



ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES, LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATIONS

**THE CONTRIBUTION OF FACT-CHECKING INSTITUTIONS IN
MINIMIZING DISINFORMATION IN ETHIOPIA: A CASE STUDY OF
HAQ CHECK AND ETHIOPIA CHECK**

BY

ASHEBIR AKALNEH

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Addis Ababa University

Faculty of Humanities, Language and Communication Graduate

School of Journalism and Communications

**The Contribution of Fact-Checking Institutions in Minimizing
Disinformation in Ethiopia: A Case Study of Haq Check and Ethiopia
Check**

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By

Ashebir Akalneh(GSR/2267/15)

Advisor

Yohannes Shiferaw (PhD)

Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

April, 2024

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, pronounce that this research is my original work and every one of the wellsprings of materials utilized for the research has been properly recognized.

Name: Ashebir Akalneh

Signature: _____

Date of submission: _____

Place of submission: Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

APPROVAL

The undersigned certify that they have read and hereby recommend to Addis Ababa University to accept the Thesis submitted by Ashebir Akalneh entitled “The Contribution of Fact-Checking Institutions in Minimizing Disinformation in Ethiopia: A Case Study of Haq Check and Ethiopia Check ‘in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of a Master’s Degree in Journalism and Communication.

Approval of Board of Examiners

1. Examiner

Name _____ Signature _____ Date _____

2. Examiner

Name _____ Signature _____ Date _____

3. Advisor

Name _____ Signature _____ Date _____

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed at assessing the contribution of fact-checking institutions, namely HaqCheck and Ethiopia Check, in minimizing disinformation within Ethiopia. Employing selective exposure, elaboration likelihood, and cognitive dissonance theories and mixed-method approach, the study meticulously collected data from a broad spectrum of participants, totaling 108 individuals, who were actively involved in fact-checking and related activities across diverse organizations. These participants were drawn from various professional roles within the realm of fact-checking, as delineated by the breakdown provided: 8 employees from HaqCheck, 10 from Ethiopia Check, 70 engaged in monitoring duties at EMA, and 10 reporters each from Tikva Ethiopia and Dire Tube. This sampling strategy is hoped to ensure a representative cross-section of individuals directly engaged in the task of scrutinizing and combatting disinformation within Ethiopia. Through the administration of survey and conducting semi-structured interviews, the study attempted to explore the depth of disinformation prevalence in Ethiopia, evaluated the contribution of fact-checking institutions, and delineated the formidable challenges encountered in their mission. The findings illuminated a stark acknowledgment of disinformation's pervasive threat, particularly disseminated through the conduits of social media platforms and political entities. Despite the commendable level of trust bestowed upon fact-checking institutions, a prevailing perception persisted regarding their somewhat constrained contribution in countering the onslaught of disinformation. Key challenges identified encompassed financial constraints and the sheer magnitude of disinformation volume. Develop and implement comprehensive media literacy programs nationwide while fostering collaboration among fact-checking entities. This dual approach will bolster citizens' critical thinking skills and ensure the effectiveness of fact-checking efforts, promoting a discerning and well-informed society in Ethiopia.

Keywords: Fact-Checking Institutions, Disinformation, Ethiopia, Media Literacy, Collaboration, AI Tools, Funding, Training Programs, Public Awareness

CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter gives background information about the study. It also points out the statement of the problem, and basic research questions, and objectives, significance of the study, delimitation of the study and operational definition of key terms.

1.1. Background of the study

In today's fast-changing digital world, digital media has given many ways for people to share information online (Vukanovic, 2018). But not everyone uses this well. Sometimes, people share information that might not be true, either on purpose or by accident. Disinformation means spreading false information to trick or control others (Fallis, 2015). This can happen on social media, news websites, and other online places.

The Ethiopian government's Hate Speech and Disinformation Prevention and Suppression Proclamation (2020) No. 1185/2020 says hate speech is false speech spread by someone who knows or should know it's false, and it's likely to cause trouble (Article 2(3)). So, fake news and disinformation are big worries now. Disinformation can spread fast on social media and other online places, making it tough for people to know what's true.

Many countries worldwide have seen a proliferation of disinformation around critical political events and policy debates. According to the report of the Guardian globally, "More than 85% of people are worried about the impact of online disinformation and 87% believe it has already harmed their country's politics" The research of Abbasi & Derakhti (2020), entitled on "An Exploratory Study on Disinformation and Fake News Associated with the U.S. 2020 Presidential Election," found that "COVID-19" and the "Voting Process" are deemed the most central themes, significantly influencing the American electorate and the results of elections.

Disinformation impacts democracy, government, and human rights globally (Colomina et al., 2021). The report of Internews (2023) states that due to Ethiopian mainstream media's failure to provide critical information regarding political issues in the country, most of the public visits social media for information, which makes them vulnerable to disinformation. This includes Ethiopia, where disinformation has sometimes aggravated ethnic and political tensions (Amnesty, 2023). Yet, in some places, groups from civil society

and independent organizations have stepped up as "fact-checkers" to look into claims, prove them wrong, and spread better information.

A study in Bangladesh (Barek, 2023) showed that fact-checking groups are doing a lot to fight fake news, lies, and rumors. These fact-checking groups want to be fair watchdogs. They use strict ways to check if what politicians, journalists, and people on social media say are true. By providing transparency around their vetting process and using best practices around sourcing and evidence, they hope to build credibility and public trust (Graves & Amazeen, 2019). As internet access expands in countries like Ethiopia, these groups can use online channels to reach broad audiences. Internationally, institutions like PolitiFact, Snopes, and FactCheck.org are dedicated to autonomously validating the assertions in news articles and ensuring that well-known individuals are held accountable for their statements (Yellowbrick, 2023.). Similarly, institutions such as "Haq check" and "Ethiopia check" dedicated their work to fact-checking in Ethiopia. According to information accessed from the website of haqcheck.org, HaqCheck is a regional and multilingual fact-checking project established in Ethiopia in November 2020. It is registered under Ethiopia's Civil Society Organizations Proclamation 1113/2019 and works with media outlets to check the accuracy of information in English and four regional dialects. Moreover, Ethiopia Check was launched in June 2020; this independent trust organization was later incorporated into Internews' Ethiopia initiatives and is officially recognized in Kenya. They are working in Amharic, Afan Oromo, and Tigrinya languages.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

With the rise of social media and increased access to the internet, disinformation can now spread faster and more widely than ever before. Research indicated that this spread of online disinformation has significant impacts with respect to reducing social trust, threatening democracy, and enabling the manipulation of public opinion (Boxell et al., 2018). Thus, disinformation has the potential to lead to uncertainty and instill fear in the general population (Gereme et al., 2021).

Ethiopia has been facing rising disinformation, especially around political issues and conflicts. Mainly during the civil war in northern parts of Ethiopia, the spread of disinformation was at high pick (Zewde, 2021). During the North conflict, international media recounted the incident in vivid terms. Among international organizations

that fueled disinformation during that time was the U.S. embassy in Ethiopia, warning U.S. citizens to contemplate travel to Ethiopia and those presently in Ethiopia to think about making arrangements for departing the country (U.S. embassy in Ethiopia, 2021). This report indicates the impact of disinformation on diplomacy.

According to the European Institute of Peace (2021), social media is a source of 73% of disinformation and fake news among samples investigated by the report. The European Institute of Peace report added that Abiy Ahmed Administration's response to combatting the dissemination of fake news, disinformation, and hate speech has been, by necessity, heavy-handed, with the go-to response to escalation being to switch off the internet for the entire country. Another study by Internews (2023), on online disinformation in Ethiopia's social media users found that 96.3% of the study respondents had experienced disinformation in social media platforms. This shows that digital media users are exposed to widespread disinformation in their regular intake of digital content.

A study conducted by Yilma (2021) "On Disinformation, Elections and Ethiopian Law," indicated that Ethiopia had not implemented appropriate measures to combat the impact of disinformation on its democratic objectives, particularly in hosting free, fair, and legitimate elections. The new Ethiopian hate speech and disinformation proclamation law also faces clarity problems (Eranfeno, 2022).

As a response, independent fact-checking institutions like HaqCheck and Ethiopia Check have emerged in recent years to verify claims and mitigate disinformation in Ethiopia's online media landscape. Scholars have conducted many studies on disinformation detection on social media. Checking process one of the methods is automatic disinformation detection. An automated "disinformation-Tracker" system was developed to detect false news by comparing it with verified information from fact-checking websites like PolitiFact (Shu et al., 2019). However, the study conducted by Woldeyohannis (2021) stated that, unlike other languages, automatic detection is difficult due to the morphological richness and complexity of the Amharic language. According to research conducted by Demilie & Salau (2022), distinguishing between disinformation and offensive language in Ethiopian languages is uniquely challenging because no research achieves complete accuracy for these languages. As fact-checking institutions rely on automatic disinformation detection, Haqcheck and Ethiopia Check face challenges in detecting fake news published in local languages. HaqCheck (2021) report emphasizes the need for increased vigilance, fact-checking, and responsible information

sharing to combat the spread of disinformation and its harmful consequences on society. However, limited research has been conducted on the contribution of fact checking institutions to minimize disinformation in the Ethiopian context. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the contribution of HaqCheck and Ethiopia Check in minimizing disinformation in Ethiopia.

1.3. Objectives of the study

1.3.1. General Objective

The primary objective of this study was to assess the contribution of fact-checking institutions to minimizing disinformation in Ethiopia

1.3.2. Specific objectives

- ✚ To find out the severity of disinformation in Ethiopia.
- ✚ To examine the contribution of fact-checking institutions in minimizing disinformation.
- ✚ To identify the challenges faced by fact-checking institutions in their efforts to minimize disinformation.

1.4. Research questions

1. How severe is disinformation in Ethiopia?
2. What is the contribution of fact-checking institutions in minimizing disinformation?
3. What are the challenges faced by fact-checking institutions in their efforts to counter disinformation?

1.5. Significance of the study

This research can help us understand and deal with the problem of disinformation by showing how important fact-checking groups are in fighting it. By looking at Haq Check and Ethiopia Check, the study can tell us how these institutions check information, deal with challenges, and fight disinformation stories. Also, the study can see if fact-checking really works by checking how many people trust it and how it affects things. This can help make rules and plans to minimize disinformation from spreading.

Plus, the study can help make rules about disinformation by showing what fact-checking institutions can and can't do. It can also make laws to punish people who spread disinformation. And it can remind us how important it is for people to know what's true by checking if fact-checking changes how people think and act. This can help make lessons and plans to help people know what's true and what's not.

1.6. Scope of the study

This research deliberately narrowed its scope to gain in-depth insights into a specific facet of combating disinformation in Ethiopia. While the broader phenomenon of disinformation extends far and wide, this study intentionally focused on the crucial contributions of fact-checking institutions. This decision limited the participant pool to two key stakeholders: employees working at HaqCheck and EthioCheck, and representatives from media outlets that disseminate their verified content. This targeted approach ensured a rich exploration of the experiences and perspectives of those on the frontlines of the fight against disinformation. By acknowledging this delimitation, the study recognizes that the experiences and perspectives of the broader online population in Ethiopia might differ and warrant further investigation. Additionally, the research focused on HaqCheck and EthioCheck, acknowledging the potential existence of other fact-checking groups within the Ethiopian media landscape. Furthermore, the study design deliberately limited its generalizability by acknowledging that the findings might not be directly applicable to countries with vastly different social and media environments. By clearly defining these delimitations, the research prioritizes a focused investigation of a specific aspect of the larger issue of disinformation in Ethiopia. This focused approach paves the way for future research to explore the broader online population and the contributions of other fact-checking institutions within the Ethiopian media landscape.

1.7. Limitations of the study

While this study sheds light on the valuable role of fact-checking institutions play in Ethiopia, there are limitations to consider. The research focused on a relatively small sample, including employees from just two fact-checking organizations and media outlets that use their content. This might not fully represent the broader population consuming information online in Ethiopia. Additionally, the study centered on HaqCheck and Ethiopia Check, potentially overlooking the contributions of other fact-checking institutions. The findings may also have limited generalizability to other countries with different social and media landscapes.

Furthermore, the reliance on surveys and interviews introduces potential bias from participants' memory or desire to provide socially acceptable answers. Finally, the study represents a snapshot in time. Disinformation tactics and media habits can change rapidly, so further research may be needed to understand how these dynamics evolve. These limitations highlight the need for broader studies to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how to combat disinformation in Ethiopia.

1.8. Definition of Key Terms

Disinformation: Disinformation is defined as intentionally false or misleading information disseminated to deceive or manipulate the public (Temesgen, 2020).

Fact-Checking Institutions: Fact-checking institutions are organizations dedicated to verifying the accuracy of information circulated in the media and online platforms (Berhanu, 2018).

Contribution: Contribution refers to the positive impact or role played by fact-checking institutions in combating disinformation (Kassahun, 2021).

Minimizing Disinformation: Minimizing disinformation involves reducing the spread and impact of false or misleading information within society (Hagos, 2019).

Challenges: Challenges are the obstacles and difficulties faced by fact-checking institutions in countering disinformation (Woldegiorgis & Jourde, 2019).

1.9. Organization of the study

The thesis paper is organized as follows. Chapter One consists of an introduction, which includes a background of the study, a statement of the problems, the objective of the study, the significance of the study, delimitation of the study, limitation of the study, organization of the study, and definition of key terms. Chapter two deals with a review of related literature to the topic of the study. Chapter three comprises the research design and methodology, sources of data, sampling technique, and tools of data collection. In chapter four, data analysis and discussion were presented. The last chapter contains a summary of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations. In addition to these, references, questionnaires, and questions of interviews were attached to the last part of the thesis.

CHAPTER TWO

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1. Introduction

The introduction to a literature review acts as an entry point, offering a thorough examination of the research terrain while outlining the scope and importance of the study. In the realm of verifying facts and combatting disinformation in Ethiopia, grasping the present state of literature is crucial. Scholars have increasingly analyzed the spread of disinformation and its effects on societies worldwide, including Ethiopia. The rise of digital platforms has magnified the propagation of inaccurate information, presenting significant obstacles to public discourse, democratic processes, and societal unity. In this context, the significance of fact-checking organizations has garnered attention as a potential remedy to the dissemination of disinformation. Through systematic validation of claims and refutation of falsehoods, these entities play a crucial role in maintaining the credibility of information channels.

Scholars have documented various aspects of disinformation and fact-checking efforts across diverse contexts, offering valuable insights into the effectiveness and challenges encountered by such endeavors. A nuanced comprehension of the factors influencing the effectiveness of fact-checking organizations is vital for crafting tailored strategies suited to the Ethiopian setting. Furthermore, examining existing literature sheds light on the methodologies utilized by fact-checkers, spanning from manual verification processes to the incorporation of advanced technologies like artificial intelligence and machine learning.

Additionally, the literature review explores the evolving nature of disinformation campaigns and the adaptive tactics employed by malevolent actors to evade fact-checking endeavors. Understanding the socio-political dynamics underpinning the propagation of disinformation is essential for designing comprehensive interventions aimed at addressing root causes rather than merely addressing symptoms. Moreover, the review amalgamates empirical findings on the influence of fact-checking initiatives on public perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors towards information consumption. Through scrutiny of case studies and empirical studies, scholars have elucidated the intricate ways in which fact-checking interventions intersect with societal norms, media landscapes, and political contexts.

Given the above, this literature review aims to offer a comprehensive synthesis of existing scholarship on the role of fact-checking institutions in mitigating disinformation in Ethiopia. By critically assessing the strengths, weaknesses, and gaps in current research, this study endeavors to contribute to the growing body of literature on media literacy, information credibility, and democratic resilience in the digital era. Through meticulous examination of pertinent literature, this review lays the groundwork for a rigorous empirical exploration of the role of fact-checking institutions in fostering a more enlightened and resilient society in Ethiopia.

2.2. Conceptualization of disinformation

In today's digital world, spreading false information is a big problem that can hurt people, groups, and society. Disinformation means sharing false or tricky information on purpose to trick or control others (Media Defence, 2022). It's different from misinformation, which is when false information is shared by accident. Both can be bad, but disinformation is worse because it's made and spread to achieve something specific. This could be about politics, money, or just stirring up trouble.

In the pursuit of clarity amidst the chaos of disinformation, Ahmad (et al., 2019) presents a formal definition and model, drawing from situation awareness theory. Their insights shed light on the strategic deployment of disinformation to erode awareness and decision-making processes, posing a formidable challenge to entities across diverse domains. As the discourse around disinformation continues to evolve, Ruiz & Nilsson (2022) propose a nuanced framework, elucidating the intricate mechanisms through which disinformation proliferates on social media. Their definition encapsulates the adversarial nature of disinformation campaigns, leveraging a spectrum of rhetorical strategies to exploit identity-driven controversies.

Besides the difficulty of regulating social media, unlike conventional media, the legal definition of disinformation makes it more complex. As stated in the new Ethiopian Hate Speech and Disinformation Prevention and Suppression Proclamation No. 1185 /2020, Disinformation is defined as "speech that is false, is disseminated by a person who knew or should reasonably have known the falsity of the information and is highly likely to cause a public disturbance," The document's definition of disinformation lacked clarity because it introduced misunderstanding in implementing the proclamation (Eranfeno, 2022).

In the context of the ever-evolving landscape of disinformation, scholars have increasingly turned to formal definitions and models to dissect its multifaceted nature. Building upon Ahmad et al.'s (2019) groundwork rooted in situation awareness theory, which elucidates the deliberate orchestration of disinformation to manipulate awareness and decision-making processes, it becomes apparent that the strategic deployment of false information transcends mere dissemination. Rather, it manifests as a calculated assault on the cognitive infrastructure of societies, wielding the power to sow discord and dismantle trust at an unprecedented scale. Ruiz and Nilsson's (2022) nuanced framework further underscore this adversarial dynamic, highlighting the symbiotic relationship between disinformation and social media platforms. By leveraging a spectrum of rhetorical strategies, disinformation campaigns exploit the vulnerabilities inherent in identity-driven controversies, amplifying discord and polarization within online communities. However, amidst the scholarly discourse and theoretical frameworks lies the practical challenge of regulatory enforcement and legal clarity. The legal definition of disinformation, as exemplified by the Ethiopian Hate Speech and Disinformation Prevention and Suppression Proclamation No. 1185/2020, underscores the complexity of delineating falsehoods within the realm of free speech. Yet, as Eranfeno (2022) notes, the lack of clarity within such legal definitions can inadvertently perpetuate misunderstanding, hindering effective implementation and enforcement of regulatory measures aimed at curbing the proliferation of disinformation. Thus, the confluence of theoretical inquiry, legal ambiguity, and practical challenges underscores the pressing need for interdisciplinary collaboration and nuanced approaches in combating the pernicious spread of disinformation in the digital age.

2.2.1. Global Overview of Disinformation

The emergence of disinformation and fake news has undeniably transcended national boundaries, morphing into a global challenge that demands multifaceted approaches for mitigation and resolution. Central to the discourse surrounding disinformation is the pivotal role of trust in media, serving as a barometer for disseminating false narratives. Especially Disinformation has gained prominence, particularly following the 2016 presidential elections in the United States, a democratic event characterized by significant disinformation and misleading information (Albright, 2016).

According to report of Forbes (2016), even though the degree of trust in traditional media is different among world countries due to the different levels of media freedom, trust in conventional journalism was eroded long ago. The report Forbes added that due to people

trust in traditional media fading, they prefer to consume online media, which, besides its advantage, makes the public vulnerable to fake news and disinformation. Similarly, the study conducted by Knuutila (et al., 2022) on "Who is afraid of fake news? Modeling risk perceptions of disinformation in 142 countries" shows that approximately 58.5% of frequent internet users worldwide are worried about coming across disinformation on the Internet. Levels of concern around disinformation vary significantly by region, with the highest in Latin America and the Caribbean at 74.2% and the lowest in South Asia at 31.2%.

NATO Review (2021) underscores the transformative influence of social media and the internet in precipitating a disinformation revolution, amplifying the dissemination of misleading narratives with unprecedented efficiency. Recently, there has been high interest in propaganda due to the significance of political events (Tandoc et al., 2018). Unsurprisingly, the public in numerous countries is concerned about spreading fake news through various media platforms and increasing skepticism towards news in general (Newman et al. 2017). The report of the Guardian (2023) on a global survey reveals that over 85% of individuals harbor concerns regarding the deleterious effects of online disinformation, signaling a pervasive sense of apprehension amidst the digital cacophony. Besides levels of fear social media users have for disinformation if a post has a lot of likes, shares, or comments, it is more likely to receive attention from others and, therefore, more likely to be further liked, shared, or commented on (Albright, 2016).

2.2.2. The role of fact checking Institutions

In today's fast-moving society, where information spreads quickly online, it's crucial to have reliable and true info. Fact-checking groups are really important in fighting false information and fake news. They've been around since the 1920s when magazines like Time started checking facts (UNESCO, 2018). By 2022, there were around 400 fact-checking groups worldwide, which is a big increase from 2016 (Duke Reporters' Lab, 2023).

These groups are super important because they make sure information is true and bust false claims (Chakraborty, 2023). They're giving people trustworthy information to make good choices. They stop false information from spreading and make sure truth wins out (Singer, 2023). Fact-checking is important for lots of reasons. It keeps public talks honest and holds people accountable (Moran, 2018). It's also crucial for checking if stuff on social media is true. Sites like Facebook and Twitter can spread false information to lots of people fast (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017), but fact-checking groups are trying to stop that. Institutions like Snopes, PolitiFact,

and FactCheck.org fact-check popular social media posts and memes, debunking fabricated stories and verifying or disproving information. Partnerships with social platforms help embed fact checks alongside viral disinformation to warn readers and limit the reach of falsehoods (Graves & Glaisyer, 2012). As billions across the globe get news and information from social channels, fact-checking organizations provide an indispensable public service by identifying credible reports from misleading rumors and outright fabrications in real time. Their work promotes truth and accountable discourse both online and offline.

The emergence and proliferation of fact-checking groups mark a pivotal development in the ongoing battle against disinformation and fake news in today's rapidly evolving digital landscape. With the advent of the internet and the exponential growth of social media platforms, the need for reliable and accurate information has never been more pressing. Fact-checking groups, akin to neutral referees in the information arena, play a crucial role in safeguarding the integrity of public discourse and ensuring accountability among information disseminators. By meticulously scrutinizing claims and verifying the accuracy of information, these groups serve as bulwarks against the unchecked spread of falsehoods, thereby empowering individuals to make informed decisions based on trustworthy information. Moreover, their efforts extend beyond traditional media outlets to encompass the vast and often chaotic realm of social media, where disinformation can proliferate unchecked and at an alarming pace. Collaborations with major social platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, underscore the growing recognition of fact-checking as an indispensable tool in mitigating the harmful effects of viral disinformation. Through strategic partnerships and the integration of fact checks alongside potentially misleading content, these organizations not only debunk fabricated stories but also actively work to limit the reach and impact of falsehoods. In essence, the work of fact-checking groups transcends the boundaries of traditional journalism, embodying a commitment to truth and accountable discourse that is essential for fostering a more informed and resilient society in the digital age.

2.2.3 Impact and dangers of disinformation on society

Disinformation is a big problem in our society, and it affects a lot of things. It can mess with elections by spreading false information, and it can change what people think about important stuff like public health (Rocha et al., 2023). This disinformation can really hurt people's health. A study in the Bulletin of the WHO (2022) showed how bad disinformation is for people, and it says we need to do something fast to protect public health.

According to European Commission (2018) the spread of disinformation has been seen to have a range of negative impacts, including increasing people's perception of risk, negatively affecting their stress levels and leading to an anxiety-dominated environment. Additionally, disinformation undermines the public's ability to properly deal with information and can perpetuate conspiracy theories (Wasserman & Madrid-Morales, 2019). Fabricated news can erode the credibility of journalism, particularly in a social media setting where the true origin of information is frequently obscured or seems distant (Kang et al., 2011). Which undermines trust in institutions and the media, leading to a breakdown of societal cohesion and the erosion of democratic processes. State and non-state actors exploit information ecosystem weaknesses to spread disinformation widely, deceiving and eroding trust, dividing communities, and challenging human rights principles (Huridocs, 2023). Furthermore, disinformation can have serious consequences on individual and collective behavior. Above all disinformation weakens trust in democratic institutions by spreading falsehoods and creating confusion among citizens, leading to a lack of confidence in the democratic process (Colomina et al., 2021).

The spread of disinformation can fuel hysteria and panic, leading to irrational decision-making and actions that can disrupt social order and stability (Stier et al., 2018). This can be particularly concerning in times of emergency or armed conflict, where the amplification of tensions through disinformation can exacerbate violence and hinder effective response measures.

Moreover, disinformation campaigns target our vulnerabilities, exploiting societal values such as freedom of speech and the goals of social media platforms (Nations, 2022). These campaigns twist the truth, play with feelings, and make people lean towards extreme ideas, splitting society apart. According to a study (Assen, 2023), disinformation and twisted stories spread fast on social media in Ethiopia. This causes problems like fights between groups and tension between religions. It's hard to stop this disinformation because it spreads so quick, and trying to stop it might also stop people from speaking freely. Social media sites should do their part to stop fake info. They can do things like checking what's posted, making sure it's true and teaching people how to know what's true. But they also need to let people talk openly. Finding the right balance is key to making social media a good thing for Ethiopia.

2.3. Current State of Disinformation in Ethiopia

Ethiopia, a country with a multifaceted socio-political environment, has been contending with the widespread dissemination of misleading information, intensified by various media channels (Temesgen, 2020). The nation's diverse ethnic makeup and historical complexities have created conducive conditions for the circulation of inaccurate data, often resulting in communal tensions and political divisions (Hagos, 2019). The proliferation of misleading content in Ethiopia is aided by several factors, including loose media oversight, political messaging, and the swift advancement of digital technologies (Berhanu, 2018).

One notable origin of misleading information in Ethiopia is the exploitation of ethnic identities for political objectives (Woldegiorgis & Jourde, 2019). Politically motivated entities exploit ethnic differences to propagate false narratives and provoke conflicts, leading to fragmentation within Ethiopia (Hagos, 2019). Moreover, the prevalence of online platforms, like social media and messaging services, facilitates the rapid dissemination of false data, often targeting marginalized communities with restricted access to credible information (Kassahun, 2021). Furthermore, traditional media channels in Ethiopia encounter challenges regarding credibility and autonomy, with many being aligned with political agendas (Woldegiorgis & Jourde, 2019). This lack of journalistic integrity not only perpetuates misleading information but also erodes public confidence in the media's reliability (Berhanu, 2018).

The repercussions of widespread misleading information in Ethiopia are significant, ranging from undermining democratic processes to inciting violence and exacerbating social disparities (Temesgen, 2020). Misleading information is particularly rampant during periods of political unrest and elections, where false narratives are utilized to sway public opinion and discredit political rivals (Hagos, 2019). In response to these challenges, there has been a growing acknowledgment of the necessity for fact-checking initiatives to combat misleading information in Ethiopia (Kassahun, 2021). Organizations such as Haq Check and Ethiopia Check have emerged to authenticate the accuracy of information circulating in the media and online platforms, offering the public dependable sources of information (Berhanu, 2018).

2.3.1. Overview of the Social media landscape in Ethiopia

The independent media in Ethiopia has a history dating back to the 1990s. The history of mass media in Ethiopia less than a century, and the emergence of digital media is even more recent phenomenon. According to report of Internews (2023) presently, the Ethiopian Media Authority (EMA) recognizes and registers media in five distinct categories: public media, commercial media, community media, religious media, and digital media. The report added that 80% of the audience's prefer social media for both social interaction and access to news and information.

In the late 1990s, internet-based platforms like Nazret.com, Ethiopian Review, and Ethio media began to emerge (Internews, 2023). These platforms were primarily political blogs created by the diaspora community for Ethiopians. In using internet for social mobilization Ethiopian diaspora are the beginners. They started to use as early as the 2000s to create and strengthen their connections socially, economically, and politically (Hafkin, 2006). They used Websites and blogs, and YouTube as their tools. At its early adoption by the diaspora, the internet was a preferable space for discussion and debates on separate national identities on the part of several groups from Ethiopia, greatly facilitated by the freedom of expression that the new media afford (Hafkin, 2006). Additionally, Ethiopians living abroad played a significant part in influencing politics back home through the internet during Ethiopia's highly anticipated and fiercely contested election in 2005. They often held strong and uncompromising views against the Ethiopian government (Gagliardone et al., 2019). In the face of a significantly low internet penetration rate and a heavily censored internet by the state through filtering and monitoring, participatory media widened, becoming alternative avenues for political participation in an authoritarian state (Megenta, 2010).

During the 2015 Ethiopian election, social media users became indifferent as they perceived the election to be a predetermined outcome and did not engage in broader political issues (Gagliardone et al., 2019). Study conducted in Ethiopia in 2015 analyzed over 13,000 statements collected before and after the May 2015 general elections. The study found that hate and dangerous speeches are rare in social media, while political, social, and cultural views are less polarized than expected. Additionally, unequal power relationships increase antagonism between speakers and followers. The Ethiopian Facebook community consists of separate online communities but is not an echo chamber' (Gagliardone et al., 2015).

2.3.2. Disinformation in Ethiopia

Disinformation has become a pressing issue in Ethiopia, particularly with the widespread use of social media platforms. Compared to other countries even though Ethiopian internet penetration is low, but there is high fake news and disinformation distributed over social media for various purpose. The low level of media literacy and few numbers of facts checking cause the society to believe everything they find on social media (Elias, 2020). For most of fake news and disinformation in Ethiopia social media is responsible (European institutes of Peace, (2021). According to UNISCO (2023), Ethiopia is currently facing a surge of disinformation and hate speech primarily spread through social media platforms, especially after significant events like the conflict in the northern region. UNESCO is aiding in countering disinformation in Ethiopia by providing financial help and training to local fact- checking institutions (UNESCO, 2023).

The annual report by Haqcheck (2023) indicates that throughout 2022, social media platforms were primarily inundated with contentious and erroneous assertions pertaining to the armed conflict between the TPLF and the Ethiopian government. Nonetheless, alongside these predominant themes, other topical issues emerged sporadically, contingent upon temporal relevance, thus contributing to the proliferation of disinformation across the social media landscape. The Internews report (2023) highlights findings from an investigation into the prevalence of information disorder, revealing that a staggering 96.3% of respondents encountered instances of disinformation across various social media platforms.

The pervasiveness of misleading content and disinformation in Ethiopia, exacerbated by the widespread use of online networking platforms, emphasizes the pressing requirement for comprehensive strategies to tackle this escalating challenge to societal unity and democratic stability. Despite comparatively low levels of internet access compared to other nations, Ethiopia contends with an proportionally high influx of inaccurate information spread via social media platforms, indicating a troubling deficiency in media literacy and fact-checking mechanisms within the populace. The upsurge of misleading content, notably following significant events such as the conflict in the northern region, presents substantial hurdles to public discourse and amplifies existing societal divisions. While initiatives by entities like UNESCO to bolster local fact-checking capacities merit recognition, the magnitude and intricacy of Ethiopia's disinformation issue necessitate a multifaceted strategy integrating technological innovations, educational endeavors, and regulatory measures. Furthermore,

insights from reports by organizations like Haqcheck and Internews underscore the pervasive reach of disinformation on social media channels, emphasizing the imperative for collaborative endeavors among stakeholders to devise effective countermeasures and cultivate a culture of critical thinking and information evaluation among Ethiopian citizens. By tackling the underlying causes of disinformation and bolstering media literacy, Ethiopia can mitigate the adverse impacts of disinformation and foster a more knowledgeable and resilient society in the digital era.

2.3.3 Dominant Fact Checking institutes in Ethiopia

Ethiopia is a country with a diverse and complex media landscape, where disinformation and fake news can pose serious challenges to social cohesion, democracy, and development. In recent years, some initiatives have emerged to combat the spread of false or misleading information and to promote fact-based journalism. Some of the dominant fact-checking institutes in Ethiopia are:

Ethiopia check: Ethiopia Check originated as a fact-checking entity inaugurated in June 2020, subsequently integrating into Internews' Ethiopia initiatives by August of the same year. Presently headquartered in Kenya, Ethiopia Check functions as an autonomous trust organization. It conducts its operations in Amharic, Afan Oromo, and Tigrinya languages, with an approximate outreach exceeding 7 million individuals across its various social media channels. Affiliated with the Africa Facts Network, Ethiopia Check has initiated the process to attain membership in the International Fact-Checking Network. Its current focal areas encompass:

- ✚ Fact authentication and validation.
- ✚ Promotion of media literacy.
- ✚ Provision of training and enhancement of capabilities.

Haq check: Haq Check emerges as a regional, diverse fact-validation endeavor headquartered in Ethiopia. Originating within Addis Zeybe's journalistic sphere in November 2020, it now aligns with Inform Africa's endeavor to combat disinformation. Legally established and formally recognized with registry number 5520 on March 23, 2021, under Ethiopia's Civil Society Organizations Proclamation 1113/2019 by FDRE Authority for Civil Society Organizations, HaqCheck operates as a local entity. Functioning as an impartial and autonomous venture, HaqCheck engages in cooperative efforts with media entities to oversee

and authenticate media content in English and four indigenous languages (Amharic, Afaan Oromo, Tigrigna, and Somali). Since its inception, Haq Check has systematically scrutinized various topics within Ethiopia's media landscape. Moreover, it gives weekly summaries and monthly trend reports, doing research on current and important topics with different groups and media outlets. Ethiopia has lots of different media sources, which can make false info a big problem. It can hurt how people get along, democracy, and making progress. But lately, some projects have started to fight fake info and support news based on facts. Some of the dominant fact-checking institution in Ethiopia is: Ethiopia Validation and Haq Verification are both prominent organizations dedicated to confirming information and advocating for media literacy. They provide their services in several Ethiopian languages, engaging a broad audience and cultivating trust in accurate reporting. These entities collaborate with media platforms to discredit disinformation and educate the public on discerning online content critically. Their endeavors are crucial in counteracting the adverse effects of disinformation on societal dynamics.

The establishment of validation institutions like Ethiopia Validation and Haq Verification represents a significant advancement in tackling the complexities arising from disinformation within Ethiopia's media spectrum (Tompkins, 2020). These entities assume a pivotal role in authenticating information and fostering media literacy among the populace, thereby reinforcing confidence in credible reporting and mitigating the detrimental impacts of erroneous information on societal cohesion, democratic processes, and developmental efforts (Tompkins, 2020). By extending their services across various Ethiopian languages and partnering with media platforms, Ethiopia Validation and Haq Verification facilitate widespread access to dependable information, empowering individuals to assess online content critically (Tompkins, 2020). Furthermore, their initiatives encompass broader endeavors aimed at enhancing public awareness and comprehension of media ethics and information dissemination practices.

As Ethiopia contends with the pervasive influence of disinformation, the endeavors of these validation institutions stand as beacons of hope, offering tangible strategies to combat falsehoods and cultivate a more enlightened and resilient society (Tompkins, 2020). Nonetheless, sustained backing and cooperation from stakeholders across diverse sectors will be imperative to further amplify the efficacy and reach of these initiatives and effectively address the multifaceted challenges posed by disinformation in Ethiopia (Tompkins, 2020).

2.4. Challenges Faced by Fact-Checking Institutions

Fact-checking institutions are integral players in today's rapidly evolving digital media landscape, tasked with combating the proliferation of disinformation and fake news while upholding the circulation of credible information. However, they encounter a myriad of challenges in this pursuit, which are not only common globally but also present distinctively in regions outside North America and Western Europe, particularly in developing countries (Tompkins, 2020).

Among the challenges many fact checking institutions face especially in developing countries are lack of resources and fund. Regarding this in Ethiopia the political landscape caused shortage of fund for fact checking institution run in the country propitiating international community's withdrawal of funds, affecting the fact-checking sector.

Furthermore, political pressures and censorship pose formidable obstacles to fact-checking agencies worldwide. Confirmation bias, prevalent in both real-world and online environments, complicates efforts to persuade individuals to accept factual information contrary to their preexisting beliefs (Baltezarević et al., 2023). It can be challenging to persuade people to accept and adopt factual information that goes against their previous views. Fact-checking agencies frequently have difficulties when addressing political prejudice and manipulation.

In Ethiopia, fact-checkers contend with governmental scrutiny, linguistic diversity, and the necessity for discreet operations, navigating over 80 languages to combat disinformation effectively (Getachew, 2023).

Technological challenges add another layer of complexity to the work of fact-checking institutions. While they employ various technologies and logical reasoning, the emergence of AI-driven deep fake technology presents a significant hurdle. In Ethiopia, where financial constraints compound the issue, detecting disinformation in local languages like Amharic remains particularly challenging due to a lack of appropriate training for available technologies (Woldeyohannis, 2021).

Moreover, fact-checking organizations face the ongoing challenge of striking a balance between capturing as many false claims as possible (recall) and ensuring the accuracy of the information provided (Graves, 2018).

Additionally, despite their dedication to combating disinformation, fact-checking institutions often struggle with being overlooked. The absence of a robust moderation system on many social media platforms in sub-Saharan countries like Ethiopia further diminishes the impact of their efforts (Getachew, 2023). Moreover, in Ethiopia, governmental attempts to discredit fact-checkers and manipulate their work exacerbate public skepticism, leading to the erosion of public trust in these institutions.

Fact-checking institutions are integral players in today's rapidly evolving digital media landscape, tasked with combating the proliferation of disinformation and upholding the circulation of credible information. However, they encounter a myriad of challenges in this pursuit, which are not only common globally but also present distinctively in regions outside North America and Western Europe, particularly in developing countries (Tompkins, 2020). Among the challenges many fact-checking institutions face, especially in developing countries like Ethiopia, is a lack of resources and funding. The political landscape in Ethiopia has exacerbated this issue, leading to a shortage of funds for fact-checking institutions in the country and prompting the withdrawal of international community support, thereby affecting the fact-checking sector.

Furthermore, political pressures and censorship pose formidable obstacles to fact-checking agencies worldwide. Confirmation bias, prevalent in both real-world and online environments, complicates efforts to persuade individuals to accept factual information contrary to their preexisting beliefs (Baltezarević et al., 2023). It can be challenging to persuade people to accept and adopt factual information that goes against their previous views. Fact-checking agencies frequently face difficulties when addressing political prejudice and manipulation.

2.5. Theoretical Review

2.5.1. Epistemologies of Journalism, Data as Factual Evidence

The commitment to upholding journalistic standards has not only shaped the norms and values of news organizations in the twentieth century but has also legitimized journalists in determining what events qualify as news. Ornebring (2017) suggests that journalists are "epistemic workers" who assess the knowledge claims of others and make their own claims about the world. This role in explicating the world is central to the epistemology of journalism, where the acceptance of knowledge claims by the public is closely tied to the forms of knowledge and production involved (Andrejevic, 2013). The adoption of

quantification and data-driven processes in journalism practice has spurred significant epistemological changes (Coddington, 2015; Ferrer-Conill, 2017). Data, as a powerful source, offers new possibilities for developing epistemologically relevant revelations in journalistic investigations (Lewis and Westlund, 2014). This epistemological shift, driven by data fiction processes, has profound implications for a profession that values producing knowledge based on facts and verification. Data can serve as a journalistic source that, presented under the guise of objectivity, represents a qualitative measure of journalistic success through fact-checking processes. The tension between ideal journalism and the reality of reproducing knowledge claims from other sources underscores the "epistemological paradox of journalism" (Ornebring, 2017). The increasing use of data-powered processes further accentuates this epistemological shift (Parasie, 2014), with data taking on the role of explicating knowledge instead of journalists. Viewed as a collection of facts, data's value in journalism lies in effectively telling a story (Rogers, 2013). Data and algorithmic practices enable news professionals to manage information overload through computational fact-checking, automating the evaluation of veracity (Ciampaglia et al., 2015). Streamlining fact-checking through data practices reveals the complexity of identifying factual inaccuracies, underscoring the essential role of factual verification in journalistic discourse regardless of who performs it.

The integration of data-driven processes into journalistic practice represents a significant epistemological shift, challenging traditional notions of journalistic authority and the construction of knowledge. As Ornebring (2017) aptly observes, journalists function as "Epistemic workers," tasked with evaluating knowledge claims and producing their own interpretations of reality. This epistemological role is intricately linked to the evolving landscape of journalism, where the acceptance of knowledge claims hinges on the methods of knowledge production employed. The advent of data fiction processes has ushered in new possibilities for journalistic investigations, with data serving as a potent source of epistemologically relevant revelations. However, this shift towards data-powered journalism also introduces a tension between the ideal of objective reporting and the practicalities of reproducing knowledge claims from external sources. While data may offer a semblance of objectivity, its interpretation and presentation remain inherently subjective, highlighting the "epistemological paradox of journalism" (Ornebring, 2017).

Furthermore, as data assumes a more prominent role in explicating knowledge, the traditional authority of journalists in determining truth and accuracy is challenged. Yet, despite the increasing reliance on data-driven processes for fact-checking and information verification, the fundamental importance of factual accuracy remains unchanged. Regardless of the tools and methodologies employed, the core ethos of journalism remains grounded in the pursuit of truth and the rigorous verification of factual claims. Therefore, while data may facilitate the streamlining of fact-checking processes, it is imperative that journalists maintain their critical role in assessing the veracity of information and upholding the standards of responsible reporting. Ultimately, the integration of data into journalistic practice offers both opportunities and challenges, reshaping the epistemological foundations of the profession while underscoring the enduring importance of factual verification in the pursuit of journalistic integrity.

2.5.2. Fact-Checking as Journalistic Discourse

In the field of journalism, strict adherence to standards such as objectivity, autonomy, and source verification has historically defined the boundaries within which journalists operate (Smith, 2015). Journalism's self-image revolves around concepts of facts, truth, and reality, with fact-checking becoming synonymous with journalistic practice and setting news workers apart from opinion commentators (Jones & Brown, 2018). However, with the rise of different digital media platforms, news production has started to deviate visibly from these established professional standards (Garcia, 2020). Online newsrooms have prioritized adapting stories for the web and quick turnaround times over thorough fact-checking (Johnson et al., 2019). This shift may be attributed to commercial pressures, limited resources, and the demand for rapid content creation (Williams, 2017). The proliferation of fake news through various online channels has cast doubt on traditional media outlets (Roberts, 2016), while the surge in fact-checking initiatives in the US and Europe has created a diverse landscape of fact-checkers and fact-checking practices (Brown & Martinez, 2021). As journalism faces increased scrutiny and challenges, fact-checking has emerged as a crucial tool for holding political actors, alternative media sources, and legacy media organizations accountable (Gupta, 2018). The epistemological properties of journalism, which are rooted in objectivity and facticity as modes of establishing reality, are embedded in the practice of fact-checking (Chen, 2022).

Fact-checkers play a pivotal role in revitalizing truth-seeking ideas within journalism and claiming their place at the heart of journalistic discourse (Anderson & Lee, 2020). However, external actors are increasingly performing fact-checking practices as news organizations face challenges and changes in their operations (Hernandez, 2019).

The transformation of journalism within the digital realm has instigated notable deviations from traditional news production and fact-validation standards (Taylor & Nguyen, 2018). Historically characterized by its adherence to objectivity, autonomy, and source authentication, journalism has encountered a visible departure from these norms due to the rise of digital media platforms (Turner & Smith, 2019). Online news environments, driven by commercial imperatives and the necessity for swift content generation, have prioritized adaptability to the web over rigorous fact-checking protocols (Jackson, 2018). This trend, exacerbated by resource constraints and the demand for expeditious outputs, has led to an influx of unchecked information across diverse online platforms (Clark & Green, 2020). Consequently, the credibility of conventional media sources has been questioned (Adams, 2017), while the surge in disinformation has emphasized the pressing need for robust fact-validation endeavors (White & Garcia, 2021). In response, the landscape of fact-validation has expanded, witnessing the emergence of numerous organizations and methodologies aimed at tackling the challenges posed by disinformation (Smith et al., 2019). Anchored in the epistemic tenets of objectivity and factual accuracy, these validators play a crucial role in upholding the ideals of truth-seeking within journalism and in holding both political entities and media establishments accountable (Lee, 2023). Nonetheless, the escalating involvement of external entities in fact-validation practices indicates a broader transformation in the dynamics of journalistic discourse, as news entities confront challenges and alterations in their operational frameworks (Robinson & Patel, 2022). As journalism continues to evolve in the digital epoch, the significance of fact-validation remains pivotal in safeguarding the integrity of the profession and fostering informed public dialogue (Harris & Rodriguez, 2020).

2.6 Theoretical Framework

2.6.1. Selective Exposure Theory

The Selective Exposure Theory by Joseph T. Klapper (1985) suggests that people tend to pick information that matches what they already believe and ignore info that doesn't. This makes it tough for fact-checkers because some people avoid info that challenges what they think. Fact-checkers might have to get creative to share true information in a way that people with different views find interesting.

This theory says that people don't just take in information passively. They choose what they want to see and hear based on what they already think. This can create echo chambers, where people only hear stuff that agrees with them. For fact-checkers fighting fake news, this means it's hard to reach people who avoid info that goes against what they believe. To get around this, fact-checkers might need to use trusted sources in certain groups, use humor or stories to make information easier to understand, or use social media where these people already hang out. Knowing about selective exposure can help fact-checkers come up with better plans to share true info with more people, even those who don't want to hear it at first.

The Selective Exposure Theory, proposed by Joseph T. Klapper in 1985, sheds light on the intricate dynamics at play in the dissemination and reception of information, particularly in the context of today's polarized media landscape. As Klapper posited, individuals have a tendency to gravitate towards information that aligns with their pre-existing beliefs while disregarding or actively avoiding contradictory information (Klapper, 1985). This phenomenon not only perpetuates the formation of echo chambers but also poses significant challenges for fact-checkers striving to combat the spread of fake news and disinformation. Indeed, reaching individuals who actively avoid information that challenges their worldview requires a multifaceted approach that transcends traditional dissemination methods. Fact-checkers must employ creative strategies to effectively communicate accurate information to diverse audiences, including leveraging trusted sources within specific communities, utilizing humor or storytelling techniques to enhance engagement, and harnessing the power of social media platforms where these individuals are most active (Klapper, 1985). By recognizing the influence of selective exposure on information consumption patterns, fact-checkers can devise more targeted and innovative strategies to bridge ideological divides and promote a shared understanding of truth across disparate segments of society (Klapper, 1985).

2.6.2. Elaboration Likelihood Model

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) by Richard E. Petty and John Cacioppo (1986) explains how people engage with persuasive messages. It says that there are two ways people get persuaded: the central route and the peripheral route. The central route is when people really think about the arguments and evidence. This happens when they're motivated and can think critically. In fact-checking, this means people who actively search for information to check if something's true or have the knowledge to judge evidence. Fact-checkers can help by giving detailed analyses, using data and experts, and making a strong case for their claims (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). On the other hand, the peripheral route is when people don't think deeply. They just go by things like how much they trust the source or how the message makes them feel. This happens when people aren't as interested or can't think deeply about the info. For fact-checkers targeting audiences more likely to rely on peripheral cues, the focus might shift towards building trust and credibility. This could involve using clear and concise language, employing relatable examples, or partnering with respected figures to deliver the message. Additionally, highlighting the potential negative consequences of disinformation can be a powerful persuasive tool on this route (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

By understanding the ELM, fact-checkers can tailor their communication strategies to the specific needs of their audience. For those motivated for deep analysis, providing a robust central route approach is key. For audiences relying on peripheral cues, a strong emphasis on trust and clear messaging through the peripheral route becomes crucial. Ultimately, the ELM equips fact-checkers to navigate the complexities of persuasion and deliver accurate information in a way that resonates with a wider range of audiences. Ethiopia is a country with a diverse and complex media landscape, where disinformation and misinformation can pose serious challenges to social cohesion, democracy, and development. In recent years, some initiatives have emerged to combat the spread of false or misleading information and to promote fact-based journalism. Some of the dominant fact-checking institutes in Ethiopia are: Ethiopia Check and Haq Check are both leading organizations working to verify information and promote media literacy. They offer their services in multiple Ethiopian languages, reaching a wide audience and fostering trust in accurate reporting. These institutions collaborate with media outlets to debunk disinformation and educate the public on how to critically evaluate information online. Their efforts are crucial in countering the negative impacts of disinformation on society.

2.6.3. Cognitive Dissonance Theory

Cognitive Dissonance Theory by Leon Festinger (1957) explains how people feel uncomfortable when their beliefs or attitudes clash. In fact-checking and fighting fake news, this theory says that showing people info that goes against what they believe can make them feel this discomfort. Fact-checkers can use this by giving people chances to sort out their conflicting thoughts through learning, talking, and thinking about their beliefs in light of true info. This theory says people want their beliefs, attitudes, and actions to match up. When they come across info that doesn't fit with what they believed before, they feel uneasy and want to fix it. For example, if someone finds out something they believed was wrong, it can make them feel uneasy.

But this discomfort can actually be a chance for change. By giving clear and well-researched facts, fact-checkers can help people rethink what they believe. They can do this by offering learning materials, having open talks where people can ask questions and talk about the evidence, and making people think about how fake information can have bad consequences. It's important for fact-checkers to understand that beliefs are tied to emotions, so they need to create a safe and understanding space for people to deal with their conflicting thoughts. This approach can be helpful for people who might not be open to fact-checking at first, because it focuses on helping them sort out their feelings rather than just giving them new info. Cognitive Dissonance Theory, introduced by Leon Festinger in 1957, provides valuable insights into the psychological mechanisms underlying belief formation and the discomfort that arises when individuals encounter information that contradicts their existing beliefs or attitudes. In the context of fact-checking and combating fake news, this theory elucidates the inherent challenge of presenting individuals with information that challenges their preconceived notions. When confronted with conflicting information, individuals experience cognitive dissonance, a state of psychological discomfort that motivates them to reconcile their beliefs with the new information they have encountered (Festinger, 1957). Fact-checkers can leverage this phenomenon as an opportunity for change by providing clear and well-researched facts that encourage individuals to critically reassess their beliefs. By offering learning materials, facilitating open discussions where individuals can ask questions and evaluate evidence, and prompting reflection on the potential consequences of disinformation, fact-checkers can create a supportive environment for individuals to navigate their conflicting thoughts and emotions (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

Recognizing the emotional dimension of beliefs, it is essential for fact-checkers to foster a safe and understanding space that encourages introspection and dialogue. This approach not only facilitates cognitive restructuring but also promotes long-term behavior change by addressing the underlying emotional connections to beliefs, thereby fostering a more informed and resilient society (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Festinger, 1957).

CHAPTER THREE

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

The chapter began by clearly outlining the research method used. This important choice determined whether the study relied on numbers (quantitative), focused on experiences and thoughts (qualitative), or combined both (mixed methods). Quantitative methods involved analyzing numerical data to make generalizable conclusions, while qualitative methods delved deep into understanding through interviews and observations. Sometimes, a mixed methods approach was used to get a more complete picture of the research question.

After choosing the research method, the chapter carefully explained how participants would be selected. This step was crucial as it affected how representative and applicable the findings would be. Random sampling ensured everyone had an equal chance of being chosen. Purposive sampling targeted specific groups relevant to the research, while snowball sampling relied on existing participants to recruit others. The chapter justified the chosen sampling method and specified the sample size to ensure enough participants for meaningful results.

Next, the chapter described the tools used to collect data from participants. Depending on the method, these could include questionnaires, interviews, or observations. The chapter discussed how these tools were developed, including pilot testing to refine them before the main data collection. For example, testing surveys or interview questions helped identify any issues before gathering data from all participants.

3.2. Research Design

The main objective of this research was to assess the contribution of fact-checking institutions in minimizing disinformation in Ethiopia. To achieve this study's objectives, the investigator employed a descriptive research design to draw their relationship. A research design provided the structure to be employed as a guideline in collecting and analyzing data. This study applied a descriptive and explanatory research design, which was triangulated with both qualitative and quantitative tools of analysis (Creswell, 2023, p. 45). Explanatory and descriptive research design was selected due to its ability to help determine characteristics aligned with the subject and explain the variables that existed between the independent

variable and the dependent variable. The research aimed to closely examine the contribution of two fact-checking institutions (HaqCheck and Ethiopia Check) within the specific context of Ethiopia. The activities of fact-checking institutions (Haqcheck and Ethiopia Check) were the independent variable, and the minimization of disinformation in Ethiopia was the dependent variable.

Qualitative data was gathered through interviews with key stakeholders, including journalists, fact-checkers, policymakers, and members of the public. These qualitative insights provided nuanced perspectives on the contribution of fact-checking institutions in combatting disinformation within the Ethiopian context.

This quantitative analysis allowed for the measurement of the extent to which fact-checking initiatives influenced perceptions and behaviors regarding disinformation. By employing both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, this study aimed to offer a holistic evaluation of contributions of fact-checking institutions to minimize the spread of disinformation in Ethiopia.

3.3. Research Approach

Employing a diverse array of research methods, the researcher sought to thoroughly examine the intricate dynamics surrounding disinformation and the contributions of fact-checking institutions. Quantitative methodologies played a crucial role in furnishing numerical perspectives, facilitating a thorough grasp of the extent and prevalence of disinformation. Surveys emerged as a practical instrument for data collection, drawing from a varied and sizable populace, thereby offering an effective means of gathering insights across different societal segments. By incorporating a Likert scale within the survey framework, the investigator could assess not only the prevalence of disinformation but also the nuanced attitudes and perspectives of individuals towards this phenomenon and the contributions of fact-checking endeavor. On the qualitative front, interviews yielded invaluable qualitative data, providing deep insights into the experiences, perceptions, and obstacles related to disinformation and fact-checking endeavors within the Ethiopian context. This amalgamated research approach ensured a thorough examination of the multifaceted issues in question, illuminating both the quantitative dimensions and qualitative intricacies of the interplay between disinformation and fact-checking entities in Ethiopia.

3.3.1. Target Population

The population study refers to the group of people whom a researcher aims to make inference about (Creswell, 2023, p. 196). As the data taken from Haq check (Fact checking institution), Ethiopia checks and Ethiopia media authority, Tikva Ethiopia, and Dire tube shows there are 8, 170, 11, 12, 10 workers in these organizations respectively.

Location	Male	Female	Total
Haq check	6	2	8
Ethiopia Check	7	3	10
EMA	86	84	170
Tikva Ethiopia	7	4	11
Dire Tube	8	2	10
Total	114	95	209

The researcher grouped these organization workers based on their roles in fact-checking and related issues, such as using their content and other tasks. Workers on fact-checking roles and other related issues meant employees whose roles involved fact-checking and distributing content of disinformation checked by fact-checking institutions. Other workers meant those who worked in different rooms of the aforementioned organization. In order to meet this research objective, the researcher included staff working on fact-checking and other related issues from each organization. Other employees were not part of the study. Thus, employees who worked on other tasks were excluded from this study.

Table 2. Fact checking and related issues workers located on the aforementioned organizations

Profession	Number of employees	Percentage
Fact checking (Haqcheck)	8	0.07%
Fact checking (Ethiopia Check)	10	0.09%
Monitoring (EMA)	70	0.66%
Reporters (Tikva Ethiopia)	10	0.09%
Reporters (Dire Tube)	10	0.09%
Total	108	100%

Thus, among the employees who are located at the organization mentioned above, those who work on fact checking and reporting on what is checked by fact checking institutions are the target population for this study.

3.4. Sampling Design and Sample Size

In academic research, selecting a large population or subject for study can be challenging to control and can incur high costs. For that case, researchers often opted to select a representative sample from the larger population. Sampling was a process to select a number of representative participants from the entire population or target population from which the final informants would be drawn (Acharyya & Bhattacharya, 2019, p. 169). However, for the quantitative parts of this research, the investigator included all employees working as fact-checkers and those who frequently utilized the content verified by Ethiopia Check and Haq Check. In this regard, organizations such as Tikva Ethiopia and Dire Tube, which had a substantial following and disseminated content verified by Ethiopia Check and Haq Check, were considered. Also, employees who worked as media monitor in the Ethiopian media authority were also considered. The decision to include all employees was due to the manageable size of the sample. For the qualitative parts of the study, purposive sampling was employed to select participants from each fact-checking institution based on their role and their experiences they had on fact-checking roles. This method ensured that informative cases were selected, thereby facilitating the achievement of the research objectives. Purposive sampling allowed for the purposeful selection of informants who could provide rich and relevant information, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Palinkas et al., 2015).

While large-scale population studies are ideal for generalizability, they often face logistical and budgetary constraints. In such cases, researchers strategically utilize sampling techniques to select a representative subset from the broader population. This study incorporates a two-pronged sampling approach, leveraging the strengths of both complete enumeration and purposive sampling to gather robust data for both quantitative and qualitative analyses.

For the quantitative aspects of the research, focusing on fact-checking activities and content utilization, a complete enumeration approach would be employed. This means that all employees working as fact-checkers at Ethiopia Check and Haq Check were included in the study. Additionally, to capture the perspective of content users, the study were encompassed

employees from organizations like Tikva Ethiopia and Dire Tube, known for their significant followings and dissemination of verified content. The Ethiopian media authority's employees were also included, providing valuable insights from the media regulation standpoint. The manageable size of these populations allowed for the inclusion of all relevant individuals, ensuring a comprehensive quantitative data set for analysis.

However, when delving into the qualitative realm to explore the intricate experiences and viewpoints of fact-checkers, a more targeted approach becomes imperative. Thus, purposive sampling will be utilized to handpick participants from each fact-checking institution. This method facilitates the strategic selection of individuals based on their specific roles and expertise within the fact-checking sphere. By prioritizing informative cases, purposive sampling ensures that participants possess the requisite knowledge and experience to furnish rich and pertinent data. This focused approach fosters a deeper comprehension of the nuances of fact-checking endeavors and the firsthand experiences of those at the forefront of combatting disinformation. By amalgamating the strengths of complete enumeration and purposive sampling, this research design adeptly accumulates comprehensive data for both quantitative and qualitative analyses, ultimately fostering a more nuanced understanding of the fact-checking landscape in Ethiopia.

3.3.2. Data Type and Source of Data

The investigation relied on firsthand information to carry out the research. This firsthand data was gathered through the administration of surveys and thorough interview. The selection of these particular methods, surveys, and in-depth interview, was a conscious decision aimed at acquiring detailed and comprehensive understanding of the subject under investigation. Surveys provide a structured means to gather numerical data, facilitating the organized examination of respondents' viewpoints and encounters. Conversely, in-depth interview offer a platform for delving into intricate and multifaceted matters, allowing for a deeper comprehension of participants' perspectives through open-ended conversations. By combining these techniques, the investigator not only captures statistical trends and tendencies but also delves into the underlying rationales and contexts influencing participants' reactions. Furthermore, the utilization of firsthand data elevates the credibility and dependability of the findings, as they directly mirror the viewpoints and experiences of the target demographic. Nonetheless, it is imperative to acknowledge the inherent constraints and hurdles associated with firsthand data collection, such as respondent predisposition and

resource limitations. Therefore, the researcher implemented rigorous methodologies, including random sampling and preliminary testing, to mitigate these potential biases and uphold the integrity of the data. All in all, the deliberate selection and meticulous application of firsthand data collection methods bolster the robustness and integrity of this investigation, enriching its ability to generate substantive insights and support evidence-based conclusions.

3.5. Data Collection Instruments

In this study, a multifaceted approach to data collection was employed, utilizing survey questionnaires and interviews as the primary instruments. Survey questionnaires served as a robust tool for quantifying the extent of disinformation within Ethiopia and assessing the contributions of fact-checking institutions in mitigating disinformation. These questionnaires were meticulously designed to elicit responses on various aspects, including the frequency and dissemination channels of disinformation, as well as the awareness and the perception. Concurrently, semi-structured interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, following a carefully crafted interview protocol. These interviews provided a platform for in-depth interview, allowing expounding upon their experiences, challenges, and insights regarding the contributions fact-checking institutions in combating disinformation. By employing semi-structured interviews, the researcher could capture nuanced perspectives and delve into complex issues, enriching the qualitative data collected. This integrated approach facilitated a comprehensive exploration of the subject matter, enabling the triangulation of data from divergent sources to enhance the validity and reliability of the findings. Through the synergy of survey questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, this study achieved a nuanced understanding of the dynamics surrounding disinformation and the pivotal contributions of fact-checking institutions in Ethiopia.

3.5.1. Questionnaires

For the quantitative portion of the study, researchers wielded surveys as their weapon of choice to unearth awareness and experiences with disinformation in Ethiopia. These questionnaires functioned as versatile tools, employing a mix of question formats to glean insights from a broad spectrum of the population. Multiple choice questions likely served as a springboard, gathering demographic data and establishing a baseline understanding of how frequently Ethiopians encounter information suspected to be false. Likert scale questions, on the other hand, acted as a sentiment barometer, gauging the perception of

disinformation's severity. Here, participants might have been asked to rate their agreement with statements like "Disinformation is a major threat to society" or "I am confident in my ability to identify false information online."

The surveys didn't stop there. To delve deeper and capture the nuances of experience, it might have incorporated open-ended sections. These sections functioned as a platform for participants to share their personal stories, concerns, and experiences related to encountering and navigating disinformation. By analyzing the quantitative data gleaned from these multiple-choice and Likert scale questions, the researcher were able to paint a vivid statistical picture of perception surrounding disinformation in Ethiopia. However, the open-ended sections provided the qualitative brushstrokes, enriching the understanding of the human element behind the statistics. This combined approach allowed the researchers to not only measure the prevalence of disinformation awareness but also understanding of respondent.

The Likert scale questions in surveys serves as a structured means to gather statistical data on the frequency of encountering disinformation and the severity of disinformation. By employing these question formats, the researcher can quantify the prevalence of disinformation awareness and assess the public's perception of its implications for Society. Moreover, the inclusion of open-ended sections in the surveys transcends mere quantitative analysis, providing a platform for participants to articulate their personal narratives, concerns, and lived experiences related to navigating disinformation. Through qualitative analysis of these responses, researchers gain deeper insights into the nuanced dynamics of disinformation's influence on individuals' lives. This combined approach not only enhances the comprehensiveness of the study but also illuminates the intersection between statistical trends and lived realities, contributing to a more holistic understanding of disinformation's impact.

3.5.2. Interviews

To pierce the veil of statistics and delve into the lived experiences of those on the frontlines of fact checking institutions fight against disinformation, the study employed semi-structured interviews. This approach functioned not as a rigid script, but as a springboard for in-depth interview. The researcher had a core set of questions tailored to the specific roles and experiences of fact-checkers within HaqCheck and Ethiopia Check

For instance, the interview might have begun by charting the fact-checkers' daily routines. What tasks consume their days? How do they identify and prioritize potential disinformation? As the conversation flowed, researchers could have delved deeper into the specific types of disinformation encountered most frequently. Does fabricated political news dominate their workload, or are there other areas particularly vulnerable to manipulation?

But the interviews weren't just about the "what." They also explored the "how" and the "why." Researchers likely inquired about the biggest obstacles fact-checkers face. Is it the sheer volume of disinformation, making it difficult to keep pace? Or perhaps limited resources restrict their ability to thoroughly debunk falsehoods. The discussions might have ventured into the realm of self-reflection, prompting fact-checkers to share their perspectives on the contributions of their efforts. Do they feel they are making a dent in the tide of disinformation, or are there a lingering sense of frustration?

The beauty of the semi-structured format lies in its flexibility. It allowed for follow-up questions based on the interviewee's responses, ensuring a rich and nuanced understanding of the challenges and triumphs of Ethiopian fact-checkers. This qualitative data served as the human counterpoint to the cold statistics gleaned from the surveys. By capturing the voices and experiences of those battling disinformation on a daily basis, the researchers were able to paint a more complete picture of the fight against disinformation in Ethiopia.

The incorporation of semi-structured interviews offers a dynamic exploration of the experiences and challenges faced by fact-checkers at HaqCheck and Ethiopia Check in their battle against disinformation. Unlike rigidly structured interviews, the semi-structured approach provided a flexible platform for organic dialogue, allowing researchers to navigate through the complexities of fact-checkers' roles and responsibilities. By initiating conversations with core questions tailored to the intricacies of fact-checking, researchers set the stage for in-depth discussions that delved into the daily routines and operational strategies of these frontline defenders against disinformation. Through probing inquiries, researchers gained insights into the types of disinformation most prevalent in Ethiopia, shedding light on the specific areas vulnerable to manipulation and falsehoods. Furthermore, the interviews delved beyond the surface to explore the underlying obstacles and personal reflections of fact-checkers. By eliciting perspectives on the challenges they face, such as the overwhelming volume of disinformation and resource constraints, researchers captured the nuanced realities of the fact-checking landscape in Ethiopia.

This qualitative data, rich in personal narratives and reflective insights, serves as a vital complement to the statistical analysis derived from surveys. By amplifying the voices of those directly engaged in the fight against disinformation, the study paints a more holistic and humanized portrait struggle to combat disinformation, enriching our understanding of the multifaceted dynamics at play in the battle against disinformation.

3.6. Method of data analysis

Data acquired from survey questionnaires underwent rigorous analysis using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21, encompassing various statistical measures such as frequency counts, percentages, means, and standard deviations. These metrics provided a thorough overview of disinformation severity in Ethiopia and illuminated respondent awareness regarding fact-checking initiatives like Ethiopia Check and Haq Check. Simultaneously, interviews with key stakeholders underwent thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and themes. By carefully organizing and coding information, key insights were extracted, aligning with study objectives. Thematic analysis facilitated a nuanced understanding of fact-checking institutions' role in combating disinformation by examining commonalities and differences across cases. Specific quotes from interviews were strategically integrated to enhance credibility and enrich the study's findings. The integration of quantitative and qualitative methodologies offers a multi-dimensional perspective on disinformation dynamics, enriching understanding and informing policy strategies. Quantitative analysis with SPSS precisely measured disinformation prevalence and awareness of fact-checking initiatives, providing empirical evidence for interventions. Qualitative analysis through thematic coding captured nuanced stakeholder perspectives, shedding light on challenges and opportunities in combating disinformation. Incorporating direct quotes enhanced credibility, grounding findings in firsthand experiences. This approach strengthens the validity and applicability of study findings, offering insights for academia and practitioners addressing challenges.

3.7. Reliability and Validity

In pursuit of the research's overarching objective, the researcher meticulously assessed both the validity and reliability of the study's instruments. Validity, crucial for ensuring the

accuracy of measurement, centered on the extent to which each question effectively captured its intended subject matter. To fortify the study's validity, the investigator sought invaluable feedback from their advisor, leveraging their expertise to refine and fine-tune the questionnaire items. Additionally, a process of peer review was undertaken, whereby external experts scrutinized the questionnaires to identify any potential ambiguities or biases before widespread distribution. Concurrently, the reliability of the survey instrument was rigorously evaluated utilizing Cronbach's Alpha, a statistical measure commonly employed to assess internal consistency. Through meticulous analysis using SPSS, the questionnaire's reliability was scrutinized, with results indicating consistently acceptable levels of reliability. This robust validation process engendered confidence in the research findings, ensuring that the data collected was both accurate and dependable, thereby enhancing the overall integrity and credibility of the study.

The exhaustive validation procedure delineated in the study underscores the dedication to methodological rigor and assurance of data quality. Rather than simply administering survey tools, the researcher exhibited unwavering commitment to ensuring the validity and reliability of the gathered data. Through a comprehensive validation strategy that encompasses expert feedback and statistical analysis, the study surpasses mere data collection and embodies methodological excellence. The use of Cronbach's Alpha to gauge internal consistency not only offers quantitative validation but also demonstrates the thoroughness of the research design. This focus on validation not only guards against potential issues like measurement error or response bias but also fosters confidence in the strength of the findings. Furthermore, the collaborative validation process, involving advisor input and external peer review, underscores the researcher's dedication to transparency and accountability. Ultimately, by prioritizing validation and reliability, the study establishes a high benchmark for empirical research in the realm of disinformation and fact-checking, laying the groundwork for future endeavors to emulate and maintain comparable levels of methodological rigor.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the research process, with stringent measures implemented to uphold the rights and well-being of participants. Prior to commencing data collection, clearance was diligently sought from the appropriate regulatory authorities, ensuring compliance with ethical guidelines and protocols. In line with ethical principles of informed consent, all participants were provided with comprehensive

information regarding the research objectives, procedures, and potential risks, and their written consent was obtained before their involvement in the study. Moreover, measures were in place to safeguard the confidentiality and anonymity of participants, with assurances provided that their identities and responses would remain strictly confidential. To mitigate the risk of misrepresentation and ensure the accuracy of findings, validation sessions were conducted with participants, allowing them the opportunity to review and confirm the accuracy of their contributions before final reporting. Furthermore, strict adherence to data protection legislation governed the storage and eventual disposal of data, guaranteeing the security and privacy of sensitive information throughout the research process. By prioritizing ethical considerations, the research upheld the principles of integrity, respect, and responsibility, thereby fostering trust and credibility in the research outcomes.

This research underscores the foundational importance of ethical principles in guiding the entire research process. Upholding the rights and welfare of participants is not just a procedural requirement but a fundamental ethical imperative. The meticulous steps taken to obtain clearance from regulatory authorities and secure informed consent from participants reflect a commitment to transparency and respect for autonomy. Additionally, the emphasis on confidentiality and anonymity serves to protect participants from potential harm or repercussions stemming from their involvement in the study. The validation sessions further exemplify a participatory approach, empowering participants to validate the accuracy of their contributions and ensuring their voices are accurately represented. Moreover, the stringent adherence to data protection legislation underscores a commitment to safeguarding sensitive information and preserving the trust and confidentiality bestowed upon researchers. Ethical considerations extend beyond mere compliance with regulations; they embody a moral responsibility to conduct research with integrity, respect, and accountability. By prioritizing ethical conduct, this research not only upholds the integrity of its findings but also fosters a culture of trust and credibility in the broader research community.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter delves into the heart of the research, unpacking the data collected from the respondents. The primary information, gathered through questionnaires and interviews, is analyzed and interpreted to answer the research questions. To achieve a well-rounded understanding, the data undergoes both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Quantitative analysis focuses on numerical data, providing a statistical lens to uncover patterns and trends. The qualitative analysis, designed to complement the quantitative findings, explores the "why" behind the numbers. It delves into the subjective experiences and perspectives of the respondents, enriching the data with depth and context.

The chapter is structured into three main sections. The first section establishes a foundation by outlining the background characteristics of the respondents. This demographic information provides valuable context for interpreting the data. The second section presents the core of the analysis, the descriptive breakdown of the main data. Here, the results are then presented and interpreted, drawing insights from both quantitative and qualitative approaches. This section becomes the cornerstone of the research, revealing the key findings that answer the research questions.

4.2. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

This section focuses on the background information of the participants in the study. Key demographics such as sex, age, marital status, and total service years are analyzed to provide context for the research findings. By understanding the makeup of the participant pool, researcher can assess the generalizability of the results and identify any potential biases. The analysis of these demographics is typically presented in tables for clear and concise communication.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variables		Respondents	
		No	%
Sex	Male	39	43.3
	Female	51	56.7
	Total	90	100.0
Age	20-25	8	8.9
	26-30	24	26.7
	31-35	38	42.2
	36-40	14	15.6
	41-45	6	6.7
	Total	90	100.0
Marital Status	Single	45	50.0
	Married	43	47.8
	Widowed	2	2.1
	Total	90	100
Total service years	<1	6	6.7
	1-3	44	48.9
	4-6	20	22.22
	7-10	12	13.33
	More than 10	8	8.88
	Total	90	100

The data indicates the characteristics of respondents participating in a study. Amongst respondents, there's a relatively balanced gender distribution with a slight majority identifying as female (56.7%). This ensures a well-rounded perspective in the research, incorporating viewpoints from both genders.

Delving deeper into the age demographics, we see a clear concentration within the mid-career range. The 31-35 age group makes up the largest portion (42.2%), closely followed by the 26–30-year-olds (26.7%). This distribution suggests a significant number of

participants likely possess experience relevant to the study's topic. This analysis could reveal trends about experience levels within this specific age range. Are there perhaps more individuals with established careers (longer service years) clustered around the mid-point of the age groups (around 30 years old) Conversely, do the younger and older respondents skew towards having less experience (shorter service years) Investigating these relationships between variables can provide valuable insights and a more nuanced understanding of the participant pool.

While a balanced gender distribution is positive, it's important to consider if this age distribution aligns with the target population of the research. This analysis could reveal if there's a clustering of established careers (longer service years) around the mid-point of the age groups (around 30 years old). Conversely, it might show that younger and older respondents skew towards having less experience (shorter service years). Examining these relationships between age and service years can provide valuable insights. For instance, perhaps mid-career professionals with longer service years are more likely to participate in research studies compared to their younger or older counterparts. Understanding these dynamics within the participant pool strengthens the interpretation of the research findings and allows for a more nuanced consideration of potential generalizability.

Among the sample of 90 individuals, 50% are single, comprising the largest segment, followed closely by 47.8% who are married. Only a small proportion, 2.1% are widowed. In terms of total service years, the majority fall within the 1–3-year range, constituting 48.9% of the sample. Following this, 22.22% have served between 4 to 6 years, while 13.33% have served between 7 to 10 years. A smaller portion, 8.88%, has accumulated more than 10 years of service. Interestingly, a mere 6.7% have served for less than a year, indicating a relatively low turnover rate or possibly a preference for longer-term employment among this group. This data offers insights into the demographic composition of the population under study, highlighting trends in both marital status and tenure within the workforce. Such information can be invaluable for organizations seeking to tailor their policies and practices to better accommodate the needs and preferences of their employees. Understanding the distribution of marital status and tenure can inform recruitment strategies, employee retention efforts, and the design of benefits packages to suit the varying circumstances and experiences of workers.

4.3. Understanding the Disinformation Landscape

Understanding the Disinformation Landscape in Ethiopia requires a multifaceted exploration of the socio-political context, technological infrastructure, and media landscape. Ethiopia, a diverse nation with a rich cultural heritage, has been grappling with disinformation, misinformation, and propaganda across various platforms. The severity of disinformation in Ethiopia is underscored by its potential to exacerbate existing social, ethnic, and political tensions, thereby posing significant threats to social cohesion, democratic processes, and public trust.

At the heart of Ethiopia's disinformation challenge lies a complex interplay of historical, political, and technological factors. Historically, Ethiopia has experienced periods of authoritarian rule, censorship, and state-controlled media, which have shaped its media landscape and information ecosystem. While recent political reforms have opened up spaces for media freedom and expression, they have also introduced new challenges, including the proliferation of unverified information and the weapon of social media for political purposes.

Ethiopia's diverse ethnic and linguistic makeup adds another layer of complexity to the disinformation landscape. With over 80 ethnic groups and a multitude of languages spoken across the country, disinformation campaigns often exploit these divisions to sow discord and manipulate opinion. Moreover, the rapid expansion of digital technologies and social media platforms has democratized access to information but has also facilitated the spread of false narratives, rumors, and propaganda at an unprecedented pace.

4.3.1. Perception of Disinformation

The following Table 2 is prepared to measure perception of disinformation and contains four items. Each item contains five scales ranging from 1 to 5.

The table presents the average response (Mean) and the variability of those responses (Std. Deviation) for five statements related to disinformation. These statements gauge the participants' self-reported awareness of disinformation (e.g., "I am familiar with the concept of disinformation"), their perceived ability to identify it (e.g., "I can easily

identify disinformation when I encounter it online or in media"), and their understanding of its potential consequences (e.g., "I am aware of the potential consequences and impacts of disinformation on individuals and society"). Additionally, the table investigates how frequently these individuals encounter misleading information related to current events in Ethiopia.

Table 2 Perception of Disinformation

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I am familiar with the concept of disinformation.	90	3.93	.981
I can easily identify disinformation when I encounter it online or in media	90	3.39	1.024
I am aware of the potential consequences and impacts of disinformation on individuals and Society.	90	3.81	1.048
I frequently encounter misleading or false information about current events in Ethiopia.	90	3.73	.889
Valid N (listwise)	90		

The data presented in Table 2 offers a compelling insight into perception of disinformation about respondents. While the descriptive statistics paint a picture of generally high awareness, a closer look reveals a potential vulnerability. On a scale of 1 to 5, respondents exhibit a strong familiarity with the concept of disinformation (mean = 3.93) and acknowledge the potential consequences it holds for individuals and society (mean = 3.81). Additionally, encountering misleading information about current events appears to be a frequent occurrence (mean = 3.73). However, a cause for concern arises when examining the ability to identify disinformation itself. The mean score for easily identifying disinformation (mean = 3.39) is the lowest among the four measured aspects. This suggests a potential gap between awareness of the issue and the ability to discern factual information from misleading content.

This finding resonates with the broader context limited access to diverse information sources can create an environment where disinformation campaigns thrive. The moderate confidence in identifying disinformation highlights the need for interventions that go beyond simply raising awareness.

Fact-checking institutions like HaqCheck and Ethiopia Check become crucial actors in this scenario. By equipping citizens with the tools and resources necessary to critically evaluate information, these organizations can empower Ethiopians to become more discerning consumers of news. Educational initiatives promoting media literacy and critical thinking skills are equally essential in fostering a more informed Society. Addressing this gap is critical to minimizing the negative impacts of disinformation on Society.

The findings from this study offer valuable insights into the perception of disinformation. While the quantitative data indicates a generally high level of awareness (mean scores exceeding 3.7 on a 1-to-5 scale) regarding the concept of disinformation, its consequences, and frequent exposure to misleading information, a potential vulnerability is revealed. Respondents report a lower mean score (3.39) for their ability to identify disinformation, suggesting a gap between awareness and critical evaluation skills.

This gap between awareness and ability aligns with previous research on information literacy in developing countries (Tompkins, 2020). Studies suggest that limited access to diverse information sources can make populations more susceptible to disinformation campaigns (Elias, 2020). Ethiopia's media landscape, dominated by state-affiliated outlets (Internews, 2023), may contribute to this phenomenon.

While qualitative studies highlight the challenges Ethiopians face due to disinformation, particularly regarding political tensions and ethnic conflicts (Assen, 2023), the current study emphasizes the need for interventions beyond awareness campaigns.

Fact-checking institutions like HaqCheck and Ethiopia Check play a crucial role in equipping citizens with critical thinking skills (Haq Check, 2023). Educational initiatives promoting media literacy, as mentioned by Getachew (2023), are essential to bridge the gap between awareness and discernment. By empowering Ethiopians to critically evaluate information, these measures can strengthen societal resilience against disinformation.

4.3.2. Impact of Disinformation

The following Table 3 is prepared to measure *Impact of Disinformation and contains six items*. Each item contains five scales ranging from 1 to 5.

Based on a sample of 90 individuals, the table explores the severity of disinformation as a threat to social harmony (average score: 4.04), its capacity to undermine democratic processes (average score: 4.27), and its role in fueling social unrest and polarization (average score: 4.04).

The data also investigates the significant impact disinformation has on public trust in the media (average score: 4.08) and its potential to influence public discourse and policy decisions (average score: 4.00). Finally, the table delves into personal experiences, with an average score of 3.87 indicating that a sizeable portion of the sample (90) has witnessed instances where disinformation has directly contributed to societal unrest or conflict.

Table 3 Impact of Disinformation on Society

Descriptive Statistics			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
The severity of disinformation in Ethiopia is a critical threat to societal harmony	90	4.04	1.027
Disinformation undermines democratic processes in Ethiopia.	90	4.27	.761
Disinformation in Ethiopia fuels social unrest and polarization	90	4.04	1.016
Disinformation has a considerable impact on public trust in the media.	90	4.08	.980
Disinformation often influences public discourse or policy decisions	90	4.00	.905
I have witnessed instances where disinformation has led to societal unrest or conflict in Ethiopia	90	3.87	.907
Valid N (list wise)	90		

Table 3 offers a compelling portrayal of how the pervasive the detrimental influence of disinformation in the society. The descriptive statistics, with mean scores consistently exceeding 4 on a 1 to 5 scale, paint a concerning picture. Respondents overwhelmingly view disinformation as a critical threat that undermines democratic processes (mean = 4.27), fuels social unrest (mean = 4.04), and erodes public trust in the media (mean = 4.08). While witnessing personal experiences of disinformation leading to unrest received a slightly lower score (mean = 3.87), the overall trend indicates a deep understanding of the pervasive and destructive nature of disinformation within Society. This data directly addresses the research question regarding the severity of disinformation in Ethiopia, highlighting it as a significant issue with far-reaching consequences. The importance of fact-checking institutions like HaqCheck and Ethiopia Check is amplified by the need to mitigate these negative effects.

A closer look at the specific impacts reveals the multifaceted threat disinformation poses. The high mean score for "disinformation as a threat to societal harmony" (mean = 4.04) suggests a strong belief that it can sow discord and distrust between different groups, potentially leading to violence and instability. Disinformation can also manipulate public opinion and hinder democratic processes, as evidenced by the highest mean score of 4.27 for "disinformation undermining democratic processes." Similarly, the data suggests a strong perception that disinformation fuels social unrest and polarization (mean = 4.04), acting as a catalyst for exacerbating existing tensions and hindering peaceful conflict resolution. Furthermore, with a mean score of 4.08, the data underscores how disinformation erodes public trust in the media, a vital pillar of a healthy democracy. When bombarded with disinformation, people become skeptical of all media sources, making it difficult to distinguish fact from fiction. Disinformation's influence doesn't stop there, with a mean score of 4.00 indicating a concern that it can shape public discourse and potentially influence policy decisions. If public opinion is based on false information, it can lead to policies that are detrimental to the public good.

These findings, while based on a limited sample size (N = 90), highlight the urgency of addressing disinformation in Ethiopia. Further research with a larger and more diverse sample could provide a more nuanced understanding of how different demographics perceive the issue. Additionally, exploring the specific types of disinformation prevalent in Ethiopia and their impact on various sectors of Society would be valuable in guiding targeted interventions. The crucial role of fact-checking institutions like HaqCheck and Ethiopia Check is undeniable in this fight against disinformation. By empowering Ethiopians with the tools and resources to critically evaluate information, these organizations can foster a more informed and discerning citizenry, ultimately strengthening Society.

The findings from this study align with previous research highlighting the detrimental influence of disinformation on societies (Rocha et al., 2023; European Commission, 2018). The quantitative data, with mean scores exceeding 4 on a 1-to-5 scale for all measured constructs, indicates a widespread perception among Ethiopians that disinformation poses a critical threat (mean = 4.04) to social harmony, undermines democratic processes (mean = 4.27), and fuels social unrest and polarization (mean = 4.04). This aligns with the qualitative literature that emphasizes how disinformation campaigns can sow discord, manipulate public opinion, and exacerbate existing tensions (Wasserman & Madrid-Morales, 2019; Stier et al., 2018).

However, a slight discrepancy emerges when comparing the quantitative results regarding personal experiences of witnessing disinformation leading to societal unrest (mean = 3.87) with the qualitative studies that emphasize the potential for real-world consequences (Assen, 2023). This may be attributed to several factors, including limitations inherent in self-reported data or the specific timeframe of the survey. Further research that delves deeper into the types of disinformation encountered and their perceived severity could provide a more nuanced understanding of this gap.

Overall, the combined quantitative and qualitative findings paint a concerning picture of how Ethiopians perceive disinformation's disruptive influence on their Society. These findings underscore the crucial role of fact-checking institutions like HaqCheck and Ethiopia Check in empowering citizens with critical thinking skills to navigate the complex information landscape.

4.3.3. Sources and Spread of Disinformation

The following Table 4 is prepared to measure *Sources and Spread of Disinformation and contains three items*. Each item contains five scales ranging from 1 to 5.

Table 4 shows the origins and pathways through which misleading information permeates Society. It explores the extent to which social media platforms contribute to the spread of disinformation (average score: 4.00), along with the perceived role of political actors and parties (average score: 4.10) in disseminating misleading information. The table also examines the influence of Ethiopians living abroad and organizations external to the country (average score: 3.98). The standard deviation values for each factor indicate some variation in how participants perceive the relative influence of these sources.

Table 4 Sources and Spread of Disinformation

Descriptive Statistics			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Social media negatively spread disinformation in Ethiopia.	90	4.00	1.066
Political actors and parties are responsible for disseminating disinformation in Ethiopia.	90	4.10	.822
Ethiopian living outside the country and organizations abroad play a role in spreading disinformation in Ethiopia.	90	3.98	.959
Valid N (listwise)	90		

This study investigated the sources and spread of disinformation in Ethiopia, aiming to understand the challenges faced and potential role of fact-checking institutions. The analysis of data from participants (N=90) revealed concerning trends. Social media emerged as the primary culprit, with a mean score of 4.00 on a 5-point scale indicating a strong perception of its negative influence. This aligns with global anxieties about the rapid dissemination of information online, often outpacing efforts to verify its accuracy. Political actors and parties were also identified as significant sources (mean score of 4.10), highlighting the potential for manipulation of information for political gain. Interestingly, the data suggests a perceived role of Ethiopians living abroad and associated organizations in spreading disinformation (mean score of 3.98). While this warrants further investigation into motivations and specific types of information disseminated, it's crucial to differentiate between legitimate critiques and deliberate attempts to mislead.

These findings, while insightful, have limitations. The relatively small sample size might not fully capture the national perspective. Additionally, the study relied on self-reported perceptions, potentially influenced by personal biases. Future research could benefit from a larger, more geographically diverse sample and potentially incorporate objective measures of disinformation prevalence alongside subjective perceptions.

The findings from this study on the sources and spread of disinformation in Ethiopia provide valuable insights that complement the qualitative understanding gleaned from previous research. The quantitative data highlights social media (mean score = 4.00) as the primary culprit, aligning with concerns raised in the literature about the rapid and often unverified spread of information online (Rocha et al., 2023). This underscores the critical need for

media literacy initiatives to equip Ethiopians with the skills to critically evaluate information encountered on social media platforms.

Furthermore, the quantitative data assigns a high mean score (4.10) to political actors and parties as disseminators of disinformation. This aligns with the qualitative studies by Assen (2023) that highlighted the use of disinformation campaigns to manipulate public opinion for political purposes.

An interesting point of comparison emerges when examining the quantitative results regarding Ethiopians living abroad (mean score = 3.98). Further research, as the study suggests, is needed to differentiate between these nuances and identify the specific types of information being disseminated by Ethiopians abroad.

Overall, social media and political actors emerge as primary culprits, highlighting the need for targeted interventions by fact-checking institutions and media literacy initiatives. By acknowledging the complexities of information shared by Ethiopians abroad, further research can guide constructive solutions to address this multifaceted challenge.

4.3.4. Broader Effects of Disinformation

The following Table 5 is prepared to measure *Broader Effects of Disinformation and contains four items*. Each item contains five scales ranging from 1 to 5.

The table analyzes data from a survey of 90 individuals, revealing their perceptions of how disinformation has negatively impacted the economy and business environment (average score: 4.06). Furthermore, it explores the perceived role of disinformation in fueling ethnic tensions and conflicts (average score: 4.00) and its potential to spread hate speech or incite violence (average score: 4.03). Interestingly, the data suggests a slightly lower average score (3.84) regarding the perceived weakening of public understanding of issues due to disinformation, with some variation in responses (standard deviation of .916).

Table 5 Broader Effects of Disinformation

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Disinformation has negatively affected the economy and business environment in Ethiopia.	90	4.06	.839
Disinformation has fueled ethnic tensions and conflicts in Ethiopia	90	4.00	.947
Disinformation spreads hate or violence in Ethiopia	90	4.03	.885
Disinformation weakens public understanding of issues in Ethiopia	90	3.84	.916
Valid N (listwise)	90		

Disinformation was perceived to have a detrimental impact on the economy and business environment (mean score of 4.06). This could be attributed to the erosion of trust due to the spread of false information, discouraging investment and hindering economic growth. Social tensions and conflicts also emerged as significant concerns (mean score of 4.00 and 4.03 respectively). Disinformation can exacerbate existing divisions by stoking fear and animosity, potentially inciting violence and jeopardizing social cohesion.

The perceived impact on public understanding of issues (mean score of 3.84) was slightly lower. However, it still indicates a cause for concern. A citizenry misled by disinformation is less equipped to make informed decisions and participate meaningfully in democratic processes. These findings, while based on perceptions, highlight the urgency of addressing this challenge. Further research employing objective measures and in-depth qualitative studies could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the problem.

Understanding the broader effects of disinformation is crucial for informing strategies to combat it. Fact-checking institutions can play a role by debunking disinformation related to the economy, social issues, and public policy. However, broader societal efforts are also necessary. Media literacy initiatives and fostering a culture of responsible social media use are additional steps towards building resilience against disinformation. In conclusion, this study underscores the pervasive and damaging effects of disinformation in Ethiopia. A multifaceted approach involving fact-checking institutions, media literacy initiatives, and responsible social media practices is essential to safeguard Ethiopia from its detrimental effects.

The quantitative data from this study on the broader effects of disinformation in Ethiopia sheds light on the multifaceted nature of this challenge, complementing the insights gleaned from qualitative research. The high mean scores for economic impact (4.06), ethnic tensions (4.00), and hate speech (4.03) align with the qualitative studies by European Commission (2018) and Nations (2022) that highlight how disinformation disrupts markets, fuels social divisions, and incites violence. These findings underscore the urgency of addressing disinformation to safeguard Ethiopia's social and economic well-being.

An interesting point of comparison emerges when examining the results regarding public understanding of issues (mean score = 3.84). This score, while lower than the others, suggests a perceived negative impact. This aligns with the qualitative studies by Wasserman & Madrid-Morales (2019) that emphasize how disinformation campaigns can manipulate participant's opinion. However, the quantitative data suggests public perception might not fully capture the magnitude of the issue. Further research, as the study suggests, could benefit from employing objective measures like media analysis alongside subjective perceptions to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how disinformation weakens public understanding of critical issues.

Overall, the combined quantitative and qualitative findings paint a concerning picture of the far-reaching consequences of disinformation in Ethiopia. The negative effects on the economy, social harmony, and public understanding highlight the need for a multi-pronged approach. Fact-checking institutions like HaqCheck and Ethiopia Check can play a crucial role in debunking disinformation. However, fostering media literacy and responsible social media use are equally important to empower citizens and build societal resilience against disinformation.

4.4. The Role of Fact-Checking Institutions in Combating Disinformation

In understanding the role of fact-checking institutions like Haq Check and Ethiopia Check in combating disinformation, it becomes evident that they serve as bulwarks against the rising tide of falsehoods and disinformation. These institutions play a pivotal role in promoting information accuracy, enhancing media literacy, and fostering a culture of critical thinking among the populace.

Firstly, fact-checking institutions contribute to minimizing disinformation by meticulously scrutinizing claims and verifying the accuracy of information disseminated through various media channels. Through rigorous investigative methods and adherence to journalistic principles, they debunk false narratives, rumors, and propaganda, thereby preventing the spread of misleading content that could incite social unrest or manipulate public opinion. Moreover, fact-checkers act as watchdogs, holding individuals, organizations, and public figures accountable for the veracity of their statements. By subjecting claims to empirical scrutiny and providing evidence-based analysis, these institutions help to expose misleading or deceptive practices and promote transparency in public discourse. Furthermore; fact-checking institutions play a crucial role in enhancing media literacy and digital citizenship. By educating the public about the importance of verifying information, evaluating sources, and discerning between fact and fiction, they empower individuals to navigate the complex information landscape with greater discernment and critical thinking skills. In addition to their proactive efforts in fact-checking and verification, these institutions also engage in outreach activities, including workshops, training sessions, and public awareness campaigns, to raise awareness about the dangers of disinformation and equip citizens with the tools to identify and combat it effectively.

4.4.1. Impact of Fact-Checking on Public Perception

Table 6 presents descriptive statistics regarding the impact of fact-checking on public perception in Ethiopia, focusing on the reliability of fact-checking institutions and their role in distinguishing between truth and false information. The data reveal a high level of trust in fact-checking institutions, with respondents strongly agreeing that they provide a reliable source for confirming the accuracy of information. However, while there is recognition of the role of fact-checking institutions in aiding individuals to discern between truth and falsehoods, the mean score suggests a slightly lower level of agreement. This indicates a need for ongoing efforts to enhance public awareness and engagement with fact-checking processes, ensuring a more informed and discerning Society. Overall, the findings underscore the importance of fact-checking institutions in Ethiopia in combating disinformation and shaping public perception, highlighting both their strengths and areas for potential improvement.

Table 6 Impact of Fact-Checking on Public Perception

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Fact-checking institutions provide a Reliable source for confirming the accuracy of information.	90	4.91	10.065
Fact-checking institutions helps us to distinguish between truth and false information	90	3.92	.768
Valid N (listwise)	90		

This study explored how fact-checking institutions in Ethiopia contribute to minimizing disinformation by examining public perception. Data analysis from 90 participants revealed positive signs regarding trust in these institutions. Ethiopians highly valued fact-checking as a reliable source for verifying information accuracy (mean score of 4.91). This suggests recognition of their role in combating disinformation and a willingness to utilize them. This level of trust is vital for the effectiveness of fact-checking efforts.

This highlights the need for further engagement between fact-checking institutions and the public. Initiatives that not only debunk disinformation but also educate the public on media literacy and critical thinking skills are crucial. Equipping citizens with the ability to independently evaluate information can empower them to become active participants in combating disinformation. While limitations exist, this study offers valuable insights. The high level of trust in fact-checking institutions is a positive starting point. However, addressing the gap in perceived effectiveness is essential to maximize their impact. By fostering media literacy and public engagement, fact-checking institutions can empower Ethiopians to become more discerning information consumers and contribute to a more informed and resilient Society.

The high mean score for trust in fact-checking institutions (4.91) aligns with the qualitative works by Haq Check and Ethiopia Check which emphasize their role as credible sources for verifying information accuracy. This highlights a positive recognition of their efforts in combating disinformation. This trust is crucial for the effectiveness of fact-checking initiatives, as people are more likely to rely on information from sources they perceive as reliable. However, a contrasting perspective emerges when examining the data on perceived effectiveness in distinguishing truth from falsehood (mean score = 3.92). This score, significantly lower than the trust rating, suggests a gap between trusting the institutions and perceiving their direct impact on individual discernment. This aligns with the qualitative studies by Getachew (2023) which highlighted challenges faced by fact-checkers, such as limited outreach and difficulty keeping up with the rapid spread of disinformation. These factors could contribute to a sense of ineffectiveness among the public.

Overall, the findings paint a complex picture. The high trust in fact-checking institutions is a positive foundation. However, bridging the gap between trust and perceived effectiveness is essential to maximize their impact. By addressing challenges like limited outreach and fostering public engagement through media literacy initiatives, fact-checking institutions can empower Ethiopians with the critical thinking skills necessary to become active participants in combating disinformation. This will ultimately contribute to a more informed and resilient society.

4.4.2. Role of Fact-Checking in the Media Landscape

Table 7 provides an insightful overview of the perceived role and effectiveness of fact-checking institutions in Ethiopia's media landscape. The data indicate a generally positive attitude towards the utilization of fact-checking services provided by institutions like Haq Check and Ethiopia Check, as evidenced by the mean score of 4.11. Moreover, respondents recognize the crucial role played by these institutions in combating disinformation, with a mean score of 3.83. This underscores the growing awareness of the importance of factual accuracy in an environment where disinformation is prevalent. Additionally, the data highlight the significance of collaborative efforts between fact-checking institutions and media organizations in addressing the challenges posed by disinformation, as reflected by the mean score of 4.10. Overall, the findings suggest a favorable perception of fact-checking initiatives and emphasize the importance of collaborative strategies in promoting accurate information dissemination and countering the spread of disinformation in Ethiopia.

Table 7 Role of Fact-Checking in the Media Landscape

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I use the fact-checking services provided by institutions like Haqcheck and Ethiopia Check	90	4.11	2.080
Fact-checking institutions like Hatcheck and Ethiopia Check play a crucial role in combating disinformation and promoting accurate information in the Ethiopian media landscape	90	3.83	.903
fact-checking Collaborations with media are essential to combat disinformation effectively	90	4.10	.784
Valid N (listwise)	90		

This study examined the contribution of fact-checking institutions in minimizing disinformation within Ethiopia, specifically focusing on their role within the media landscape. Self-reported use of fact-checking services offered by Haq Check and Ethiopia Check revealed a moderate level of engagement (mean score of 4.11). While this suggests some awareness and willingness to utilize these resources, the high standard deviation indicates significant variation in individual behavior. Limited awareness, accessibility issues, or language barriers could explain this difference.

Despite the variation in personal use, a strong majority of participants recognized the vital role of fact-checking institutions in combating disinformation and promoting accurate information within Ethiopian media (mean score of 3.83). This suggests a general understanding of the importance of fact-checking in ensuring a more reliable media environment. Overwhelmingly, the data supports the idea that collaboration between fact-checking institutions and traditional media outlets is essential for effectively combating disinformation (mean score of 4.10). This high level of agreement highlights the limitations of each entity working independently. Fact-checking institutions need a wider platform to disseminate their findings, while traditional media outlets benefit from the expertise and focus fact-checkers provide.

The gap between perceived importance and reported personal use suggests a need for further strategies to encourage information seekers to actively utilize fact-checking resources. Public awareness campaigns, partnerships with educational institutions, and exploring innovative dissemination methods could address this gap. While limitations exist, such as reliance on self-reported behavior and a relatively small sample size, this study highlights the potential of fact-checking institutions to contribute to a more reliable media landscape. Encouraging broader utilization of their services and fostering stronger collaborations with traditional media outlets are crucial strategies for minimizing disinformation in Ethiopia. By addressing these areas, fact-checking institutions can empower Ethiopians to become more informed and discerning consumers of information.

This study sheds light on how respondents perceive the role of fact-checking institutions within the media landscape, complementing the insights gleaned from previous qualitative research. The high mean score for perceived importance of fact-checking (3.83) aligns with the qualitative works by Haq Check and Ethiopia Check which emphasize their crucial role in promoting accurate information in the media. This suggests participant's recognition of the need for fact-checking to improve media credibility. Additionally, the strong support for collaboration between fact-checking institutions and traditional media (mean score = 4.10) aligns with previous works by scholars like Vos (2019) who highlight the effectiveness of collaborative efforts in combating disinformation. This consensus underscores the limitations of fact-checking institutions working in isolation and the potential of partnerships to amplify their reach and impact.

However, a gap emerges when comparing the perceived importance of fact-checking with self-reported use of fact-checking services (mean score = 4.11). While the moderate mean score suggests some awareness and utilization, the high standard deviation indicates significant variation in individual behavior. This finding contrasts with the qualitative studies by Kassaye (2023) which emphasized the growing popularity of fact-checking platforms among Ethiopians. Potential explanations for this discrepancy include limitations of self-reported data, lack of awareness about available fact-checking resources, or accessibility issues.

Overall, the findings highlight the potential of fact-checking institutions to contribute to a more reliable media landscape in Ethiopia, but also emphasize the need to bridge the gap between perceived importance and actual utilization of their services. Public awareness campaigns, collaborations with educational institutions, and exploring innovative dissemination methods are crucial steps to encourage Ethiopians to actively seek out fact-checking resources. By addressing these areas and fostering stronger partnerships with traditional media outlets, fact-checking institutions can empower Ethiopians to become more informed and critical consumers of information within the Ethiopian media landscape.

4.5. Challenges and Opportunities for Effective Fact-Checking in Ethiopia

The challenges and opportunities for effective fact-checking in Ethiopia, it becomes evident that while fact-checking institutions such as Haq Check and

Ethiopia Check play a crucial role in countering disinformation, they encounter various obstacles in their endeavors. One significant challenge faced by fact-checking institutions is the sheer volume and speed of disinformation circulating across digital platforms. In Ethiopia, where internet penetration is rapidly increasing, false narratives and rumors can spread virally within minutes, making it challenging for fact-checkers to keep pace with the deluge of disinformation. Moreover, the decentralized nature of social media amplifies the reach of false information, making it difficult for fact-checkers to stem the tide effectively.

Another challenge stems from resource constraints and capacity limitations faced by fact-checking organizations. Despite their crucial role in safeguarding the truth, many fact-checking institutions in Ethiopia operate with limited funding, staff, and technological infrastructure. This hampers their ability to conduct comprehensive fact-checking, invest in advanced tools and technologies, and scale their operations to meet the growing demand for verification services. Furthermore, fact-checking in Ethiopia is often hindered by political interference, censorship, and intimidation. In an environment where freedom of expression is sometimes curtailed, fact-checkers may face pressure or threats from powerful actors seeking to control the narrative and suppress dissenting voices. This poses significant challenges to the independence and integrity of fact-checking initiatives, undermining their credibility and effectiveness in countering disinformation.

However, amidst these challenges, there are also opportunities for effective fact-checking in Ethiopia. The increasing recognition of the importance of media literacy and critical thinking skills presents an opportunity for fact-checkers to collaborate with educational institutions, civil Society organizations, and government agencies to promote information literacy and combat disinformation from the grassroots level. Moreover, advancements in technology, including artificial intelligence and machine learning algorithms, hold promise for automating the fact-checking process and augmenting the capabilities of human fact-checkers. By harnessing these technologies, fact-checking institutions can enhance their efficiency, accuracy, and scalability in combating disinformation.

4.5.1. Resource Constraints

This study investigates the challenges faced by fact-checking institutions in Ethiopia, with a particular focus on resource constraints. By analyzing interview excerpts from a representative institution, the research exposes the significant limitations hindering effective efforts to counter disinformation. One of the most pressing challenges identified is the overwhelming volume of disinformation. The interviewee laments, *"The sheer volume of disinformation makes it difficult to keep up"* (interview excerpt). This highlights the immense strain placed on fact-checkers who are simply unable to verify information at the rate it is being produced. Consequently, by the time a claim is debunked, it has often already spread widely online, diminishing the impact of the fact-checking effort.

The interviewee underscores the potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to address this challenge: *"Imagine if we could use AI tools to analyze text and identify potential red flags in disinformation"* (interview excerpt). Automating the initial detection of disinformation through AI could significantly improve efficiency. This would free up fact-checkers to dedicate their time to more complex investigations and in-depth analyses, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of their work. The financial constraints faced by fact-checking institutions further limit their ability to combat disinformation. Grant funding, a critical source of income, is described as unreliable: *"Absolutely. Grant funding is crucial, but it can be unreliable"* (interview excerpt). This lack of consistent funding hinders investment in essential resources, such as training for fact-checkers, cutting-edge technology to automate tasks, and expanding the workforce to handle the ever-growing volume of disinformation.

The interviewee emphasizes the domino effect of limited resources: *"We have to prioritize what we fact-check, which means some disinformation inevitably goes unchecked. This can have a ripple effect, eroding public trust in information as a whole"* (interview excerpt). When forced to prioritize due to resource constraints, some disinformation remains unchecked. This unchecked disinformation can have a cascading effect, breeding general distrust in information, making it even harder for the public to discern truth from falsehood. The interview also highlights the importance of collaboration as a strategy to overcome resource limitations: *"We rely heavily on volunteers and partnerships with other fact-checking organizations. Collaboration is key when resources are scarce"* (interview excerpt). By working together with volunteers and other fact-checking institutions, these

organizations can combine their expertise and resources to achieve a wider reach and greater impact.

This study aligns with previous research on the challenges faced by fact-checking institutions globally (Marble & Pomeranz, 2020). The qualitative findings from the interview with a representative Ethiopian fact-checking institution (Haq Check or Ethiopia Check) echo concerns identified in the literature. The overwhelming volume of disinformation, as lamented by the interviewee, mirrors findings by Vos (2019) who highlights the ever-increasing firehose of false content that fact-checkers struggle to keep pace with. This highlights the potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a solution, as suggested in the interview. Similar propositions for leveraging AI-powered fact-checking tools are explored by Lazer et al. (2018) as a means to improve efficiency and identify potential disinformation for further investigation.

Financial constraints also emerged as a significant challenge, aligning with the literature. The interviewee's description of unreliable grant funding resonates with the concerns raised by Wurth et al. (2020) regarding the precarious financial footing of many fact-checking organizations. This financial vulnerability restricts investment in resources like fact-checker training and essential technology, ultimately hindering the effectiveness of their work. The interviewee highlights the domino effect of limited resources, where unchecked disinformation erodes public trust in information as a whole. This aligns with the qualitative findings by Banerjee & Tewari (2020) who emphasize how limited fact-checking capacity can create an environment where skepticism towards all information prevails.

The interview also highlights collaboration as a key strategy, echoing recommendations from scholars like Vos (2019). By working with volunteers and other fact-checking institutions, Ethiopian fact-checkers can overcome resource limitations and amplify their impact. This collaborative approach aligns with the growing recognition of the need for a global network of fact-checkers to combat the transnational spread of disinformation (Lewandowsky et al., 2020).

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the challenges faced by Ethiopian fact-checking institutions, mirroring those identified in the broader literature. The findings emphasize the need for innovative solutions like AI-powered tools and collaborative efforts to address resource constraints and maximize the impact of fact-checking in the fight against disinformation.

4.5.2. Streamlining Verification Processes

This study explores the challenges associated with manual verification processes employed by fact-checking institutions in Ethiopia. The research utilizes interview excerpts from a representative organization to highlight the limitations of traditional methods and advocate for the integration of technology to streamline verification workflows. A central theme emerging from the interviews is the laborious nature of manual verification. The interviewee describes the process as "a lot of legwork" involving meticulous source verification, expert consultation, and extensive data analysis (interviewee 1). This time-consuming approach significantly hinders efficiency and creates a gap between fact-checking efforts and the rapid spread of disinformation online.

The interviewee emphasizes the critical issue of speed: *"By the time we finish verifying a claim, it's often already been shared thousands of times online"* (interviewee 2). Disinformation outpaces manual verification, rendering fact-checking efforts less impactful. This highlights the need for a more efficient system to address the time-sensitive nature of combating disinformation.

The interviews acknowledge the importance of accuracy inherent in manual verification, but also recognize its limitations: *"While manual verification ensures accuracy, it can be susceptible to human error"* (interview excerpt). The meticulous nature of manual verification, while valuable for accuracy, is prone to human mistakes. The interviewee suggests that technological automation of specific tasks could potentially improve efficiency and allow fact-checkers to dedicate more time to nuanced analysis, where human judgment remains crucial.

The potential of technology to revolutionize fact-checking is a recurring theme. The interviewee expresses optimism about automation's ability to streamline processes: *"Technology could revolutionize fact-checking...identify suspicious trends, automate data collection"* (interview excerpt). Automating tasks like trend identification and data collection could free up significant resources for fact-checkers to focus on in-depth investigations and complex analyses. However, the interviewee emphasizes the irreplaceable role of human expertise: *"Absolutely. Manual verification allows for a deeper understanding of the context and intent behind disinformation. Technology can't replace that kind of critical analysis"* (interview excerpt). Human judgment remains essential for critical analysis of the context and intent behind disinformation, a task not easily replicated by technology.

This study aligns with prior research on the limitations of manual fact-checking processes (Lazer et al., 2018; Marble & Pomeranz, 2020). The qualitative findings from the interview with a representative Ethiopian fact-checking institution (Haq Check or Ethiopia Check) echo these concerns. The interviewee's description of manual verification as "a lot of legwork" (interview excerpt) resonates with the time-consuming nature highlighted by Marble & Pomeranz (2020). This laborious approach, as the interview suggests, creates a gap between fact-checking efforts and the rapid spread of disinformation online. This finding aligns with Lazer et al. (2018) who emphasize the need for speed to counter the fast-paced dissemination of disinformation. The interviewee's point regarding the critical yet error-prone nature of manual verification (interviewee 3) is another point of convergence with the literature. While accuracy is paramount, human error is a risk inherent in manual processes, as mentioned by Marble & Pomeranz (2020).

The interview highlights technology as a potential solution, mirroring recent scholarly discussions (Lazer et al., 2018; Vos, 2019). The interviewee's optimism about automation streamlining processes (interview excerpt) aligns with proposals by Lazer et al. (2018) for leveraging technology to identify suspicious trends and automate data collection. This would free up fact-checkers for more nuanced analysis, as the interviewee suggests. However, the interview also acknowledges the irreplaceable role of human expertise in critical analysis (interview excerpt). This aligns with Vos (2019) who cautions against over-reliance on technology, emphasizing the continued need for human judgment in evaluating context and intent behind disinformation.

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the limitations of manual fact-checking processes in Ethiopia, aligning with the broader literature. The findings highlight the potential of technological advancements to streamline verification workflows and improve efficiency. However, the importance of human expertise in critical analysis remains undeniable. By embracing a strategic combination of technological solutions and human fact-checking, Ethiopian institutions like Haq Check and Ethiopia Check can be better equipped to address the challenges of disinformation in the digital age.

4.5.3. Navigating the Ethiopian Context

This study explores the unique challenges faced by fact-checking institutions in Ethiopia, focusing on the specificities of the country's socio-linguistic and technological landscape. Utilizing interview excerpts from a representative organization, the research explores how

these complexities hinder efforts to combat disinformation and emphasizes the need for context-specific solutions and continuous adaptation. A central theme emerging from the interviews is the challenge posed by Ethiopia's linguistic diversity. The interviewee highlights the need for a multilingual fact-checking workforce: *"Disinformation often spreads in multiple languages... We need fact-checkers with fluency in various Ethiopian languages"* (interview excerpt). This linguistic barrier necessitates fact-checkers fluent in Amharic, Oromo, Tigrinya, and other regional languages to effectively address disinformation across the entire population.

The interviewee further emphasizes the complexities of navigating traditional communication channels: *"Trust in traditional sources and a reliance on oral communication can make it difficult to challenge disinformation"* (interview excerpt). Ethiopia's deep-rooted trust in elders, community leaders, and oral communication creates fertile ground for the spread of disinformation. Disinformation disseminated through these established trust structures can be particularly challenging to counter as it leverages pre-existing social dynamics. The interviewee highlights the limitations imposed by Ethiopia's digital landscape: *"Limited internet access and a reliance on social media platforms with weak content moderation make it easier for disinformation to spread unchecked"* (interview excerpt). This statement underscores the double-edged sword of limited internet access. While it may restrict the reach of some disinformation, it also creates a situation where information verification is less accessible for the public. Furthermore, the lack of robust content moderation on social media platforms fuels the unchecked spread of falsehoods.

The interviewee emphasizes the need for context-specific solutions: *"The combination of linguistic diversity, cultural factors, and technological limitations creates a complex environment"* (interview excerpt). This multifaceted challenge cannot be addressed with a one-size-fits-all approach. Effective fact-checking in Ethiopia requires solutions tailored to address the interplay of its unique linguistic diversity, cultural reliance on certain communication channels, and limited internet access with weak content moderation. The interviewee emphasizes the need for continuous adaptation: *"As internet access expands and Ethiopians become more tech-savvy, we need to anticipate new ways disinformation might spread. We need to adapt our strategies to stay ahead of the curve"* (interview excerpt). The digital landscape is constantly evolving. As internet access expands and Ethiopians become more tech-savvy, new avenues for disinformation will emerge. Fact-checking institutions

must anticipate these changes and adapt their strategies to remain effective in the face of evolving threats.

The qualitative findings from the interview with a representative Ethiopian fact-checking institution (Haq Check or Ethiopia Check) resonate with the literature on context-specific challenges in combating disinformation.

The interview highlights linguistic diversity as a central hurdle, echoing limitations identified in regions with multiple languages (e.g., Banerjee & Tewari, 2020). The interviewee's emphasis on needing fact-checkers fluent in various Ethiopian languages (Amharic, Oromo, and Tigrinya) aligns with Banerjee & Tewari's (2020) call for multilingual fact-checking approaches. This ensures messages reach the targeted populations in their native languages, maximizing impact.

The interview sheds light on the complexities of Ethiopia's socio-cultural landscape. The deep-rooted trust in traditional communication channels and reliance on oral communication, as mentioned by the interviewee, creates fertile ground for disinformation a challenge also identified by scholars like Akin et al. (2020) in contexts with strong oral traditions. Disinformation spread through trusted channels like elders and community leaders can be particularly difficult to counter because it leverages existing social dynamics.

The interviewee's point regarding limited internet access and weak content moderation presents a nuanced challenge. While limited internet access might restrict the reach of some disinformation, it also hinders public access to information for verification, as noted in the study. This aligns with findings by Ponce de Leon et al. (2019) who highlight the limitations of fact-checking in regions with restricted internet access. Furthermore, the lack of robust content moderation on social media platforms, as mentioned in the interview, creates an environment conducive to the spread of unchecked falsehoods. This finding aligns with the broader literature on the role of social media platforms in facilitating disinformation dissemination (Vos, 2019).

The interview underscores the need for context-specific solutions and continuous adaptation, echoing recommendations from scholars like Banerjee & Tewari (2020) and Vos (2019). The Ethiopian context, with its unique interplay of linguistic diversity, cultural norms, and technological limitations, necessitates a multifaceted approach to fact-checking. As the

interviewee suggests, fact-checking institutions must be adaptable, continuously innovating strategies to stay ahead of the evolving tactics used to spread disinformation.

4.5.3. Leveraging Technological Solutions

Utilizing interview excerpts from a representative organization, the research examines how AI and other technologies offer promising tools for combating disinformation, while also acknowledging the challenges of cost, cultural appropriateness, and responsible integration. A central theme emerging from the interviews is the potential of AI for identifying disinformation red flags. The interviewee highlights the ability of AI to analyze vast amounts of text data: "AI-powered tools could analyze text and identify potential red flags in disinformation, like unusual phrasing or suspicious sources" (interview excerpt). Automating the initial detection process through AI-powered tools can significantly improve efficiency by flagging potentially false information based on linguistic markers or suspicious source attribution. This allows fact-checkers to focus their time and expertise on in-depth investigations of more complex disinformation tactics.

The interviewee also emphasizes the value of technology in debunking visual disinformation: "*Reverse image search tools could help us debunk fake photos and videos that are often used to spread disinformation*" (interview excerpt). This statement highlights the usefulness of these tools in verifying the authenticity of photos and videos, a common tactic employed to spread disinformation. By employing reverse image search, fact-checkers can quickly identify manipulated visuals and expose them as falsehoods. Despite the potential benefits, the interviewee acknowledges the practical challenges of cost and cultural appropriateness: "*Cost can be a barrier, but also ensuring the technology is culturally appropriate and functions effectively in the Ethiopian context*" (interview excerpt). Financial constraints can be a significant barrier for many fact-checking institutions, limiting their access to these beneficial technologies. Furthermore, ensuring that the technology is culturally appropriate is crucial. AI tools trained on data from different cultures might not be optimized to identify disinformation tactics specific to the Ethiopian context. Inappropriate tools could lead to misidentification of legitimate content.

The interviewee emphasizes the importance of human judgment: "*Technology is a powerful tool, but it's not a silver bullet. Human expertise is still crucial for critical analysis and judgment*" (interview excerpt). This statement acknowledges that while AI can automate tasks and identify potential red flags, it cannot replace the critical analysis, judgment, and

understanding of the nuances of disinformation that human fact-checkers possess. The interviewee underscores the need for transparency: "*Transparency is key. We need to be open about how we use technology and ensure it complements, rather than replaces, our core fact-checking principles*" (interview excerpt). Building public trust is crucial. Fact-checking institutions must be open about how they leverage AI tools and ensure that technology complements, rather than replaces, their core principles of fact-checking.

This study sheds light on the potential and limitations of technological solutions for fact-checking in Ethiopia, aligning with the ongoing debate in the broader literature. The qualitative findings from the interview with a representative Ethiopian fact-checking institution (Haq Check or Ethiopia Check) echo both the optimism and concerns surrounding AI and other technologies.

The interview highlights the potential of AI for streamlining fact-checking workflows, aligning with proposals by Lazer et al. (2018) and Vos (2019). The interviewee's emphasis on AI's ability to identify red flags in disinformation (unusual phrasing, suspicious sources) resonates with Lazer et al. (2018) who advocate for AI-powered tools to detect potential disinformation for further investigation. This frees up fact-checkers to focus on complex analyses, as the interview suggests. The interviewee also highlights the value of technology in debunking visual disinformation, mirroring the growing recognition of image and video manipulation techniques used to spread disinformation (Chen et al., 2020). Reverse image search tools, as mentioned, can be powerful aids in verifying the authenticity of visuals, as acknowledged by Chen et al. (2020).

However, the interview also acknowledges the limitations and challenges associated with technological solutions. The interviewee raises the crucial point of cost, aligning with concerns identified by scholars like Marble & Pomeranz (2020) regarding the financial constraints of fact-checking institutions. Limited resources can restrict access to these beneficial technologies. Furthermore, the interviewee emphasizes the need for culturally appropriate AI tools, a concern not often addressed in the literature. AI models trained on data from different cultures might misinterpret linguistic cues miser disinformation tactics specific to the Ethiopian context. Inappropriate tools could lead to the misidentification of legitimate content, as the interview suggests.

The interview also underscores the importance of human expertise, echoing concerns raised by Vos (2019). While AI can automate tasks and flag potential disinformation, it cannot

replace the critical thinking and nuanced understanding possessed by human fact-checkers. Finally, the interviewee highlights the need for transparency, aligning with recommendations by Marble & Pomeranz (2020). Building public trust necessitates openness about how fact-checking institutions leverage technology. By acknowledging the limitations and ensuring responsible integration of AI tools, Ethiopian fact-checking institutions can harness the potential of technology while safeguarding their core principles.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter deals with summary of the major findings, the conclusion drawn from the findings and recommendations of the study. In the first section, a summary of the general study and the major findings was presented. Then, conclusions drawn from the findings were made. Finally possible recommendations were given based on the major findings of the study.

5.1. Summary

The main purpose of this study was to assess the contribution of fact-checking institutions to minimizing disinformation in Ethiopia. To this end, the study tried to answer the following basic research questions.

1. How severe is disinformation in Ethiopia?
2. What is the contribution of fact-checking institutions in minimizing disinformation?
3. What are the challenges faced by fact-checking institutions in their efforts to counter disinformation?

This study explored the contribution of fact-checking institutions in minimizing disinformation in Ethiopia, focusing on HaqCheck and Ethiopia Check. The research used a mixed-method approach, combining surveys and interviews to assess the severity of disinformation, contribution of fact-checking institutions, and the challenges faced by these institutions.

The findings reveal that disinformation is a major threat in Ethiopia, spread widely through social media. While the respondents acknowledge the dangers of disinformation, they have difficulty identifying it. There is high trust in fact-checking institutions, but a perception that they are not entirely effective. These institutions grapple with limited resources and the vast amount of disinformation they encounter.

Equipping citizens with media literacy skills is vital to make them discerning information consumers. Fact-checking institutions should also explore innovative methods for disseminating information and partner with educational institutions. Collaboration with volunteers and other fact-checking organizations is another key recommendation. Finally,

utilizing AI tools for identifying content and responsibly integrating technology can improve efficiency.

Effective fact-checking in Ethiopia requires a multifaceted approach that combines traditional methods with innovative technologies, media partnerships, and public education initiatives. By empowering citizens and adapting to the evolving digital landscape, fact-checking institutions can contribute to a more informed and resilient society.

Building upon the established groundwork, it is evident that disinformation poses a significant challenge in Ethiopia, particularly with its widespread dissemination through social media and political channels. Despite recognizing the dangers of disinformation, many Ethiopians struggle to differentiate between reliable information and false narratives. While fact-checking institutions like HaqCheck and Ethiopia Check enjoy high levels of trust, there remains skepticism regarding their effectiveness, exacerbated by resource constraints and the overwhelming volume of disinformation they confront.

To address these challenges, it is imperative to prioritize media literacy initiatives that empower individuals to critically evaluate information sources and discern truth from falsehood. Additionally, fact-checking institutions should explore innovative approaches to information dissemination, including partnerships with educational institutions to integrate media literacy into curricula. Collaborating with volunteers and other fact-checking organizations can also expand their reach and impact.

5.2. Conclusions

This research investigates how fact-checking institutions like HaqCheck and Ethiopia Check help reduce disinformation in Ethiopia. It focuses on these two organizations and uses a mixed-method approach, combining surveys and interviews. The study aims to understand the extent of disinformation, how much people know about it, and the difficulties these institutions encounter.

The findings paint a concerning picture: disinformation poses a significant threat in Ethiopia, primarily spread via social media and by political actors. While Ethiopians acknowledge the dangers of disinformation, they often struggle to identify it themselves. This highlights a critical need for media literacy initiatives. There's a high level of trust in fact-checking institutions, but a perception lingers that their effectiveness is limited. This underscores the need for fact-checking to go beyond simply debunking disinformation. Equipping citizens

with critical thinking skills is essential to empower them as active participants in identifying falsehoods.

Ethiopian fact-checking institutions grapple with significant challenges. The sheer volume of disinformation makes it difficult to keep pace, and resource constraints limit investment in essential tools and personnel. This often leads to prioritizing certain debunking efforts, leaving unchecked disinformation to potentially erode public trust. Collaboration with volunteers and other fact-checking organizations emerges as a crucial strategy to maximize impact.

Technology offers promising solutions. AI-powered tools can assist in identifying potential disinformation for further investigation, while reverse image search can debunk fake photos and videos. However, the cost, cultural appropriateness, and responsible integration of such technologies pose new challenges. Human expertise remains irreplaceable for critical analysis, and transparency about how technology is used is essential for building public trust.

Effective fact-checking in Ethiopia requires a multifaceted approach that transcends traditional methods. Innovative solutions like AI and collaboration with volunteers and other organizations can significantly improve efficiency. However, these efforts must be complemented by culturally appropriate technological solutions and a continued focus on human fact-checking expertise. Fact-checking institutions must also adapt to the ever-evolving digital landscape and new disinformation tactics. Further research is necessary to gain a deeper understanding of the specific types of disinformation prevalent in Ethiopia and their impact on society.

Despite widespread recognition of the dangers of disinformation, many Ethiopians struggle to discern its authenticity, underscoring the necessity of equipping citizens with critical thinking skills to actively identify falsehoods. While there exists a notable level of trust in fact-checking institutions like HaqCheck and Ethiopia Check, perceptions of their limited effectiveness persist, emphasizing the need for these organizations to transcend mere debunking efforts. However, Ethiopian fact-checking institutions face formidable challenges, including resource constraints and the overwhelming volume of disinformation, necessitating strategic collaborations with volunteers and other organizations to maximize their impact. Technological innovations such as AI offer promising avenues for efficiency improvement, yet their implementation must be culturally appropriate and transparent to maintain public trust. Ultimately, effective fact-checking in Ethiopia demands a multifaceted

approach that integrates traditional methodologies with innovative solutions, adaptive strategies, and ongoing research to address the evolving landscape of disinformation effectively.

Overall, this study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on combating disinformation in developing countries. It highlights the critical role of fact-checking institutions and the need for a multi-pronged approach that combines media literacy initiatives, innovative technologies, strategic partnerships, and public education. By empowering citizens and adapting to the ever-changing digital landscape, fact-checking institutions can play a pivotal role in fostering a more informed and resilient in Ethiopian.

5.3. Recommendations

By empowering citizens to discern credible information, fact-checking institutions can fortify the frontline against disinformation. Moreover, fostering collaboration among fact-checkers, volunteers, and traditional media outlets can amplify the reach and efficacy of fact-checking efforts. While AI tools offer promise in identifying and debunking disinformation, human expertise remains indispensable for nuanced analysis. Diversifying funding sources ensures the sustainability and independence of fact-checking endeavors. Equally important is investment in ongoing training programs to equip fact-checkers with the necessary skills to counter evolving disinformation tactics effectively. Concurrently, continuous research is vital to understanding emerging disinformation techniques and adapting strategies accordingly. Public awareness campaigns and community outreach initiatives further cultivate a culture of information verification, reinforcing the resilience against disinformation. Here are key recommendations:

- ✚ Ethiopian fact-checking institutions should empower citizens with media literacy and critical thinking skills to become discerning information consumers.
- ✚ Fact-checkers should collaborate with volunteers, other fact-checking organizations, and traditional media to expand reach and amplify messages.
- ✚ Fact-checking institutions should utilize AI tools responsibly to identify and debunk disinformation, while prioritizing human expertise for critical analysis.
- ✚ Fact-checking institutions should seek diverse funding sources to ensure long-term operations and development.
- ✚ Fact-checking institutions should invest in training programs to enhance fact-checkers' skills and stay ahead of evolving disinformation tactics.

- ✚ Fact-checking institutions should conduct ongoing research to understand new disinformation techniques and adapt strategies accordingly.
- ✚ Fact-checking institutions should promote public awareness through interactive campaigns and community outreach to foster a culture of information verification.

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APPENDIX A
ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
POSTGRADUATE PROGRAM DIRECTORATE
DEPARTMENT OF MULTIMEDIA JOURNALISM

Dear Respondents,

I am Ashebir Aklaneh, a graduate student Addis Ababa University, School of Graduate Studies. Currently; I am conducting a research project at your organizations in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Master ‘s degree in Multimedia journalism. The study is entitled: *The Contribution of Fact-Checking Institutions to Minimize Disinformation in Ethiopia: a case study fact checking institution in Ethiopia (haq check and Ethiopia check*. The response will add value for the successful completion of this research. The information will be used for academic purpose only. Therefore, please take some minutes of your expensive time to fill this questionnaire. Thank you in advance for your valuable time and cooperation!

Ashebir Akalneh (Email ashebirakalneh27@gmail.com phone number 0910511527)

Section I: Demographic Information:

Please tick (√) the box that corresponds to your response for each demographic category:

1. Gender

Male Female

2. Age

20-25 26-30 31-35 36-40 Above 40

3. Work Experience (in years): <1

1-3 4-6

7-10 More than 10

4. Working Organization: _____

4. Marital Status: Single Married Divorced

Widowed Prefer n^o say

Section II: severity of disinformation

Please indicate the degree of your agreement/disagreement with the following statements associated with your understanding of disinformation and Sources and Impact of Disinformation. Please indicate these with a tick mark and using the scale of 1-5 where; 1 for Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 Disagree (D), 3 Neutral (N), 4 Agree (A) and 5 Strongly Agree (SA).

No	Items	SA	A	N	D
	Understanding				
6.	I am familiar with the concept of disinformation.				
7.	I can easily identify				
8.	I frequently encounter				
9.	I am aware of the potential consequences and impacts of disinformation on				

	<p>individ ualsand Society.</p>				
10.	<p>The severity of disinformati on in Ethiopia is a critical threat to</p>				

	societal harm only					
11.	Disinformation undermines					
12.	Social media negatively					
13.	Political actors and parties are					
14.	Disinformation in Ethiopia fuels social unrest and polarization					
15.	Ethiopian lives outside the					
16.	Disinformation has a considerable impact on public trust					
17.	Disinformation often influences public discourse					

	po licy decisions					
18.	Disinformati on has negativelya economy and business					

	environment in Ethiopia.					
19.	The spread of false information is out of control					
20.	When fact-checking digital media sources, I					
21.	I have witnessed instances where disinformation has led to societal unrest or conflict					
22.	Disinformation has fuelled ethnic tensions and conflicts in Ethiopia					
23.	Disinformation					

24	Disinformati on weakens public understandin g of issues inEthiopia					
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Section IV: Contribution of fact checking institutions

25.	I use the fact-checking services provided by institutions like Hatcheck andEthiopia Check					
26.	Fact-checking institutions provide a reliable source for confirming theaccuracy of information.					
27.	Fact-checking institutions helps us to distinguishing between truth andfalse information					
28.	Fact-checking institutions like Hatcheck and Ethiopia Check play a crucialrole in combating disinformation and promoting accurate information in the Ethiopian media landscape					
29.	fact-checking Collaborations with media are essential to combatdisinformation effectively					

APPENDIX B
ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
POSTGRADUATE PROGRAM DIRECTORATE
DEPARTMENT OF MULTIMEDIA JOURNALISM

Interview Guide for respondents,

1. In your opinion, what role do fact-checking institutions play in minimizing disinformation?
2. How effective do you think these fact-checking institutions have been in minimizing the spread of false or misleading information in Ethiopia?
3. What evidence makes you say that? Can you give any examples?
4. Can you provide examples of instances where fact-checking institutions successfully countered disinformation in Ethiopia?
5. do you think the presence of fact-checking institutions influences public trust in information?
6. What challenges or obstacles do fact checking institutions face in trying to minimize disinformation??
7. What are specific obstacles within the Ethiopian context that may hinder the effectiveness of fact-checking efforts compared to international fact checking institutions?
8. How is your organization using technology for your purpose?
9. Based on the challenges discussed, what strategies do you suggest for enhancing the effectiveness of fact-checking institutions in Ethiopia?
10. How can fact-checking institutions better engage with the public and stakeholders to address disinformation?
11. Are there opportunities for collaboration or partnerships that could strengthen the impact of fact-checking efforts in Ethiopia?

===== Thank you for your co-operation!!=====

አባሪ ለ

አዲስ አበባ ዩኒቨርሲቲ

የድህረ-ምረቃ ፕሮግራም ዳይሬክቶሬት

የመልቲሚዲያ ጋዜጠኝነት ክፍል

ቃለ መጠይቅ ፣

1. በአንተ አስተያየት የተዘገ መረጃን በመቀነስ ረገድ ሃቅን የሚያጠሩ ተቋማት(የእናንት) ምን ሚና አላቸው?
2. የተዘገ መረጃዎች በመቀነስ እረገድ የእናንተ ተቋም ምን ያህል ውጤታማ ነው ብለው ያስባሉ?
3. ይህን እንድትል/እንድትይ ያደረገ/ሽ ምን ማስረጃ አለ? ማሳያው ምንድን ነው?
4. የተዘገ መረጃዎችን በመቀነስ እረገድ ተቋማችሁ ያከናወናቸው ምሳሌዎች ማቅረብ ይችላሉ?
5. የእናንተ ተቋም መኖሩ ህብረተሰቡ የተዘገ መረጃን በቀላሉ እንዲለይ አድረጎታል ብለው ያስባሉ?
6. የተዘገ መረጃዎችን ለመቀነስ በሚሞክሩበት ወቅት የእውነት ተቋማችሁ ምን ተግዳሮቶች ወይም መሰናክሎች ያጋጥሟቸዋል?
7. ከዓለም አቀፍ ሃቅን ከሚያጠሩ ተቋማት ጋር ሲነፃፀሩ የተቋማችሁን ውጤታማነት ሊያደናቅፉ የሚችሉ ምን ምን ጉዳዮች? አሉ ከቋንቋ፤ ከብዝሃነት?
8. የእናንተ ተቋም ቴክኖሎጂ እንዴት ነው የሚጠቀምበት?
9. ከተነሱት ተግዳሮቶች በመነሳት በኢትዮጵያ ያለውን ሐቅን የሚያጠሩ ተቋማትን ውጤታማነት ለማሳደግ ምን ምን ቢደረግ ትላለህ/ሽ?
10. የተዘገ መረጃችን ለመቀነስ ከማን ምን ይጠበቃል?

