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017).

2.2.3 The motivation behind fake news

After providing a top-level view of the time period of fake information, it's miles critical to talk about the motivations in the back of the manufacturing and circulate of fake information on social media. According to Allcott and Gentzkow (2017), there appear like fundamental motivations for offering fake information. The first is pecuniary: information articles and posts that grow to be viral on social media can draw sizeable marketing and marketing sales while customers click on at the authentic website.

The second motivation, as Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) describe of their take a look at approximately unfold of fake information at some stage in the United States presidential elections, is ideological. In fact, a few fake information vendors are trying to find to boost precise political factors of perspectives and distribute their propaganda through the use of deceptive information and statistics inside their articles. For instance, the person who ran endingthefed.com, claimed that he began out the web website online particularly to assist Donald Trump's campaign even as a few different vendors of right-wing fake information stated they sincerely perceive themselves as left-wing and desired to embarrass the ones at the Right through displaying that they could credulously flow into fake tales (Townsend, 2016).

Summarizing the above, fundamental motivations are in the back of the manufacturing of fake information: financial and ideological. On one hand, outrageous and pretend news that cross viral – exactly due to the fact they're outrageous – offer content material manufacturers with clicks which can be convertible to marketing and marketing sales. On the alternative hand, a few

different fake information sellers produce fake information to sell thoughts or humans that they favor, frequently through discrediting others (Dewey, 2016).

2.2.4 A platform approach to fake news

The appearance of false news on news outlets is by no means a new phenomenon: in 1835 a series of articles published on the New York Sun, known as the Great Moon Hoax, described the discovery of life on the moon. Nowadays, the world is witnessing considerably more intricate hoaxes; social media platforms have facilitated the spread of false news with far-reaching consequences. The majority of today's news consumption has switched to online social media, where it is more convenient to consume, share, and discuss news with friends or other readers. (Schlesinger, 2017).

As producing content online is easier and faster, barriers for entering online media industry have dropped. This has conveyed the dissemination of low-quality news, which reject traditional journalistic standards and lack of third-party filtering and fact checking. These factors, together with a decline of general trust and confidence in traditional mass media. Two main motivations have been proposed as to explain the rise of disinformation websites: a pecuniary one, where viral news articles draw significant advertising revenue and a more ideological one, as providers of false news usually aim to influence public opinion on particular topics. Besides, the presence of malicious agents such as bots and trolls has been highlighted as another major cause to the spreading of misinformation. We refer the interested reader to for an extensive analysis of various factors explaining the spreading of false news in social media platforms. (Munzel, 2016)

The online world is increasingly struggling with misinformation, such as fake news, that is spreading in digital platforms. Intentionally as well as unintentionally created and spread false content travels fast in platforms and may reach global audiences instantaneously. To pre-screen, monitor, correct or control the spreading is extremely difficult, and often the remedial response comes only in time to deal with the consequences. (Munzel, 2016)

2.2.5 Common source of Fake news

Fundamentally, those who operate fake news websites want as many visitors to their sites as possible. While some may want their visitors to see the content and have it influence their political values, others simply want internet users to click on them, which often takes users to a website where users see more content (ideological or not) and/or see advertising. When a website has ads on it, those visits pay the website owner advertising revenue. Both of these motivations—ideological and commercial--need as many people to click on the website link and visit as possible (Sydell, 2016).

2.2.6 Interconnection of social media and fake news

Prominent media outlets have invested significantly in developing and improving digital journalism, publishing content for their online environments and expanding their networks through social media and the Internet. Information sharing, networking, and communication are among the key motivations behind the use of social media and, as a result, social media is emerging as one of the key platforms for information dissemination (Xiang and Gretzel, 2010). The technological advances associated with the emergence of social media have increased the spread of information and democratized its consumption globally.

According to Burkhardt (2017), the dissemination of information allows ideas to be shared and formerly inaccessible regions to be connected. It also allows users to make choices about the received information and provides a platform for many points of view. Over the past two decades, media organizations have invested in building their online presence, with the later use of social media platforms playing a significant role. In fact, they use social media like Facebook or Twitter, to distribute their content, share their information and build a network of audiences and engage with them. On the other hand, users benefit from the technological advances social media offer since they have acquired access to multiple sources of information and the way they consume news has also changed significantly. The new digital landscape for information dissemination and sharing, in combination with the pressure that media organizations face in an omnipresent media environment, have placed considerable changes on news organizations as they are currently structured (Silverman, 2015).

As Kellner (2003) underlined, pressures – economic, technological, political, and social – combined with the need to be constantly present, to report with equal speed and alacrity, and to gain followers in the process, has led to a landscape where fake news is almost everywhere, even in prominent media outlets.

It is clear that the new technological advances associated with social media (for example the free and real-time distribution of news and information) have also provided a fertile environment for the online misinformation to grow. Burkhardt (2017) argues that in a largely unregulated medium, supported and driven by advertising, the incentive for good is often outweighed by the incentive for revenue, and this has a major impact on how the medium develops over time.

2.2.7 Consequences of fake news

An article by the Reuters institute researchers Richard Fletcher and Rasmus Nielsen (2017) points out that internet users do not make a clear distinction between real news, false news and other forms of disinformation and that this results in a generalized distrust in the media.

Public opinion studies tell us that trust in news is at historically low levels and that the existence of false news is leading to a bankruptcy of the so-called fourth estate. It is therefore necessary to continue to address the phenomenon, but without forgetting the characteristics that distinguish the media landscapes in different countries and the need to take care when interpreting the structures for measuring and reading trust in the news in different contexts and geographic areas. It is also important to examine the relationship of trust in the news in detail, depending on each platform and type of media used (Fisher, 2018).

Basing themselves on a literature review of the concept of trust in the news, Fisher (2018) and Kohring and Matthes (2007) conclude that there is no clear definition of either that concept or the concept of fake news in the case of news media. Fisher (2018) also argues that there is a growing disconnect between the normative ideal of an informed citizen and complex influences on perceptions of the credibility of news in the digital age, when channels like the social networks are widely used in order to hyper-disseminate information. Fake news and its impact on trust in the news. Fisher (2018) states that there is rising tension between the ideal of ‘trust’ and the ever-greater pressure derived from the high degree of skepticism among consumers in the age of false news.

2.3. Fake news: An overview in Ethiopia

2.3.1 Positive and negative impacts of social media in Ethiopia

According to European Institute of Peace, (2021) An examination of the data in the table below reveals that the most popular social media pages are a hybrid of entertainment and news. For example, Zehabesha (over 1.5 million social media followers), Dire Tube (over 3 million social media followers), and Ethiopian DJ (over 2 million social media followers). These are orders of magnitude higher than traditional print media's social media presence than ten times higher than The Reporter). Television stations, such as the Oromia Media Network (OMN) and ESAT, with 1.2 million and 1.5 million followers, also attract significantly higher numbers than print media. A critical difference between the 'New Media' (online only) and traditional media (broadcast and print) appears to be the level of investment in journalists and editorial staff.

This section sees the positive and negative impacts of social media practice in Ethiopia. The positive and negative aspects. Such as, facilitating mobilization, become an alternative source of information. Nowadays social media became a part of necessities across the world. In addition, different types of information flooded through social media. Social media users chose its platform because of different reasons some of them for political reason, some of them for economic reason and others for social purposes. Social media are easily accessible and portable because of that the mass population accustomed it. In this subsection, we were concerned on the political protest movement. The first and foremost benefit of social media is connectivity. People from anywhere can connect with anyone, regardless of the location and religion. The prettiness of social media is that you can attach with anyone to learn and share your thoughts (Akram & Kumar, 2018).

Negative thought was involved in social media. They noted that all the negatives' things appeared in social media caused by political thought. Activists published hate speech and fake news that could create turmoil among ethnics. Besides hate speech and the spreading of fake news, internationally, in terms of data usage, social media is becoming more and more sophisticated (Akram & Kumar, 2018).

Ethiopia, as a country should have data protection law before enacting laws of hate speech and fake news because locally and internationally data protection is more threatening than ever. The initial optimism and gains in press freedom which followed the end of the EPRDF ruling coalition in 2018 were undoubtedly real and substantive. However, since then, frequent national internet blackouts and the introduction of the hate speech and disinformation prevention and suppression proclamation Federal Negarit Gazette, have been heavily criticized by civil society groups (Wanyama, 2019).

2.4 Fake news and traditional media

2.4.1 Effects of fake news on traditional media

Traditional forms of mass communication, such as newspapers, magazines, television, and radio (rather than the Internet), emerged as mainstream media. The term "mainstream media" refers to television networks, newspapers, periodicals, radio, and, most notably, the film business. It's called "mainstream" because its miles are made to appeal to as wide a target population as possible (Newman, 2009).

News is the reporting of cutting-edge activities or happenings, which can be normal, unusual, or tragic, and which are broadcast over and done with the structures of mass communication such as radio, television, cinematography, newspaper, magazine, or the International Network (Internet) to a diverse audience. Newman (2009) claims that mainstream media retailers are decided by television, radio, the internet, newspapers, and other periodicals. They include television networks such as ABC, CBS, and NBC, as well as national news organizations such as CNN and Fox News. They also include websites like as MSNBC and major publications such as The New York Times and USA Today. Mainstream media outlets are frequently easy to locate and reach large audiences.

Globally, there is growing skepticism for "mainstream media." For example, the Edelman Trust Barometer's country report for the United States showed a point decline in public trust in traditional media. In Ethiopia, distrust of mainstream or international media is not formally tracked. However, since the commencement of hostilities in Tigray, there can be little doubt that distrust of international media has increased within the country, often as a result of the reporting

and framing of the conflict. Equally, anecdotal evidence suggests that Ethiopian citizens are aware of the high likelihood of bias in state-owned media. (European Institute of Peace, 2021)

2.4.2 The role of media in fighting fake news

There are simple variations among information values and journalistic values, simply as features vary from standards of a phenomenon. And as Johnson and Kelly (2016) agree, information values vary from journalistic values. They regard journalistic values as accuracy and balance, which describes as requirements and guidelines such as ‘objectivity, accuracy, fairness, neutrality, highbrow honesty, and tiers of proof’. These journalistic values address the moral requirements with inside the exercise of journalism with inside the print and digital media in addition to the new media.

One crucial motive for why mainstream media record approximately fake information is anchored with inside the very simple tenants in their profession. Part of reporters’ function perceptions carries the want to are seeking for the fact and to show what isn't always true (Donsbach, 2004). Reporters need to understand that a crucial a part of their expert obligation is to accurate manipulation and disinformation. Verification and correction are portrayed in the literature as the essence of journalists ‘professionalism. Stories about fake news ‘that include correction of deception thus enable journalists to fulfill a central element of their profession (Harcup, 2014).

The obligation to expose the truth and to verify information has been a cornerstone of journalists ‘professional principles since the early days of profession but its importance has grown even stronger over the past decades, as part of the rise of a professional culture that emphasizes analysis, contextualization and interpretation, in addition to simply recording and reporting on news events (Godler & Reich, 2017).

As Graves (2016) explains, the fact-checking movement reflects and reproduces the professional culture tied to analytical journalism. Fact-checks are stories that, at least in some respects, deviate from journalists ‘classic detached observer role. Fact-checking is instead all about deciding whether he or she are right or wrong. This goes beyond merely describing the world, as it entails interpretation and elaboration, selection of information sources that represent the truth, ‘against which the new information should be cross-examined, and a true/false verdict that

necessitates journalists to give up a constructivist point of view that offers the option of objectively ‘presenting to audience competing notions of truths.

The journalistic dedication to accurate incorrect statistics and to assist the general public research the fact is properly expressed in journalistic discourse approximately fake information, that treats the journalistic response to fake information as a ‘combat’ and reiterates that reporters have to know no longer stand apart and have to ‘weigh in at the war over lies, distortions. This discourse perspectives vintage-faculty journalism practices of truth-checking and verification as the principal approach on this war (O’Carroll, 2019).

In addition, journalistic reports on fake news not only enable journalists to fulfill the very basic imperatives of their profession – exposing and correcting lies. The emphasis journalists put on truth and truthful reporting when they expose and correct fake news also enables them to differentiate between their work (which they would call real news ‘) and fake news. Similarly, to journalistic coverage of WikiLeaks and blogs and to journalistic discourse about entertainment the coverage of fake news by established media enable mainstream journalists to preserve their journalistic authority using dichotomous distinctions between honest and deceitful, ethical and unethical and works for the public or against it (Carlson, 2007).

2.5 Theoretical frame work of social media theory

2.5.1 Technological determinism theory

Technological determinism is a reductionist principle that objectives to offer a causative hyperlink among generation and a society’s nature. It attempts to provide an explanation for as to whom or what ought to have a controlling electricity in human affairs. The principle questions the diploma to which human idea or movement is stimulated via way of means of technological factors. The term ‘technological determinism’ became coined via way of means of Thorstein Veblen and this principle revolves across the proposition that generation in any given society defines its nature. Technology is considered because the riding pressure of subculture in a society and it determines its direction of history. Karl Marx believed that technological development causes more modern methods of manufacturing in a society and this in the long run stimulated the cultural, political and financial factors of a society, thereby unavoidably converting society itself. He defined this assertion with the instance of ways a feudal society that

used a hand mill slowly modified into a business capitalist society with the advent of the steam mill. An opportunity weaker view of technological determinism says that generation is serving a mediating feature due to the fact notwithstanding its main to modifications in subculture, it's far surely managed via way of means of human beings. When manipulate of generation slowly reduces from being with inside the arms of few human beings, it passes absolutely into manipulate of generation itself. This view of human beings having no manipulate is cited as 'self-sufficient technological determinism. (Griffin, 2000).

New media aren't simplest an addition to present media, they may be additionally new technology and consequently do have a deterministic thing as well. McLuhan made a well-known assertion that "the medium is the message." This way that the medium used to speak affects the thoughts of the receiver. The advent of information print, TV and the net have all proven how technological advances have an effect at the society. (Littlejohn, 1999)

History indicates us several examples to provide an explanation for why generation is taken into consideration to be figuring out the society that we stay in. The invention of the gun modified how disputes have been taken care of out and modified the face of combat. A gun required minimal attempt and talent for use efficiently and can be used from a secure distance. This whilst as compared to how in advance wars have been fought with swords and archery cause an intensive extrude with inside the guns utilized in war. Today with the invention of nuclear energy, destiny wars can be fought with nuclear arsenal. Each new discovery reasons a transition to an exceptional society. The discovery of steam electricity permit to the improvement of the economic society and the advent of computer systems has brought about the sunrise of the statistics age. The idea known as technological determinism denotes the technique selling the thesis that using instructional generation is stimulated each via way of means of the consumer and his surroundings, however additionally, above all, via way of means of the generation itself. It way that technology as such isn't impartial to the gaining knowledge of process. They shape statistics in a way traditional of them (the sector is based in a different way via way of means of the medium known as writing and the medium known as the technical image), they have an effect on the psyche of the consumer, or even reason social market. The proponents of technological determinism argue that the society is stimulated and fashioned via way of means of technological improvement. It has to regulate and adapt to new technology and innovations. The

bad effects of the technological improvement are the end result of bad use via way of means of the people, now no longer of the very nature of generation (Toffler, 1980).

Toffler (1980) understood the generation as a determinant of all modifications which have a deadly effect on all regions of human existence. The computer has the capacity to take manipulate of the complete mechanical age. Today's scenario is known as the "third wave", a length of large modifications and acceleration of existence pace, that is quicker because of the non-stop improvement of generation. He believes that the converting society has a primary effect at the human psyche and talks approximately the "surprise of the destiny". Negroponte has a greater optimistic, however, particularly utopian view of the issue, whilst he relates the scenario to "changing atoms with bits". The characteristics of the digitization process (decentralization, globalization, harmonization and strengthening) are too robust for it to be stopped.

2.5.2 Criticism of Technological Determinism

A critique of technological determinism is that generation in no way forces itself on participants of the society. Man creates generation and chooses to apply them. He invents TV and chooses to view it. There isn't any imposition at a part of the generation for use alternatively generation calls for humans to take part or contain themselves in some unspecified time in the future or some other to apply a vehicle or a microwave. The preference of the usage of generation and experiencing its outcomes consequently lies with inside the hand of a human being. On the contrary, social determinism argues that the social sphere situations and determines technological development. Introduction and use of recent technology are the end result of social order. However, proponents of this idea emphasize the bi-directionality of this method of their theory. The generation on one hand and the social element however do now no longer exist as heterogeneous worlds or strategies. The society is modelled through the technical alternate and the technical alternate is created through the society. Technical innovation comes from in the financial device progressively brought through deliver and demand, and it isn't always sincerely adapting to outside transformations. As the paintings of man, it passes left out most effective if he lets in it. The society is therefore described each with the aid of technology which it may create, and people which it makes a decision to apply and expand instead of others. In this sense, generation is one of the many social strategies (Hauer, 2017).

Castells (1996) took a comparable stand in this issue. He rejected the concept of ICT as something that the society ought to adapt to. He understood the generation as a social method, while the society is shaped through the technical alternate, and the technical alternate is fashioned through the society. This -manner method is known as social embeddedness. In his publication, Castells additionally remarks regarding the issue. The generation does now no longer decide the society; the generation is the society.

Lévy (1998) additionally refused to just accept the idea of one-sided technological determination: “The generation is an analytical attitude of world socio-technical systems, a view that emphasizes the fabric and synthetic a part of human phenomena, and now no longer the real amount that could exist independently of the rest, might have numerous outcomes and paintings through itself. He stated our on-line world become part of a social movement, it had its institution leaders, its passwords and its logical aspirations. Furthermore, He argues that if one takes into consideration any relationship, it will likely be plenty greater complex than determination. According to him, social and cultural scenario is infinitely complicated and in part indeterminate set of interacting strategies which can be robotically maintained or suppressed. Instead of determination, he, consequently, makes use of the idea of conditionality. The society is encouraged through technological developments, the poor outcomes are resulting from negative use through the humans, now no longer through the character of the generation itself, and additionally the advent and use of recent technology is the end result of the social order.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the concern of research design, area of study, population, and samples of the population, sampling technique, and instruments for data collection and methods of data analysis are presented.

Users' reactions to fake news on social media: The case of popular bloggers and social media influencers is the focus of this study paper. It depicts Ethiopian social media users' attitudes and behaviors toward fake news. As a result, the researcher will primarily undertake a complete and systematic analysis and observations of social media sites. Questionnaires and interviews are used to acquire primary data. Respondents will receive questionnaires via Facebook, Telegram, SMS for mobile users, and email. In addition, hard copies in postal forms are prepared. To increase the response rate, the researcher provides proper orientation to the respondents, carefully prepares the questions in both the local (Amharic) and English languages, and pays close attention to the questionnaire form. Proper approaches are also used to check for reliability and validity.

3.2. Research Design

The main target of this study was to examine the users' response to fake news. In order to meet this target, the researcher used descriptive design through mixed research approach that includes collecting, analyzing and interpreting data using both quantitative and qualitative research methods in a single study in order to investigate a phenomenon or attempt to answer research questions. It is also useful to offset the weakness of both methods (Creswell, 2014).

Thus, this research method also allowed the researcher to use both quantitative as well as qualitative data gathering tools such as questionnaire, content analysis, in-depth interviews and observation so as to identify major findings relevant for the study. Quantitative method is employed while the researcher gathered data through survey and quantitative content analysis.

And the descriptive and statistical analysis, as method of analysis also makes the choice of quantitative method.

Qualitative method is employed since the researcher proposed collects data through in-depth interview and qualitative content analysis. And the interpretative and qualitative content analysis, as method of analysis also makes the choice of qualitative method.

3.3 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

Non-random sampling, was used to collect data since it allowed the researcher to choose the study participants. In purposive sampling, the criteria of the elements that are to include in the study is predefined.

This study had a total of 100 participants. The total social media users are a group of 100 people who are active social media users, particularly on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, and who have 1000 or more friends, followers, or subscribers on the stated platforms.

A collection of activists, politicians, opinion leaders, journalists, writers, and professors with clout in diverse social, political, economic, and cultural activities were hand-picked for this study. A total of 13 informant sources, including activists, monitors, legislators, opinion leaders, journalists, scholars, and writers, were purposefully chosen as key informants and important professionals.

3.4. Data Collection Tools

3.4.1. Data Source

The researcher used both primary and secondary sources for this investigation. Questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and observation were employed as primary sources. Documents acquired in connection with this study were also fully analyzed and used in the analysis in line with data obtained through questionnaires and interviews as secondary data sources.

Primary data is information acquired directly by the researcher. Because no earlier records of the data exist to be accessed by the public, the researcher collects such data on purpose. As a result, primary data is gathered through content analysis (for example, social media posts),

questionnaires, and interviews. The online questionnaire was sent out via SMS, email, and Facebook, and the respondents were recognized.

Secondary data is information that has been collected, compiled, and written by someone and is available to the general public. It's the information gleaned from other sources by the investigator. The secondary data in this case are several books and articles that the researcher used to further the literature on the topic and the study's discussion.

3.4.2. Content Analysis

Content analysis is a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words, themes, or concepts within some given qualitative data (i.e. text). Using content analysis, researchers can quantify and analyze the presence, meanings and relationships of such certain words, themes, or concepts. Qualitative Content analysis, as data collection method, used to collect data from Facebook, Twitter and YouTube by extracting posts . The units of analysis collected via key word search are posts (image post, text post, image with text posts and video posts) taken from the selected platforms.

3.4.3. Survey- Questionnaire

The survey was chosen to gauge the thoughts, perspectives, and experiences of a large number of active social media users on the topic of fake news. Questionnaires are a type of survey instrument that will be used at this point. A questionnaire will be used as a scientific instrument to collect data from the 100 active social media users who have been chosen. The survey questionnaires are semi-structured and contain only a few open-ended questions.

3.4.4. Interviews

Interviewing is a qualitative research strategy that entails conducting in-depth individual interviews with a small group of people (13 persons) to learn about their views on a topic or issue. In-depth interviews are also valuable when you want to learn more about a person's beliefs and behaviors, or when you want to dig further into a topic.

3.5 Data presentation and analysis

As noted in the research design, both quantitative and qualitative data gathering approaches were used in this study. Questionnaires and content analysis were used as quantitative methods. As a qualitative method, in-depth interviews and document analysis were performed. In-depth interviews were used to collect data. As a result, the analysis and presentation were both numerical and interpretive. The data acquired via questionnaire was analyzed using descriptive statistics, allowing the researcher to answer the study questions while evaluating and presenting the acquired data, with a detailed discussion part included. A questionnaire is used to gather data, and a quantitative analysis method is used to convert the data into information in this research article. The quantitative analysis methodology aids in the conversion of data into understandable graphs, charts, and statistics.

The data is analyzed using statistical and textual methods. First, the quantitative findings, survey questionnaire, and quantitative content analysis data are presented and examined in a table with various charts and numbers based on frequency analysis. The qualitative data is then presented and evaluated interpretively using the chosen themes, in order to answer the research question. After coding, the qualitative data is presented and evaluated according to the recognized themes (created and emerged from the literature review and from the standpoint of proposed research questions).

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction

The main objective of this study was to investigate the users' response to fake news on social media among Ethiopians on the case of selected top bloggers and social media influencers. So that research questions were point out and both qualitative and quantitative research method were selected to realize the affirmed objective. And survey-questionnaire, content analysis and in-depth interview were employed under the mixed approaches as research methods to collect the necessary data and information in accordance with the mentioned research questions. Then in this chapter all primarily-data are presented, analyzed and discussed to complete the main objectives of the study and to answer the posed research questions. Here quantitative data is presented and analyzed first, and then quantitative data is pursued and data's collected from in-depth interview presented and analyzed after everything else. And the data's obtained from survey questionnaire; content analysis and in-depth interview are discussed jointly in the discussion part of this chapter.

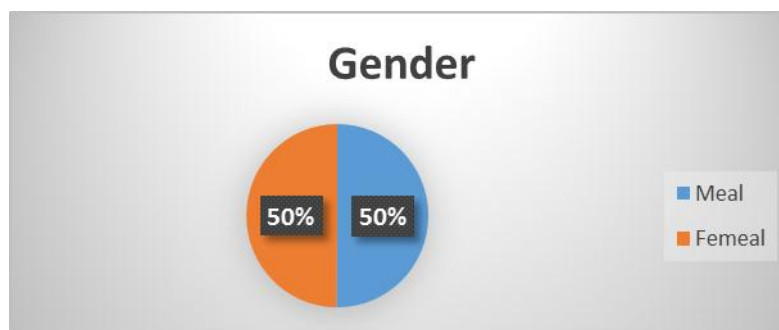
4.2. Presentation of Survey-questionnaire data

4.2.1. Demography of the respondents

1. Gender of the selected respondents

Figure 1 designates the gender of selected social media users who completed the questionnaire.

Figure1: Gender of the selected respondents (social media users)



As it indicates in figure 50 % of the respondents are male and 50% female. This shows that equal number of male and female are included in the study.

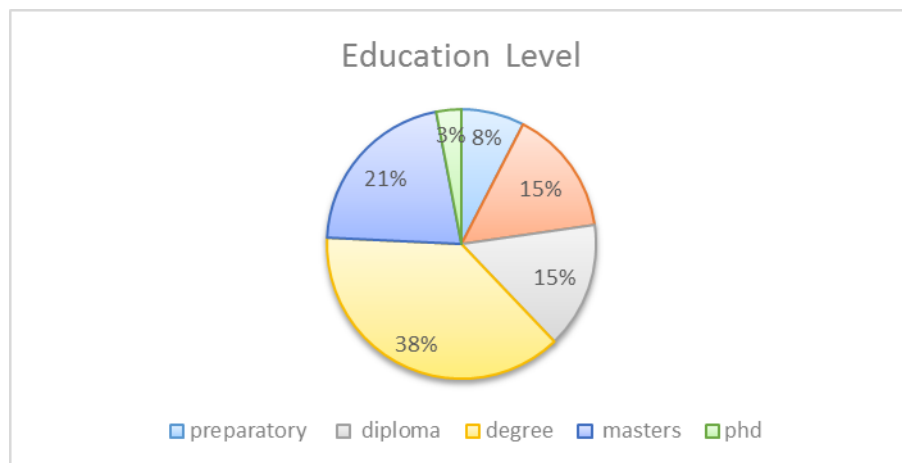
2. Age of the selected respondents

Table 1. is information about the age of the selected social media users

Age	Frequency	Percent
18-25	41	41.0
26-33	41	41.0
34-41	16	16.0
Above 41	2	2.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 1: Age of the selected respondents (social media users). As figure 2 shows 41 % of the respondents were aged between 18 – 25 while another 41% were 26-33. This indicates that majority of the respondents are at youth age. Following, 16% of the respondents are aged 34-41. The least percent which is 2% counted for respondents aged 48.

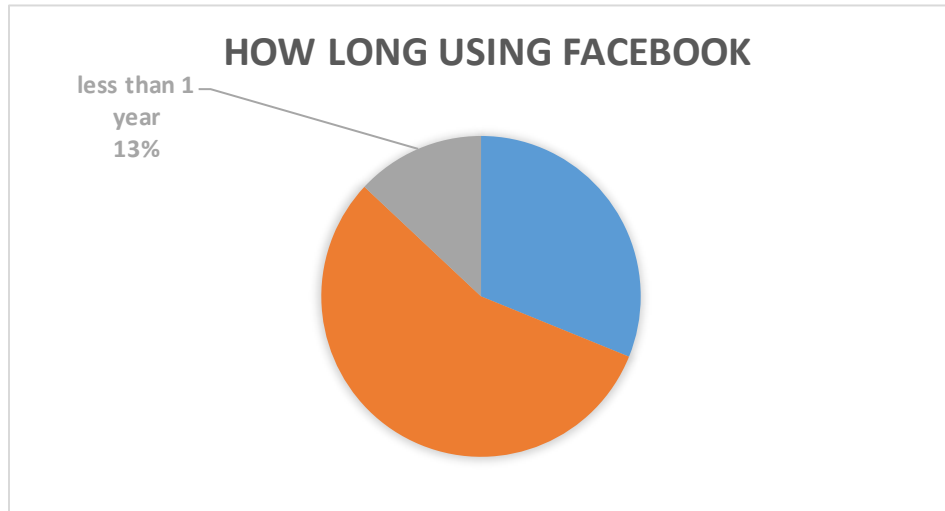
Fig 2. Academic States of respondents



Among the total respondents, much of the respondents 38(31%) were degree holders. And 15(15%) and 21 (21%) of the respondents had a diploma and masters respectively. 15 % respondents were found under the category of high school completed. Preparatory students who

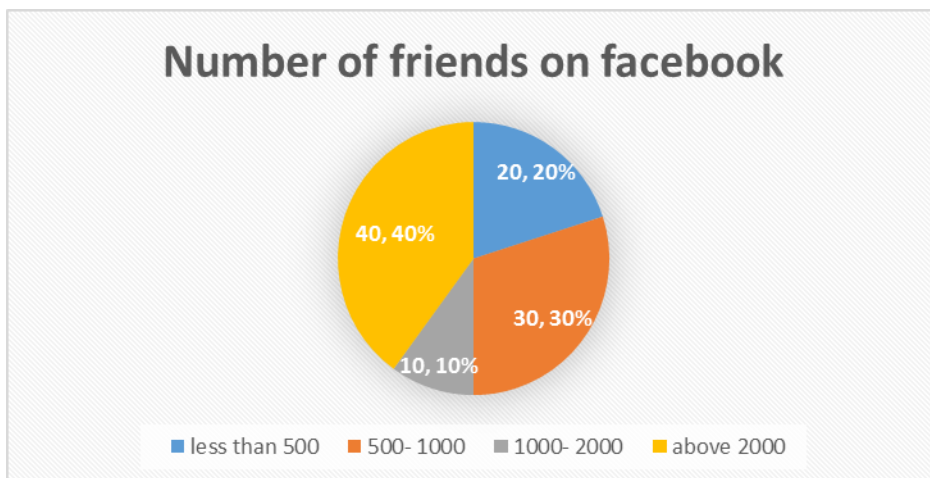
use social media are 15(15%). PhD holders who use social media among respondents are 3 (3%). This indicates that most of the social media users among the respondent are literate and professionals.

Fig 3. How long the Respondents uses face book?



According to the data obtained via the questionnaires as presented in fig-3 below, 56% of them used social more than 6 years. 31% of them used 2- 5 years. The rest 13% of the respondents used social media less than 1 year. This indicates that most of the social media users' respondents have more than 6 years of involvements.

Figure 4. Number of Facebook Friends

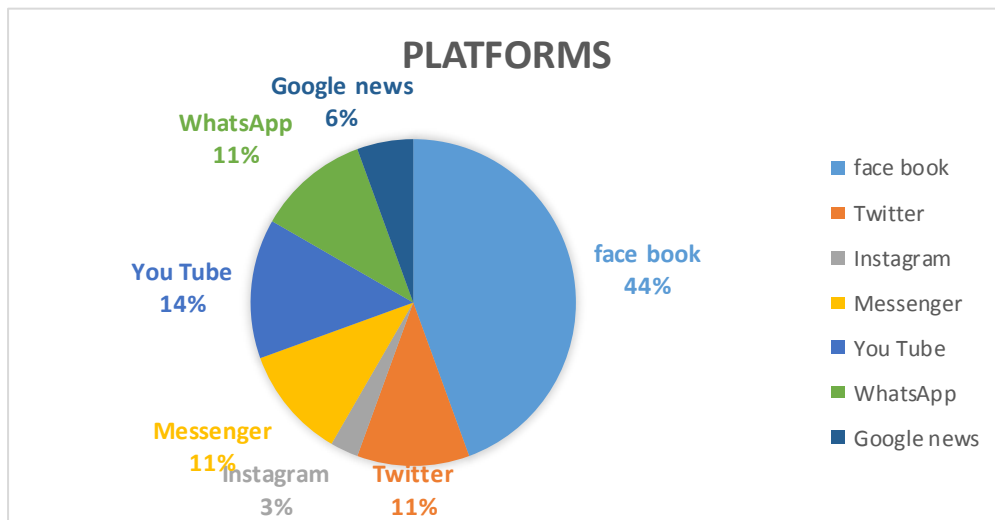


In this survey 40 % respondents have more than 2000 Facebook friends. News can be distributed easily to many people within a couple of hours. If this message is attractive, it might be distributed in thousands and millions within a couple of days. Facebook is a place where groups of people with similar interest gather and share opinions, experience and observations. An individual with 2000 friends can distribute his/her message for 2000 people. In media perspective this means an individual can distribute online news to 2000 viewers or readers.

Section -2

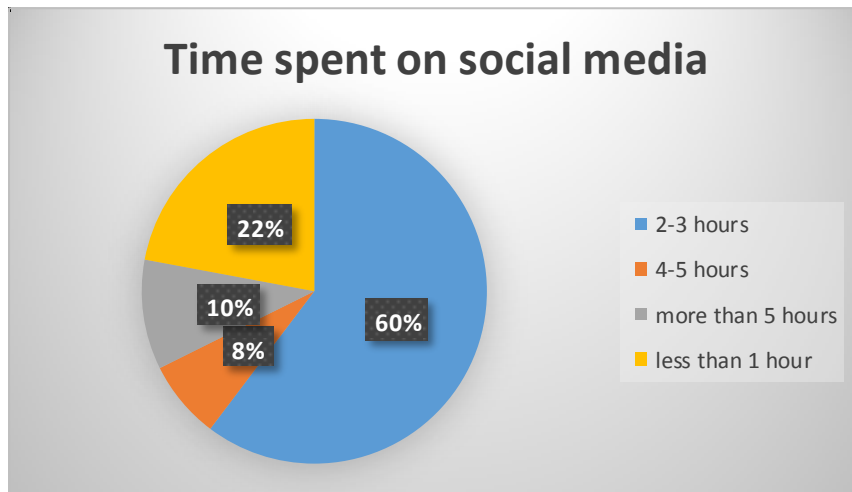
4.2.1.2 Nature of social media users' respondents

Fig 1. People interest of platforms



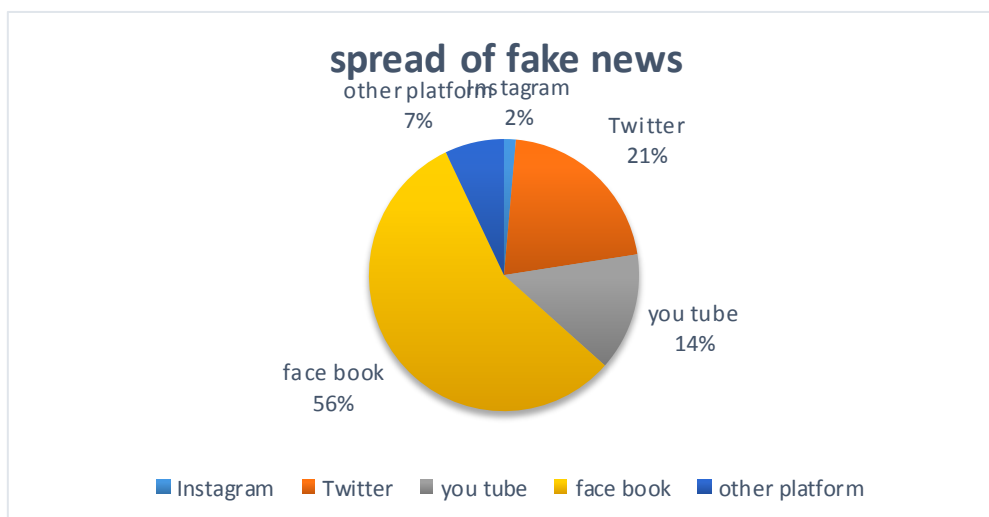
Regarding platforms of spending time 44% prefer to spend their time in Facebook. According to respondents a significant number of people prefer to spend their time in Facebook. But other social media have also huge a places. This shows respondents use different alternative social media also.

Fig 2. Time Spent on Facebook



But most people spend their time in Facebook, 60% spend at least 2 hours in a day on Facebook. People spend significant amount of time in Facebook, which is a great opportunity for news distributor and users. In Ethiopia the price of mobile internet data is 0.45 birr per bandwidth. It is expensive for most Ethiopian.

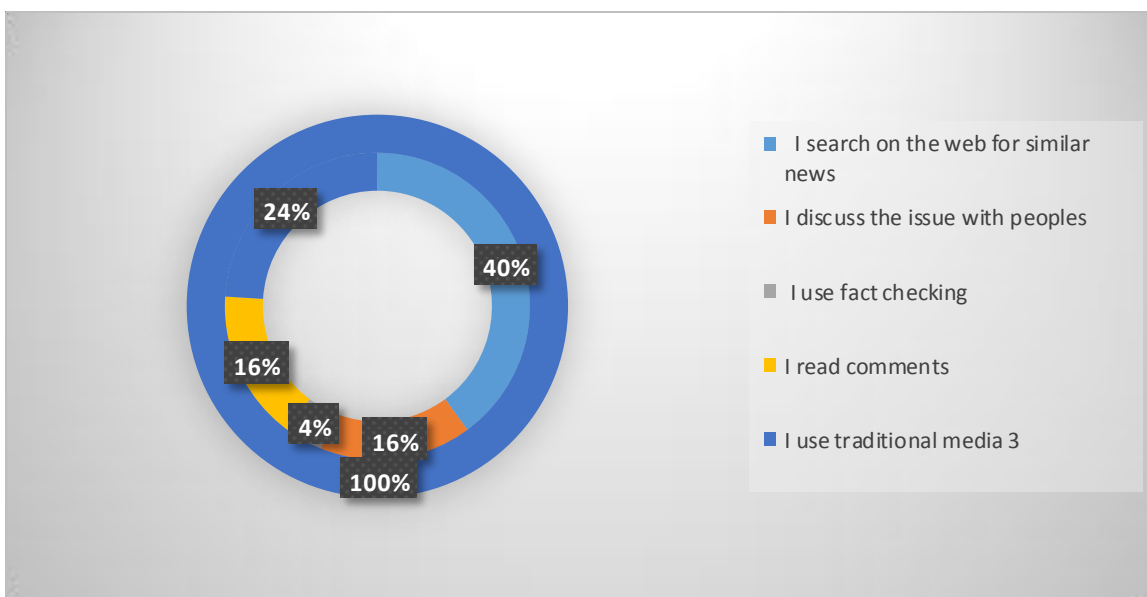
Fig 3. Based on your experience which social media platform offers a more fertile environment for the spread of fake news story?



The users who participated in this study were asked to specify which social media platforms offer a more fertile environment for the spread of a fake story. Based on their experiences, 56% of the users believed that Facebook is the best place to post fake news since it provides an

environment to produce and share fake stories easily. According to 21% of the users, Twitter is also a social media which offers the tools to distribute fake stories easily while 14% stated that YouTube provides a fertile environment as well. Only 2% of the users described Instagram as a social medium which is a fertile ground to generate and circulate fake stories and 7% underlined that the spread of fake news has to do with the users and not with the social media and that the users are the ones responsible for the production and distribution of a fake story. The social media offer the tools for generating and distributing fake news rapidly.

Fig 4. What tools do you use to identify fake news?



To be more specific, 40% of the participants underlined that they conduct their own research on the web, to confirm the credibility of the news they read on social media. This process, despite the fact that it is time-consuming since it requires a lot of research on relevant websites or other online sources, is preferred by the users as the most effective. Moreover, 24% of the people who participated in this study said that another effective tool to identify fake news circulated on social media is to search for the media outlet’s background and journalists’ identity. Based on this finding, for the participants of this study, the background of the source plays a significant role. The users tend to seek information about the media which posted a story on social media and the author of this story in order to understand whether it is a fake story or not. Apart from researching the web for clarifications and exploring the background of the media and the authors,

a lot of users implement another tool to identify fake news on social media. That is, 16 % of the users read comments below the post to find out any information about reliable sources or users. There are cases where users have already identified fake news and they have posted a comment to warn other users. Therefore, the users of this study underlined that they can find useful data which will help them to spot a fake story on social media, by searching in the comments below it.

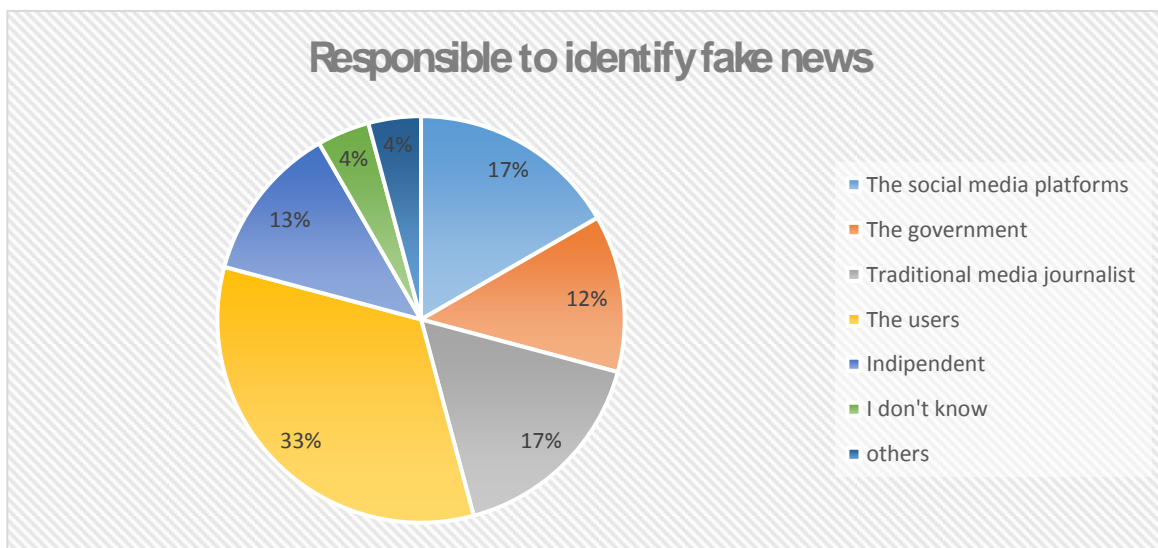
The results of this study highlight the fact that the users when they try to identify fake news on social media, consider also the identity of the person who has posted the specific story. In fact, 15% of the users discuss the issues with the people about the person who has posted a story on social media, to acquire a broader image of their identity and background. Moreover, the users pointed out that they also search for clarifications through their own network. For instance, they ask other users or online friends for their perspectives about a story circulated online, or they search on to find any relevant material or data. It is worth mentioning that only 4% of the users, who participated in this study, use a fact checker pages to evaluate the accuracy of a story circulated online. Despite the fact that there are many free to use software programs which can identify misleading information and arguments, the users of this study do not prefer them as tools to spot fake news and they mainly choose to make their own research.

Fig 5. What is your reaction to fake story which is generated by other users or trolls?



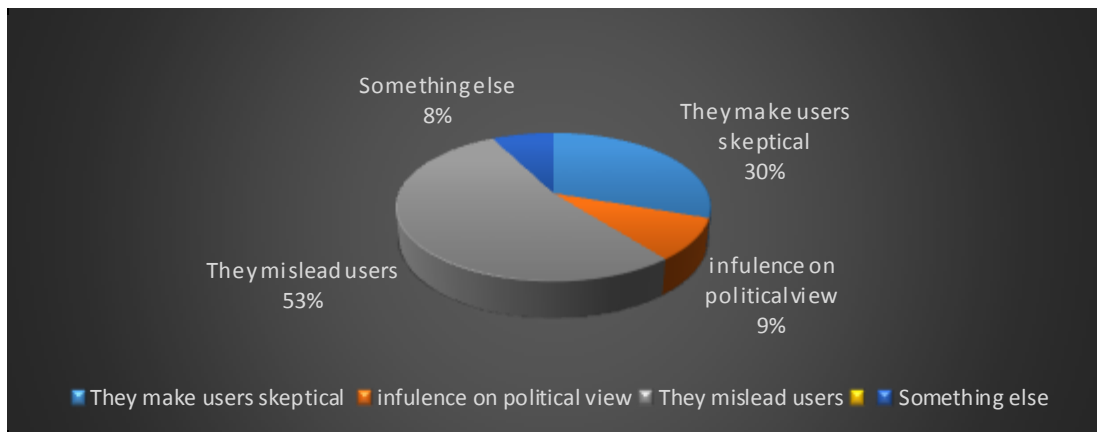
After they indicated which methods and tools they employed to identify fake news on social media, the participants of this study were asked to elaborate more on their interactions with the misleading content (Figure 5). First, the users were asked to provide data about their interactions with a fake story which is circulated on social media by other users or trolls and then they were asked to provide data about the interactions with fake stories distributed on social media by media outlets. Based on the findings of this study, when it comes to a fake story which is generated by other users or trolls – for example, a misleading photograph with inaccurate data – the users mainly employ two specific methods: commenting and reporting. To be more specific, 53 % of the users choose to comment below the post by saying that this is a fake story and the users visibly flag the post as untrustworthy. However, there are users who take more action after they detect a fake story. In fact, 20 % of the users pointed out that they report the post or the user – or both – when they confirm that the data presented is fake or misleading. Interestingly, there are users who re-share fake news knowing that they are fake. Specifically, 8 % of the users who participated in this study indicated that they choose to re-share a fake story generated by users or trolls in order to warn other users not to read it. Furthermore, approximately 13% of the users said that they simply ignore the fake post and they take no action after they have spotted it as fake. However, there are also users who prefer to act in the opposite way. For instance, 6% of the users choose to directly contact the user or the account that has produced the fake story and ask them to delete it.

Fig 6. Who should be responsible for identifying and curbing fake news on social media?



After clarifying which social media are more fake-news responsive, the users who participated in this study expressed their opinions about who is responsible for identifying and curbing fake news on social media. The users concluded that the users and the social media platforms have the main responsibility to counter the spread of fake news. In fact, 33 % of the users believed that the users should be responsible for identifying a fake story distributed on social media and stopping its spread. Moreover, 17 % of the users stated that the social media platforms should take actions in order to spot the fake news and curb their distribution. Apart from the users and the social media, 14% of the participants of this study believed that an independent body can play a significant role in this process and it is crucial to creating an independent authority responsible for spotting fake news on social media. There were users (12%) who underlined that the government should also be responsible for curbing fake stories on social media, and users (4%) who said that they do not know who should take actions and stop the distribution of fake news on social media. Furthermore, 8% of the users believed that the independent body described above should consist of journalists who will judge the content of the fake news, while 4% of the users pointed out that there should be penalties initiated by the social media for users who produce and share the fake news.

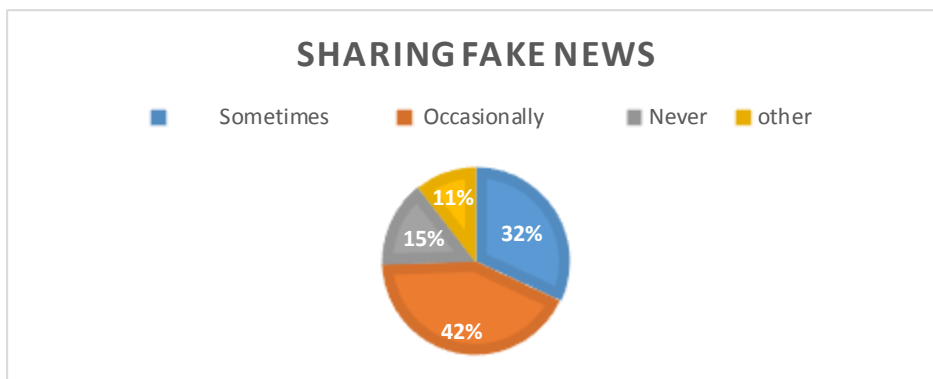
Fig 7. In Ethiopia there is a lot of fake news which is generated and distributed on social media. what impact do you think these stories have on social media users?



Based on the fact that the users who participated in this study are constantly dealing with fake news, they were also asked to provide perspectives about the impact these stories have on the audiences. To be more specific, the users expressed their opinions about the impact fake stories

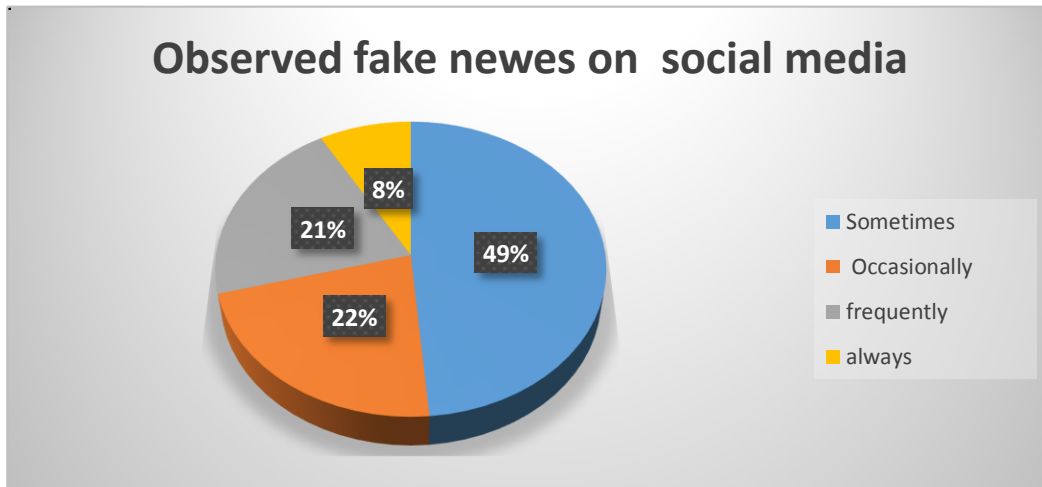
have on social media users in Ethiopia. Mainly, the users believed that fake stories mislead the users (45%) and they increase negative feelings. This study has shown that the users believe fake stories which are distributed on social media in Ethiopia increase tension and conflict among the people. In addition, 30% of the users who participated in this study stated that fake stories make the users mistrustful about other stories which are true. Moreover, there were users (8%) who declared that fake stories influence users' political views while others (9%) believed that fake news increases misinformation about health issues, medication, and diets. Finally, the users believe fake news has a strong impact on the audience by increasing adverse feelings, misleading the users and making them mistrustful about the media and news in general.

Fig 8. How often have you ever shared something that wasn't true?



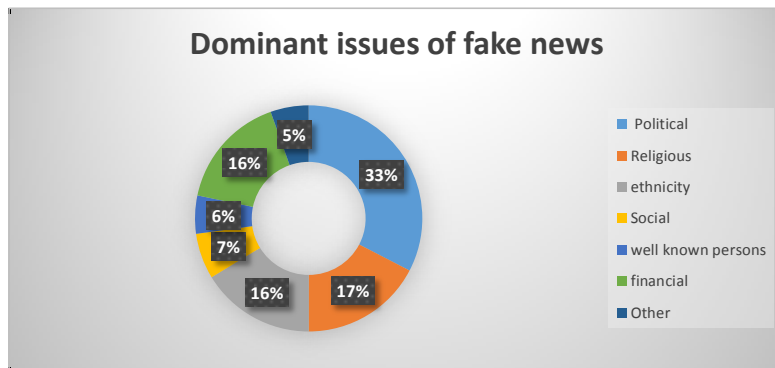
Many of respondents (42%) say that it happens occasionally. Some other (32%) says that intentionally or unintentionally share false stories and images. Some of respondents (15) had never been share fake news on social media. Some of the them (11%) said that everyone who is involved in news production and news consumption might be partially responsible for the spread of misleading information.so that governments, audiences and social media platforms ought to play an active role in the fight against the spread of fake news.

Fig 9. How many times have you observed something online that wasn't true?



Many of respondents 49(%) says that sometimes they notice fake news on social media. Some other (22%) says that it happens irregularly. Some of respondents (21%) observe fake news on social media frequently. Some of the them say that (8%) observe fake news on social media. This indicates that there is much fake news post on social media. As it was already mentioned above, the spread of fake news on social media has increased rapidly and there are strong concerns about the way this phenomenon can be confronted. The question is what to expect of mainstream media and news organizations in the post-fact culture and what role do consumers, sharers, and publishers of news play in the declining space of truth and fact in society today.

Fig 10. What are dominant issues in Ethiopia that appeal as fake news?



The evidence from the figure 10 shows, interference in the political process would seem to be the obvious motivation for creating fake news. According to respondents nearly (33%) individuals and groups clearly create and distribute fake news in order to spread digital propaganda and influence political discourse and electoral outcomes. Others do it (16%) for purely financial reasons. Because fake news can generate a lot of web traffic and therefore a lot of digital advertising revenue. While still others (17%) do it out of mischief, or to undermine religious dogma. Ethnicity based fake news counts (16%) which is very high issue on social media. 7% and 6% respondents say that social and well known persons are governing issues of fake news on social media respectively. Other says that fake articles are going to become increasingly difficult to identify which is dominate issues on social media.

Table.1 What is the effect of fake news on your life and people around you?

Effect of fake news	Frequency	Percent
Arguing and quarreling	40	20%
Involve in wrong act	30	15%
Attacking person and group of people	10	5%
Negative psychological effects	80	50%
No effect at all	0	0
Making wrong decision	20	10%
Other		
Total	200	100%

Fake news has a huge effect on individual life and people around them. 50% of the respondents said that they face negative psychological effect. Fake news and disinformation can covertly change the behavior of individuals. It can do this by manipulating implicit attitudes and emotion. Some other (20%) say that get in to arguing and quarreling with the people around them. Some (15% and 10%) say that they involve in wrong act and make wrong decision respectively. Few of them (5%) say that they get into physical and psychological attack on others. No one says that there are no effects of fake news under this category. This indicates that, it's one thing to hear something that isn't true. It's another to believe it. It's these beliefs that lead to action, which can

have both positive and negative consequences. Formed of inaccurate information and often deliberately published or shared in media outlets and social media, fake news can be a dangerous way of obtaining information. When sharing news, people often don't stop and think about whether the article could be fake and, in an age of instant internet access and social media platforms, news is shared to millions at the touch of a button. And therein lies the danger.

4.3 Interview data analysis

1. What are dominant fake issues presented in the form of news? Why?

Almost all of the professionals (Media experts and Social Media influencers) agreed that people share fake news for a variety of reasons such as religious, financial, personal interest yet the most dominant issues of fake news are rooted in political motivations. More ever Informant 6 mentions that users place loyalty to their political identities above the truth – and thus fail to discern truth from falsehood in favor of simply believing ideologically concordant information. Informant 2 in addition claims that

“Those who share news on social media are mainly motivated to inform others and express their feelings”.

2. Who is responsible for fabrication and spreading fake news?

Most informants had the belief that users play a large role in what content is created and how it is disseminated. Informant 4 said that the primary players and pressure points can be identified as content consumers and content creators (journalists, bloggers). Some would include newspapers and broadcasters with content creators, on the grounds that they exercise some control over the created content and are not covered by a safe harbor. Content distributors are distinguishing between traditional content distributors (newspapers, broadcasters) and digital content distributors (wikis, blogs, social media platforms, search engines, online news aggregators). All in all, social media is a significant provider of information.

3. Why bloggers and or social media influencers disseminate fake news?

According to informants in general, the reasons why people create fake news can be explained as follows: - informant 2 believes that

“Social media influencers have intent to mislead in order to damage an agency, entity, or person. Beside those financial gains by getting people to click on sites so that they are exposed to advertising.”

In this respect informant 4 agrees that social media influencers need to persuade others to take action to support or oppose a cause or political candidate.

“Increased political polarization and hostile government actors are those who generate and propagate fake news, particularly during elections”.

Moreover, Informant 3 said that social media influencers try to deceive or prank people and increased popularity of social media such as the Facebook News Feed. Informant 3 strengthen the concern said,

To increase readership and improve rates because ‘eye-popping’ headlines in social media feeds make it easier for users to share content without evaluating or reading it. This creates a viral storm of sound bites without substance because the vulnerable recipients unknowingly are enlisted as amplifiers and multipliers.

Informant 7 on the other hand said that confirmation bias-people are more likely to accept information that confirms their beliefs and dismiss information that does not.

4. What are the effects of fake news on social media users?

Informant 14 tries to view fake news is a bigger problem than previously thought, with potentially far-reaching consequences. The effects of fake news can be evaluated in the light of journalism as a profession. First, salient danger associated with “fake news” is that it devalues and delegitimizes voices of expertise, authoritative institutions, and the concept of objective data—all of which undermine society’s ability to engage in rational discourse based upon shared facts. Second, is the promotion of “safe news” at the expense of difficult or challenging news stories? Thirdly, indicates the need for credible sources to allocate ever-diminishing resources to debunking inaccurate information (which poses both financial and reputational costs).

Informant 15 in was strengthening the fact that fake news has an enormous effect on the public in general. The effect includes causes moral panic or mass hysteria, damages public trust. Furthermore, increasingly polarized along ideological lines, and this affective polarization tends

to trigger motivated reasoning —an unconscious, biased way of processing information which makes even smart people believe in falsehoods that support their ideological and partisan predispositions. As well, fake news entrenches stereotypes, generalizations and inequality in society. Additionally, People have been killed when false rumors have spread through digital media.

5. How do media users' respond to fake news?

Al most all the professionals assents those Ethiopian social media users interact with fake news on social media by looking for information about its content and its sources. According to Informant 7

Users tend to search for the media outlets' background and journalist's identity. Moreover, they search for reliable sources and users by reading comments below fake news. This process is also part of the source authentication process since the users primarily look for information about the source or the message.

In addition to this point, informant 11 said users tend to search for clarification about fake news through their own networks – friends and families – which means that their personal knowledge might be influenced or expanded by the interactions within their networks.

In contrast to the mentioned informants 5, few people are prepared to effectively navigate the online information environment. Users deficit in digital media literacy could be identified as a critical factor explaining widespread belief in online misinformation. And also It is a fact that many people lack the sophistication to detect a message as being untruthful, particularly when it appears to come from an authoritative or trusted source. Ethiopian users involved in fake news activities, e.g. posting, forwarding, liking, and commenting.

6. How could users fight the spread of fake news from users side?

Most informants held that users can make their own effort in the fight against the spread of misleading information. Informant 1 said□

in Ethiopia there are active users who use the media to fight the spread of fake news and satisfy their need for quality content in journalism. There are users who

are aware of their roles, their responsibilities, and their power and they use their knowledge to collaborate and build a better news ecosystem.

More ever in the view of informant 1 users ought to post or share stories they know to be true, from sources they know to be responsible and help for journalism they value. Likewise, fight with fake news sites that produce and lead to the proliferation of that kind of information and journalism.

In addition to this point, informant 5 appreciates the role of the community, businesses and organizations wield “enormous power” to channel advertising or sponsorship money to platforms they trust and respect, and not to sites that attract views by promoting hate or divisiveness. Appropriate legislation- by passing laws that strike a balance between weeding out fake news that is deliberately misleading, malicious and used to profit off others, while allowing journalists get on with their jobs.

Informant 13 reinforce the concern said that content consumers must be better educated, so that they are better able to distinguish credible sources and stories from their counterparts. Creating more critical news consumers could be approached at a variety of levels. Consumers could be educated about how news information propagates in today’s world, the harms of fake news, and how to identify it. Furthermore, another approach would be to enable the consumer to learn more about the actors and stakeholders in a given story, better understand their affiliations, and to identify and question unverified details. As well, in informants 13 view goes to the extent that critical news consumption could be incorporated into school curriculums or promoted through government-sponsored computer and content literacy tools and training programs.

Informant 7 on the other hand opposes the above informant because long-term solution was widely endorsed. The informant noted that education is hardly a cure-all. Well-educated individuals often default to ideologies, and the lack of news literacy can hardly be the reason for the relatively recent fake news problem, since it is unlikely that news literacy has gotten significantly worse in recent years. Instead of focusing on education, users need to double down on supporting facts.

4.4 Content Analysis (Qualitative)

4.4.1 Social media data analysis

Fake news is false or misleading information presented as news. It often has the aim of damaging the reputation of a person or entity, or making money through advertising revenue. There is also politics behind most of fake news.

There are many categories collectively referred to as fake news. Some of which are actually fake (disinformation), others down to human error or biases (misinformation). Either way they all have a very loose connection with the truth and basically sit on a continuum of intent to deceive.

1. Fake news related with religion ,ethnicity , politics and persons (entities)

There are much social media fake news that tries to create tension between members of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and Protestant Christians, as well as between the Ethiopian Orthodox and Muslims in general.

Source: Pic.1 @Fake News Ethiopia ·Community Pic 2. By Peter Mwai BBC Reality Check



The first picture intentionally prepared as it is the information of Ethiopian National Electoral Bored. It shows that the composition of religious followers who involves in Ethiopian political parties. Ethiopia is home to three main religious groupings (Orthodoxy, Islam, and Protestantism), which are sharply distinct in practice and community identification. It tries to

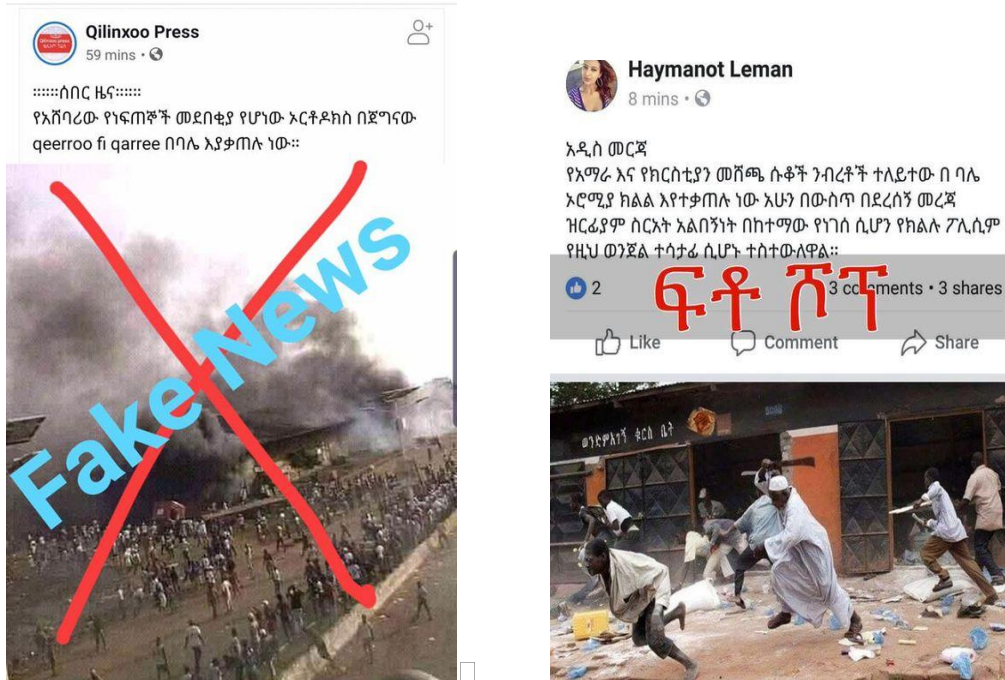
show religious members who have support for different parties. This is to create religious envy and controversy among the members of followers. The second picture seems that two Tigray mothers are praying. It is a misleading image of a 'destroyed church'. In recent months, the conflict in Tigray has dominated most analyses of Ethiopian politics. The conflict in Tigray has resulted in the destruction of many buildings, including churches. However, a picture widely circulating online of two women apparently praying beside a damaged building with the claim that it's a destroyed church in Tigray is misleading. It's not from Tigray. A reverse image search reveals this same photo appears in a Facebook post from July 2018, predating the current conflict, and on a travel website, which reveals the location to be the town of Adi Keih in Eritrea.

Pic .3 Source: @Fake News Ethiopia ·Community



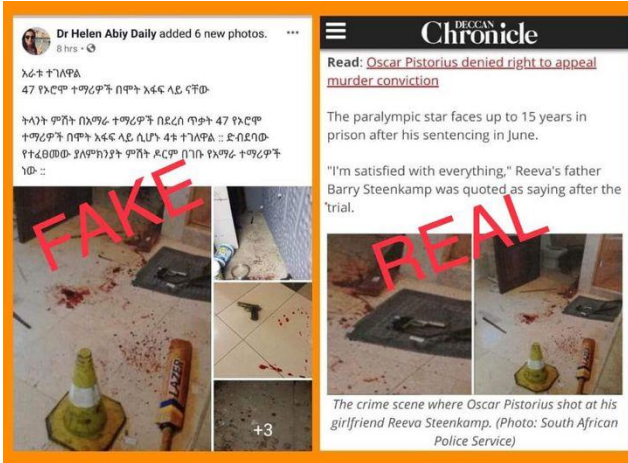
Picture 3 shows that manipulated picture which is happen in Texas. it was reported by CNN. A 26 years old man was convicted of burning down mosques in Victoria Texas. The story changed in to Ethiopian context. In Amhara region around Gonder Amhara youth(Fano) burn mosques and kill Muslims. This is to deceive and provoke the followers of Muslim religion.

Pic 4 <http://www.wishetnew.com/>



Pic 4 indications that how ethnicity and religion intertwined. Oromo youth (qeeroo) burn Amhara orthodox church in Bale. This fake news takes the Bale Oromo youth are Muslims and enemy of Amhara and Ethiopian Orthodox Church. These two aspects of collective identity formation are not clearly separate in Ethiopia but overlap and interact with one another in complex ways. Moreover, the clash is most often understood as an attack by Christians upon Muslims and therefore framed as a purely interreligious conflict with no clear ethnic overtones. In these interpretations, the question of religious extremism is particularly prevalent.

“In the Ethiopian context, where ethnicity is a defining political ideology and organizing factor, this law could be abused [by] police opposition, political parties, and shrink political speeches,” Eneyew said. Picture 5 shows that 47 Oromo university students has been highly injured by Amhara ethnic groups. It is totally wrong information and the picture is taken from Chronicle which present different story. This hate speech or disinformation that is disseminated on social media This might consequently create violent conflicts during rallies among ethnic groups. Furthermore, disinformation will force students and their parents to make wrong decision. Adding that the mechanisms behind disinformation are more organized than people think. □

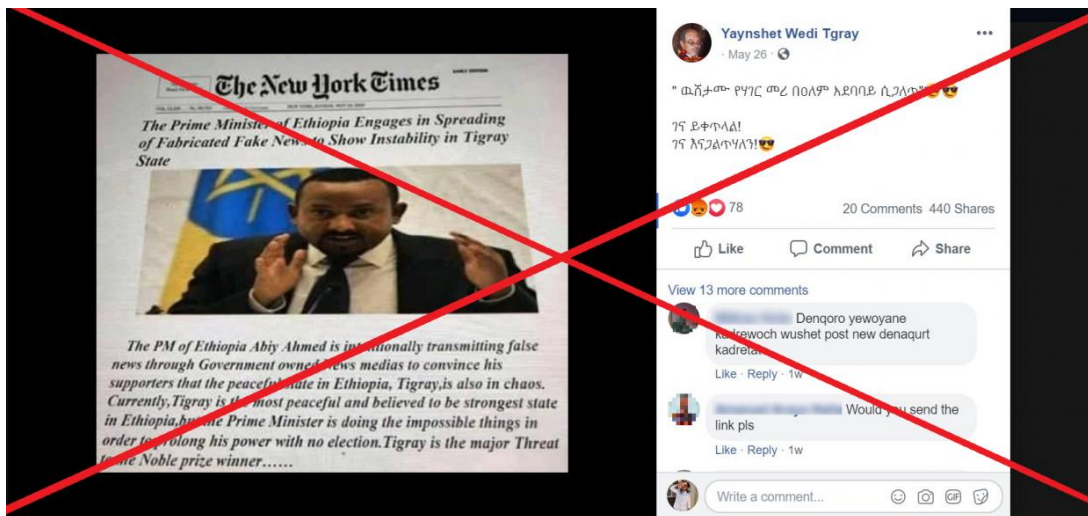


Source: Pic 6 @Fake News Ethiopia •Community

Pic 6 tries to show the fake news from ethnic and religious dimension. It demonstrates that Bale Oromo youths burning shops and properties of Amhara or Christians. the image is taken from other country amid edit in Photoshop to seems real. This kind of rising tide of disinformation, mostly online, is fueling

these tensions in Ethiopian ethnic groups, long regarded as a place where different ethnic and religious groups live in harmony.

Source: Pic 7 AFP Fact Check



Pic 7 shows that images shared on Facebook claim to show newspaper front pages, including The New York Times, accusing Ethiopia’s prime minister of spreading “fake news” to start riots. But the claim is false and the images were digitally manipulated. A Facebook post published on May 25, 2020, archived here and shared more than 400 times features a picture of Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed on what appears to be the cover of The New York Times. “Our country's liar of a leader was exposed to the world. It’s not over yet! We will continue exposing you! (sic),” reads the caption in Amharic.

Pic 8 Fake News Alert Ethiopia



Pic 8 fake news depicts significant figures in Ethiopian politics and their professions, including Daniel Kibere, Janterar Abay, and Telahun. According to the text, their participation in the country's most ambitious reforms puts them in jeopardy. And also tries to show that they do not support the Amhara people since they support the newly reformed politics and the Prime Minister. There are insults on the post that degrade the personalities of these figures. Ethiopia's ethnic federalism structure was always going to be vulnerable to politicians using atavistic attitudes. This post implies that these individuals must reject the reformation brought about by people.

2. Fake news and fake page

Source: Pic 9 @FakeNewsEthiopia ·Community



People steal pictures from artiste’s profiles and use them as their own. It is for the sake of gaining money and getting many followers. Many artistes found out someone took pictures from their album and created a fake

account. All the pictures are taken from social media. There are many artistes experiencing this same problem.

Source: Ethiopian Monitor Daily Ethiopia

Tech giant Facebook says that it has removed more than a dozen accounts and pages on Facebook and Instagram from Egypt that targeted Ethiopia, Sudan and Turkey. Facebook removed 17 Facebook accounts, six Pages, and three Instagram accounts from Egypt that targeted Ethiopia, Sudan, and Turkey. It said the pages had violated Facebook policy against foreign interference. The accounts have shared stories in the Amharic language which is widely spoken in Ethiopia. The content includes criticism of the massive dam that Ethiopia has built on a tributary of the River Nile.

Source: AP news

Facebook shuts 20 pages claiming to be Ethiopian broadcaster. Fana Broadcasting Corporate's statement comes as that fake information reviews in current months have contributed to mass violence and deaths in a few components of the country. "Based on our request, Facebook has close down thirteen fake pages with inside the beyond week alone. In current weeks, a complete of 20 fake Fana pages that have been spreading fake information have been close down," Mekoya Hailemariam, head editor of Fana's on-line publications, informed The Associated Press on Wednesday. "The pages have been the use of our legitimate emblem and combining our true information gadgets with fake ones to deliberately unfold misinformation. Some of those fake pages used to have as excessive as 45,000 followers."

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study's major goal was to see how Ethiopians reacted to fake news on social media via the eyes of leading bloggers and social media influencers. Four key research questions were developed to guide the process, and qualitative and quantitative research methods were used to achieve the stated goal. Survey-questionnaire, content analysis and in-depth interviews were employed under the notion of the mixed methods approach to collecting the necessary data and information in accordance with the mentioned research questions. Once sufficient data were acquired, analysis and interpretation were held guided by the stated objectives.

5.1. Conclusion

This study concluded that false news is pervasive in Ethiopia based on data from questionnaires, social media posts, and interviews. Furthermore, this study found that social media is one of the primary reasons for Ethiopians' exposure to fake news. Among the various social media platforms, Facebook is the chief one for facilitating a stage for fake news, followed by YouTube and Twitter.

Politically motivated false information is the most common type of fake news among Ethiopians, according to the study. The next most popular sort of fake news practiced by Ethiopians is religious-based fake news. According to data from the survey, interviews, and content analysis, ethnicity, hurting a person's or entity's reputation, false pages of well-known people, and broadcast organization fake news are all significant among Ethiopians.

According to data collected through questionnaires, interviews, and social media posts, online fake news among Ethiopians frequently includes misleading information, manipulated images and videos, defamation of a person or entity, hate speech, and deceiving content that is fabricated, with no verifiable facts, sources, or quotes. Propaganda that is purposefully written to deceive readers and written fake news for financial gain. This study indicated that the online fake news environment among Ethiopians looks to be severe based on questionnaires, social media posts, and interviews.

According to the data, ethnic politics, a tense political climate, political suppression, low levels of digital literacy among users, the advent of social media, fake news providers produce fake news to promote ideas or people they favor, often by discrediting others, elites with political motives, a lack of professionalism among the media, and religious foundations lacking strength are all factors. Activists circulated hate speech and bogus news that might cause ethnic strife; some did so purposefully to attract attention, while others did it to attract more protestors to their camp and speed up the movement. All of these factors have been cited by survey participants as contributing to Ethiopians' excessive reliance on fake news

5.2. Recommendations

Despite the difficulties in identifying easy remedies or clear perpetrators in the issue of false news, this study has demonstrated that there are effective strategies to detect and prevent fake news on social media, and that user may play an important role in this process. Indeed, it appears that building more ways to restrict, flag, or remove bogus content from social media platforms is a critical step. Users who are well-informed and educated may be able to stop – or at least greatly reduce – the propagation of fake news on social media.

Social media is a fertile environment for the fake news to be spread rapidly. However, social media platforms can also be used by users, media outlets, and advertisers as a powerful tool to counter the circulation of fake news. To build a better news ecosystem, with a well-informed audience, quality, and accuracy in journalism, we need to construct and follow a strategy with an aim at educating the users on spotting and curbing fake news. Empowering users with the tools and the knowledge to verify information distributed online could lead to a better online society with the less fake news.

Apart from the well-informed and educated users, capable of spotting fake news and curbing its spread on social media, quality in journalism is also required in order to counter the spread of misleading information. In the information age, the spread of social media and the fact that fake news industry is a profitable business have changed the media ecosystem. Fake news is everywhere, and it is generated and distributed with tremendous speed. However, as this study has shown, there are people, media outlets and organizations who are fighting the spread of fake news and are willing to make an effort in order to provide quality content. Media outlets which

produce quality content need to be supported both by advertisers and the audience. Government, independent authorities and technologies firms should cooperate not only in the field of fighting fake news industry but also on supporting media outlets or audience communities which produce quality content, make research and provide accurate data and facts. The healthy journalism should be supported in order to survive and beat the fake news tsunami. Quality in journalism in combination with media literacy and the well-educated and skeptical audience might be the solution to the spread of fake news, by developing a new online media ecosystem where there will not be a place for disinformation, misleading facts, and fake news.

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Appendixes

Appendix –I

Addis Ababa University School of Journalism and Communications Questionnaires for social media users

This questionnaire is prepared to collect data from the social media users for the study being conducted on “An assessment of users’ response to fake news on social media: The case of popular bloggers and social media influencers”. The effectiveness of the questionnaire relies on your genuine and reliable response to each of the questions. May I request you to share your ideas on the questions mentioned below. And your response to each of the questions will be kept confidential and used only for this research purposes. Thank you in advance.

General Directions

- You do not need to write your name on anywhere in the questionnaire.
- When you respond for the questions in the box, use only a tick mark (✓).
- For open-ended questions, please write your responses in the space provided.
- The research paper will be fruitful if you read and respond to all the questions.
- In this questionnaire, the term “mainstream” is used to refer to media such as newspaper, magazine, radio and television.

Section 1: Background Information about the Respondents

1. Your age: Below 20 years 21-25 years 26-30 years Above 30 years
 2. Gender: Male Female
 3. What is your academic status?
- Preparatory diploma degree Masters PHD

4. How long have used Facebook?

Less than 1 year 2-5 years 6-10

5. How many face book friends do you have?

Less than 500 500-1000 1500-2000 More than 2500

Section 2: This section focuses on data that shows the nature of users' response to social media; please circle or shade your responses among the choices.

6. Are you use any of the following platforms? (select more than one is possible answers)

Facebook

You Tube

Twitter

WhatsApp

Instagram

Google news

Messenger

7. How long do you spend on social media sites?

Less than 1 hour

2-3 hours

4-5 hours

More than 5 hours

8. Based on your experience which social media platform offers a more fertile environment for the spread of fake news story?

Face book

Instagram

Twitter

You tube

Other platform_____

10. Have you ever shared anything that wasn't true?

Yes

No

If yes, How_____

11. How many times have you observed something have you know ever shared something online that wasn't true?

Yes No I don't know

12. What tools do you use to identify fake news? (select more than one is possible answers answers)

I search for media I search on the web for similar news
I use fact checking I read comments
I discuss the issue with people

13. What is your reaction to fake story which is generated by other users or trolls? (select more than one is possible answers)

I just ignore it I provide a disapprover comment
I report the post I touch the like click
I re share the post to warn others I do something else_____

14. In Ethiopia there is a lot of fake news which is generated and distributed on social media. What impact do you think these stories have on social media users? (select more than one is possible answers)

They make users skeptical They mislead users
They entertain some Influence on political view
Something else_____

15. Who should be responsible for identifying and curbing fake news on social media? (select more than one is possible answers)

The social media platforms The users
The government The social media hosts
The traditional media journalism

APPENDIX - II

Interview Questions: Media experts and Social Media influencers

1. What are dominant fake issues presented in the form of news? Why?
2. Who is responsible for fabrication and spreading fake news?
3. why bloggers and or social media influencers disseminate fake news?
4. What are the effects of fake news on social media users?
5. How do media users' response to fake news?
6. What is the involvement of media influencers to spread fake news?
7. How could users fight the spread of fake news from users' side?