AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON GROWTH OF FAKE NEWS AND ITS IMPACT ON MEDIA TRUST AND CREDIBILITY OF AUTHENTIC NEWS

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Abstract

This study aims to evaluate the negative consequences of Fake News on the information system. A rush of information is arriving to the people due to the emergence of several media platforms worldwide. This is the case regardless of whether the specific information being disseminated is genuine or false. It is also important to highlight that the distinctions between News, information, and opinions have become more difficult to discern due to the availability of so much information. The widespread availability of internet-enabled smartphones has been made possible by the decline in the cost of associated technologies and realistic increases in data transfer speeds. The proliferation of social media platforms has resulted in the decline of the gatekeepers in the conventional media system. As a result, it is now much simpler for any individual to become a publisher and a broadcaster. This tendency has also contributed to the ease with which Fake News may be transmitted from one platform to the other. Since it is a problem that has touched practically all people from all walks of life, it is of utmost importance to understand the impacts of disinformation, which will offer up additional chances for future study in the subject. A country in which Fake News has been responsible for the deaths of a large number of people on its own makes it all the more vital and pertinent for media organizations, civil societies, the government, and other stakeholders to conduct this study to combat the threat posed by Fake News and uphold the standards of journalism.

As a result, this study aims to attempt to comprehend how Fake News spreads and how it affects the media organization. To comprehend the connection between media credibility and Fake News, the study will attempt to research the topic. This study aims to determine whether or not the spread of Fake News has impacted people's perceptions of the media. The purpose of the study is to determine, via the collection of primary data, whether or not people's trust in the media has decreased over time. The research will also aim to identify what the people believe to be the most reputable sources of News and information, as well as the criteria that lead them to trust a certain piece of News.

Keywords: Fake News; Media Trust; Credibility of Authentic News; Misinformation, Social Media

Introduction

The public dialogue on trust in the media is often characterized by many unsolved concerns and reservations about the media's role in democratic nations like India. On the topic of the function of the media and its many facets, there is a significant body of published work. On the other hand, not enough studies are done from the audience's point of view. The current study attempts to comprehend the dynamics of trust and news consumers in the context of the contemporary period, which is characterized by an excess of information and News originating from various sources. The study is also an attempt to comprehend the dangers posed by Fake News and why people trust a certain item of Fake News and pass it on to another person. The phenomenon of content being shared, particularly news stories, is an intriguing phenomenon that relates to the kind of content being shared, the psychology of the person sharing it, and that person's behavior and habits towards media consumption. This is important to study because it throws up numerous new lines of inquiry that may be pursued to understand better how people's trust in media, particularly news media, is ebbing. Only when trust is jeopardized can the public focus on the issue. This is also true in the context of the environment and security. A well-known quote attributed to Sophocles states that "Trust withers and distrust flourishes."

Trust is a crucial function that enables various organizations in society to develop and advance through time. Journalism and other forms of media are crucial roles of society that are intended, among other things, to promote the values of impartiality and truthfulness in reporting. In this way, functioning as a watchdog for society, maintaining a check on the government, and holding them responsible for their actions are all things that the watchdog does. This perfectly encapsulates why it is regarded as the fourth pillar of democracy.

The media industry has expanded into several new fields over the last ten years because of the internet's widespread availability. There is no question about the importance of the news industry in providing the general public with accurate and up-to-date information. Despite the vast and exponential expansion of the media in India, there is a shortage of competent journalism and a diversity of themes covered by news organizations, which shows that the media is hardly linked with the lives of ordinary people and the importance concerns them. There are a lot of different things that might be contributing to this increased distrust of one another. The increase of 'information disorder' in the system may be one of the key reasons why people are starting to distrust the system more and more. A word that has lately gained popularity due to the proliferation of Fake News and disinformation, both of which have put the integrity of the information ecosystem at risk while also making it more complicated and disorganized. However, scarcely any study has been conducted to evaluate these dynamics in the context of India. There is now a significant problem of reliability and trust among the Indian media. Suppose nothing is done to address the imbalanced dynamics. In that case, India will lose one of its most valuable assets, which will be progressively undervalued, increasingly mistrusted, and finally lose its essence. If the news industry were to lose its neutrality, authenticity, reliability, and trust, it would lose relevance to thousands of average men for

whom it was the most significant source of information. People will no longer trust the News and see it as a source of cheap pleasure and titillation due to the information disorder, making the information ecosystem very vulnerable. To enhance public trust in the media and maintain the attributes of being accurate, objective, investigative, analytical, and public-oriented, to mention a few, the current study is essential from the perspectives of both news consumers and news producers.

What is Fake News?

In simple words,Fake News can be described as misleading or false information. Its main motive is to damage an entity's or a person's reputation. The spreaders of Fake News look to make money by advertising such information. The term Fake News covers a broad definition which will also include unconscious and unintentional mechanisms by individuals for applying any news unfavorable to that individual perspective.

Fake News includes videos, images, or text shared to spread incorrect information with wrong facts. Though the News may seem authentic initially, it will attract shocking opinions and attention from the readers. These are created by groups or individuals who have their interests, which may be motivated by economic, political, or personal agendas.

The spread of Fake News is not new today and has been since the times of print media. But they have become more often and widely spread because of digital exchange. The visibility of Fake News is high in less time as sharing via social media is easy and less time-consuming.

"Mass media introduced Fake News" in the last centuries, but it rapidly sprung in the 2016 US Presidential Election. After 2016 the term "Fake News" became jargon; therefore, several researchers defined this term, but none is globally accepted. Fake News can be considered poor-quality News intentionally created and propagated by individuals/bots for the tattle or political benefits. Allcott et al. describe that intentionally and verifiable false News is considered fake news and misleads the other readers. People disseminate Fake News on social media for political or financial benefits and destroy a community or individual. In the last three months of the 2016 US Presidential Election, many Fake News was generated and approximately 37 million times shared on Facebook and Twitter infavor of either of the two participants.

Let us see some other Fake News incidents along with this popular incident. When the earthquake occurred in Chile in 2010, rumours increased and spread, increasing the public's panic. To consider a recent example, the Facebook story claimed that CNN does not fall into the top ten watched networks category. An interesting Fake News spread that aliens existed on the moon, according to the Physicist Stephen Hawking. All these were spread to mislead social media users and create panic among them.

Zaryan highlighted the worrying viewpoint that fake and unverified News generated by unauthentic sources attracts more crowds than authentic News. Research done on this subject concludes that Fake News has more effect than real News, and it is spread faster than authentic News. Many researchers used different terminology for Fake News like satire, dis-/mis-information, spam, rumor, and satire. But in this dissertation, these terms are used interchangeably.

People consume and produce a large amount of information on social media websites without authenticating its genuineness. Due to this, users unintentionally get involved in the

proliferation of Fake News over the internet, which moves forward to wrong decisions. To stop this propagation of Fake News, several agencies developed online websites for checking the genuineness of News like "Hoax- posed, PolitiFact, The Washington Post Fact Checker, FactCheck, Snopes, TruthOrFiction, FullFact, Vishvas News, Factly Media & Research"; these are unable to respond to any Fake News immediately.

Due to the massive growth of Fake News, it is observed that in 2022 the amount of Fake News will be more than real News over the internet. This is highly a concern as it has to be curtailed by detection before it causes more havoc among the people reading them.

Motivation behind spreading Fake News

Digital platforms significantly changed the method of user interactions and modified traditional information ecosystems. In recent years, readers have used social media websites and messaging applications to exchange views, but this scenario creates unforeseen problems, i.e., Fake News dissemination. Despite various advantages of the digital platform, it has become a place where people spread Fake News for their financial, health, and political benefits. Some aftereffects of Fake News are as follows:

A. Financial context:

Along with all other divisions, even finance had seen impacts from Fake News. Major impacts are seen on the stock market, where effects were only for some time. The stock market recovered soon from the aftereffects, but it can get serious anytime. For example, when a fake tweet mentioning the injuries of Barack Obama due to the explosion was spread in 2013, around $130 billion in stock value was wiped out. Hackers spread Fake News. Though the stock market recovered sooner after the incident, this shows how manipulative information can affect the trading algorithms by impacting the trading calls taken by different investors.

Along with the stock market, Fake News affects multiple departments' finances. The graph, shown in figure 1, was constructed based on the CHEQ AI Technologies Ltd research. When CHEQ company and the University of Baltimore opted to research the spread of Fake News, it was detected that it is affecting $78 billion in the global economy annually. Their report and economic costs also estimate the stock market value loss, which is up to $39 billion annually. When World Economic Forum (WEF) analyzed the spread of Fake News, it identified Fake News spread as a global risk. According to CHEQ CEO,Fake Newsis found everywhere. He defines this as the sharing and creating false information to mislead the audience. CHEQ has worked with the economic department of Baltimore University to analyze the economic data. The department has helped to analyze and show the financial costs that Fake News has on different sectors of the economy. These effects on the economic sectors can be understood by reading the graph given here.
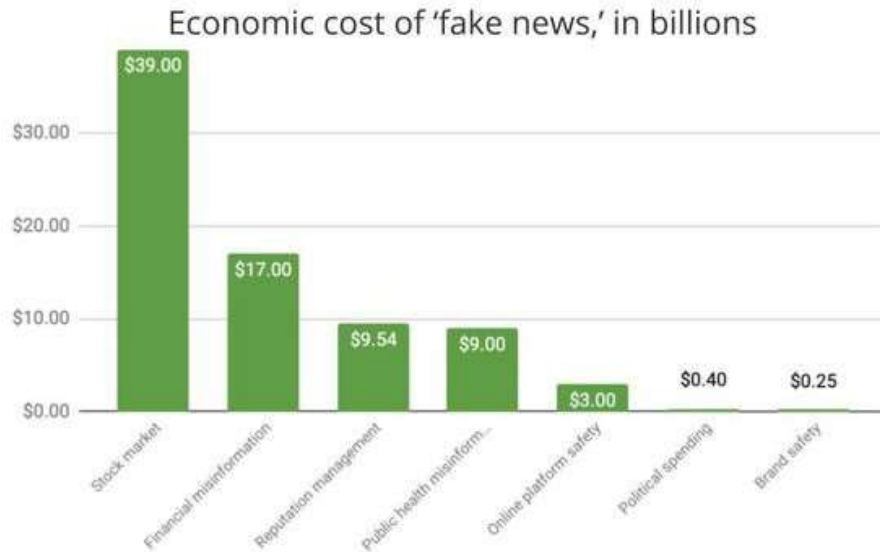
Figure 1: Economic analysis conducted by the University of Baltimore

B. Medical context:

A huge amount of fake information related to medicine on digital platforms leads to irreparable damage. For instance, a patient who suffered from cancer disease taken the treatment as per an online ad and finally died. Furthermore, many people spread unauthentic News related to COVID-19, which created panic in society. Several fact-checking agencies analyzed that over 3500 fake claims related to COVID-19 were scattered over the internet in less than two months. This leads to the death of at least 800 people worldwide in the starting three months of 2020.
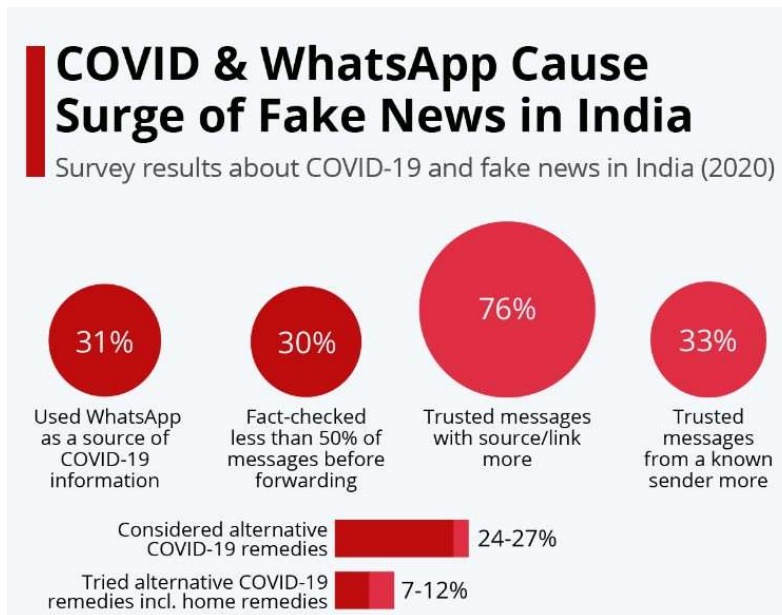

Figure 2: COVID & WhatsApp Cause Surge of Fake News in India

Figure 2 is one example of the Fake News impact during COVID-19. The spread of different Fake News has created panic in individuals during the pandemic. When the COVID-19 new

wave hit, a flood of Fake News occurred in India. Doctors from Rochester, New York, and India have conducted a scientific study and published the peer-reviewed journal. This journal of Medical Internet Research has given insights explaining India's internet user behavior during the pandemic. This helped to understand the spread of misinformation through WhatsApp better. The survey estimated that more than 30% of people used WhatsApp regularly in India to get information regarding COVID. And out of these, only a few have rechecked the facts before spreading them further. The report also stated that minority users spread bulk messages. Even the age groups were estimated during the survey. The major age group was those over 65, who do not check information or check their facts before spreading them. This was the opposite when the age group of 25 was compared with. But according to most Indians, the message can be trusted when a source or link is attached. But only one-third of people trusted the messages from any known sender.

C. Political context:

There are several cases where people spread Fake News over social media web- sites to manipulate opinionsin favor of participants in the election. The 2016 US Presidential Election is one of the famous examples of the dissemination of Fake News over Twitter and Facebook during the election. This event is also known as the "misinformation war." Ribeiro et al. discussed the case study where they explained the use of Fake News in advertising. Another impact of Fake News on the election was observed in the 2018 Brazilian elections, in which many manipulated images were spread using WhatsApp. According to the analysis, it was found that 88% of fake images were shared in the last month of the Brazilian elections. Fakesters also uses WhatsApp to spread Fake News, and due to this, several social disturbance and lynching cases have occurred in India.

Review of Literature

The term "Fake News" is inadequate to describe the complex issue of disinformation, according to HLEG (2018), which also includes practices that go far beyond anything that even remotely resembles "Fake News," such as automated accounts used for "organized troll, networks of fake followers, fabricated or manipulated videos, targeted advertising, and content that is not actually or completely "Fake News." The term "disinformation" is also used often in the study to describe any false, inaccurate, or misleading information that is created, spread, and promoted to harm the public or generate profit intentionally.

Gordon Hull, Heather Richter Lipford, and Celine Latulipe (2021) conducted research titled "Contextual Gaps: Privacy Problems on Facebook" to examine the idea of contextual integrity. Contextual integrity has been described as a framework for comprehending the privacy implications of current social media developments. Weblogs, a web phenomenon that has been around for some time but is still relatively new, were included in the study because of how quickly people are starting to share their ideas online in them. The research shows that social media users have a propensity to rationally develop their identities, or to become who they are and represent who they are by emphasizing the people they interact with. The users run the danger of being the targets of stalking, being re-identified in other circumstances, and even having their identities stolen. Even the problems that are caused by third-party programs are a cause for worry since they are almost always hidden. It is necessary to improve both the

program and the user interface design, and an increasing number of users will also need education in this area.

During the US election campaigns, websites like those mentioned in the Townsend, T. (2016) article "Meet the Romanian Trump Fan behind a Big Fake News Site"published spectacular Fake News to generate revenue from advertising. The website endingthefed.com, another recent instance of a Fake News source website, is owned by a man who is just 24 years old. This guy runs the website that produced four of the ten most shared Fake News stories about the US election on Facebook.

The term "Fake News" has become a buzzword, especially in the wake of the 2016 presidential elections in the United States, a democratic process that was marked by a lot of misinformation and false News, as discussed by Albright (2016) in his paper titled "The #Election 2016 Micro-Propaganda Machine." During the 2016 US presidential elections, according to Albright, the phrase "Fake News" became a buzzword.

In his book "Broadcast Hysteria: Orson Welles's Battle of the Words and the Era of Fake News," A.B. Schwartz (2021) notes that during the broadcast of this radio play episode, Welles detailed an extraterrestrial invasion that many listeners took to be real. In his book "Broadcast Hysteria: Orson Welles's Battle of the Words and the Age of Fake," Schwartz addresses this issue. After hearing the story, several people fled into the streets in fear, expecting it to be true. It is also important to note that what followed was a string of news stories that described a destructive extraterrestrial invasion that was taking place throughout the United States and the rest of the planet.

"Fake News" is defined as "a type of propaganda or yellow and misleading journalism that consists of deliberate misinformation, spread via traditional media outlets (their print or online editions) or online social media," according to Leonhardt, D., and Thompson, S., A.'s (2017) article "Trump's Lies," which was published in the "New York Times." This definition can be found in the authors' article "Trump's Lies."

Allcott, H., and Gentzkow, M. (2022) addressed the idea that "Fake News" is not a recent creation in their article titled "Social Media and Fake News in the 2016 Election."The phrase "Fake News" seems to be viral articles based on false stories created to look like news reports in modern discourse, particularly in media coverage. Researchers classify published articles with the intention of misleading readers as Fake News because they include false information that can be independently confirmed. In the opinion of researchers, the two main reasons for the spread of Fake News have been identified. The first advantage is monetary: news articles and posts that go viral on social media may earn much advertising revenue when users click on the source website.

As a consequence of this discovery, it should not be surprising to learn that the bulk of the producers whose identities have been revealed seem to have prioritized financial gain. The second reason is ideological, as shown by their study on the spread of Fake News during the US presidential elections. In actuality, certain publications that disseminate Fake News do so to advance particular political ideologies and disseminate their propaganda by using false facts and data in their articles. As they demonstrate in their research on the spread of Fake News during the US presidential elections, it is not new and has a long history beforeit.

International media research has long emphasized the questions of contingency and precariousness of what is widely accepted as the "truth" in cultural studies and sociological strands. In his research on "Fake News, post-truth, and media-political transition," Corner, J. (2017) addressed these questions. Corner spoke on how questions about the contingency and precariousness of what is widely accepted as the "truth" have been raised in this research.

In their article titled "Spreadable Spectacle in Digital Culture: Civic Expression, Fake News, and the Role of Media Literacies in Post-Fact Society,"Mihailidis, P., and Viotty, S. (2017) describe Fake News as hoax-based stories that propagate gossip, rumors, and misinformation. They note that there has been much debate on how journalists and news organizations deliver the facts in the era of digital technologies.

In their article "Defining 'Fake News': A typology of academic definitions," published in Digital Journalism, Tandoc, E., Lim, Z., and Ling, R. (2018) provide an overview of the many types of Fake News. The study categorizes Fake News into six categories: propaganda, news satire, parody, fabrication, and manipulation.

"Community intelligence and social media services: a rumor theoretic study of tweets during social crises" is the title of the authors' research. Onok Oh, Raghavrao, and Agrawal Manish researched social media platforms and community intelligence. In a social crisis, this study focuses on how social media may be used to spread vital information andrumors. The study has analyzedseveral social crises and concerns aboutthe information. Anxiety, ambiguity in the information, personal participation, and social links have been analyzed as the primary contributors to the problem. Over twenty thousand tweets and user ids associated with them have been acquired in relation to the Mumbai assault. More than 37,000 tweets from a specified time period were gathered for analysis in the Toyota case, but in the Starbucks café shooting investigation, data was gathered in a manner that was almost identical to real-time. The dichotomous character of the rumor variable required the use of logistic regression to analyze the data. According to the results, the ambiguity of the content does not contribute to the spread of rumors; nevertheless, the ambiguity of the source does contribute to the spread of rumorsvitally. With relation to the source, it was discovered that the impact of anxiety was significantly less significant than that of ambiguity.

In their article titled "Europe Combats a New Foe of Political Stability: Fake News," which was published in the New York Times in 2017, Scott, M., and Eddy, M. discussed how mainstream political outlets have reported extensively about Fake News, and how even political institutions around the world have discussed ways to curb the phenomenon.

Fake News is defined as falsified news stories generated either for profit or for political goals by Wardle, C. (2017) in his article titled "Fake News. It's Complex."

In his study published in 2016, Sydell, L., under the heading "We Discovered a Fake-News Maker in the Exurbs of a Major City. This is What We Picked Up From It ", it was revealed that a firm based in the United States known as Disinfomedia runs multiple Fake News websites, some of which are NationalReport.net, USAToday.co, and WashingtonPost.com. The proprietor of this organization claims to employ between the age of 20 and 25 years.

Objective of the Study

1. This study's primary goal is to understand better the phenomenon of Fake News and how it affects the media's credibility.

2. To establish a connection between the dissemination of Fake News and the use of social media platforms.

3. To evaluate the dynamic ecology of Fake News that has called the credibility of real News into doubt

4. To investigate how this phenomenon of Fake News has influenced people and given them a reason to distrust the credibility of the information sources that are now accessible.

Research Methodology

The researcher establishes several criteria, and members of a population are selected randomly. Each and every one of the sample members has an equal probability of becoming a member of the group.

The researcher selects the members of a nonprobability sampling randomly. This approach is not an established procedure in any sense. A sample should not have any bias toward any one of its characteristics. The population as a whole should be represented by it. Depending on the purpose of the survey and the resources at hand, the best design for mass media research may be chosen.

There are two distinct ways to collect data via sampling: probability sampling and non-probability sampling. A sample design is a strategy that specifies how a researcher would gather a specific quantity of information from a certain population. The population being studied is referred to as the "population under study." Also, it refers to a procedure that the researcher would use to get the data. A sample may also be considered a subset or subsection of a larger group. This kind of sample is often made up of people who share the features of a wider population.

The use of a sampling design is done in the questionnaire technique to assess the population's characteristics with statistical accuracy. It is an attempt to answer questions like how people feel about a specific manner, how much they agree or disagree with a thought, how often they engage in a certain activity, and so on. These kinds of questions provide straightforward comparisons. In addition to this, it offers a sample that may be generalized to the whole population.

The sampling procedure is the last and most crucial factor to consider while designing a sample. Nowadays, a mixed technique is used, which consists of stratified sampling followed by random sampling of the various strata.

Data Analysis & Interpretation

A. Distribution of the Age of the Participants

Age Group	Response from Respondents	Percentage
18-25	83	43.5%
26-35	71	35.5%
36-45	22	11%
46-55	19	9.5%
55 or above	5	2.5%

Total	200	100%

Interpretation:

It is clear from the data shown in the table that the majority of respondents, i.e., 43.5% belong to the age group between 18-25 years, followed by the 26-35 years group, which are 35.5%, 36-45 years age group which is 11%, 46-55 years age group which is 9.5% are above 55 years are just 2.5%.

B. Distribution of Gender among the Participants

Gender	Response of Respondents	Percentage
Male	105	52.5%
Female	94	47%
Transgender	1	0.5%
Total	100	100%

From this detailed analysis made for this study, it is seen that male slightly dominates with 52.5% than female respondents, which are 47%. 1 respondent is transgender.

C. Marital Statu sof the Respondents

MaritalStatus	Frequency	Percentage
Married	119	59.5%
Unmarried	75	37.5%
Other	6	3%
Total	200	100.0%

Source:SPSSOutput.

Above tabledepicts the descriptive statistics table providing information about the maritalstatus of respondents. The total number of respondents is 200, out of which 59.5%are married and 37.5%areunmarried.Other3%oftotalrespondentsare either divorcedor deserted.

D. Education Levels of the Respondents

Education	Frequency	Percentage
BelowMetric	1	0.5
Metric	2	1.0
12th	16	8.0
Graduation	73	36.5
Post-Graduation	91	41.5
PhD	17	8.5
Total	200	100.0%

Source:SPSSOutput.

The survey resultthrows light on the education level of respondents. It can be observed that the majority of 91respondents are Post Graduates, and 73 respondents are Graduates. While 17 respondentscompleted theirPh.D.,16, 2 and 1 respondents studied up to the secondarylevel, metric and below metric.

E. Profession of the Respondents

Profession	Frequency	Percentage
GovernmentEmployee	23	11.5%
SelfEmployed	53	26.5%
Businessman	48	24%
Professional	31	15.5%
Anyother	45	22.5%
Total	200	100.0%

Source:SPSSOutput.

Itisevidentfromsurvey resultthat11.5%ofrespondentsaregovernmentemployeesand26.5% of respondents are self-employed. However, 24% of respondents are businessmen, and 15.5%areprofessionals.The remaining22.5%ofrespondentsare involved in some other profession.

F. IncomeLevels of the Respondents

Income	Frequency	Percentage
Below1Lakh	3	1.5%
1Lakh-1.5 Lakhs	5	2.5%
1.5Lakhs -2.5 Lakhs	25	12.5%
2.5Lakhs -5 Lakhs	81	40.5%
5Lakhs -10 Lakhs	51	25.5%
Morethan10Lakhs	35	17.5%
Total	138	100.0%

Source:SPSSOutput.

The survey result exhibits the frequency distribution table giving information about the income ofrespondents. The table shows that 40.5% of respondents have INR 2.5 to 5lakhs yearly income. Whereas the yearly income of 25.5% of respondents is INR 5 lakhs to 10lakhs, and 12.5% of respondents' income is INR 1.5 to 2.5 lakhs per year. While the income of17.5% of respondents is more than INR 10 lakhs per year, and 2.5% of respondents have INR 1 to 1.5 lakhs per year income. Only 1.5% of respondents' income is below INR one lakh annually.

G. Participant's Primary Source to get updated about News

Participant'sPrimarySource to get updated about News	Response from Respondents	Percentage
Social Media Platforms	95	47.5%
Online News Portal	53	26.5%
Newspapers & Magazines	21	10.5%
TV & Radio	27	13.5%
Other Platforms	4	2%
Total	200	100%

Interpretation

It is clear from the data shown in the table that the majority, 47.5% of respondents, are using Social Media Platforms to get updated about News, followed by 26.5% who use Online News Portal, 13.5% who use TV & Radio, 10.5% use Newspapers & Magazines, and remaining 2% who use other platform to get updated with News.

H. Time spent on news consumption by the participants

Time spent on news consumption by the participants	Responsefrom Respondents	Percentage
Less than 1 hour	93	46.5%
1-2hours	41	20.5%
2-3 hours	37	18.5%
3-5 hours	19	9.5%
More than 5 times	9	4.5%
Never	1	0.5%
Total	200	100%

Interpretation:

It is clear from the data shown in the table that the majority, 46.5% of respondents, spend less than 1 hours on watching News from different sources, while 20.5% of respondents spent 1-2 hours, 18.5% spent 2-3 hours, 4.5% spent more than 5 hours. Only 1 respondent (0.5%) never watch any news source.

I. Most TrustworthySource to get updated about News

Most TrustworthySource to get updated about News	Response from Respondents	Percentage
Social Media Platforms	13	6.5%
Online News Portal	57	28.5%

Newspapers & Magazines	96	48%
TV & Radio	29	14.5%
Other Platforms	5	2.5%
Total	200	100%

Interpretation

It is clear from the data shown in the table that the majority, 48 % of respondents, are foundNewspapers & Magazines as most trustworthy source to get updated about News, followed by 28.5% who trust Online News Portal, 14.5% who trust TV & Radio, 6.5% trust onSocial Media Platforms, and remaining 2.5% who trust other platform to get updated about News.

J. Participant's found Medium that is most likely to spread Fake News

Medium that is most likely to spread Fake News	Response from Respondents	Percentage
Social Media Platforms	134	67%
Online News Portal	25	12.5%
Newspapers & Magazines	9	4.5%
TV & Radio	29	14.5%
Other Platforms	3	1.5%
Total	200	100%

Interpretation

It is clear from the data shown in the table that the majority, 67% of respondents, found that Social Media Platforms are the main source to spread the Fake News, followed by 14.5% who think Fake News spread through TV & Radio, 12.5% who think itsOnline News Portal, 4.5% thinks Newspapers & Magazines are the major sources of spreading the Fake News. The remaining 1.5% of respondents think a few other platforms are the main source of spreading the Fake News.

K. Mediums that crosscheck the fact before Publishing the News

TrustworthyMediums that crosscheck the fact before Publishing the News	Response from Respondents	Percentage
Social Media Platforms	11	5.5%
Online News Portal	47	23.5%
Newspapers & Magazines	96	48%
TV & Radio	43	21.5%
Other Platforms	3	1.5%
Total	200	100%

Interpretation

It is clear from the data shown in the table that the majority, 48 % of respondents, are found Newspapers & Magazines as most trustworthy source that crosscheck the fact before publishing the News, followed by 23.5% who trust Online News Portal, 21.5% who trust TV & Radio, 5.5% trust on Social Media Platforms, and remaining 1.5% who trust other platformsas a most trustworthy source that crosschecks the fact before publishing the News.

L. Do you think the problem of Fake news was always there in our society

The problem of Fake News was always there in our society	Response from Respondents	Cumulative Number of Respondents
StronglyDisagree	6	6
Disagree	10	16
Neutral	62	78
Agree	34	112
Strongly Agree	88	200
Total	200	200
Middle Point	200/2=100	Category of Middle Point - Agree
Difference	100-78=	22
Calculated Fraction	22/34=	0.64
Median	3.5+0.64	4.14

Interpretation:

The majority of people who took part in the survey are of the opinion that there has always been a presence of Fake News in society. The idea that our culture has always been riddled with instances of Fake News is supported by the opinions of 61% of people who either "agree" or "strongly agree" with the statement. This suggests that they do not consider Fake News a recent phenomenon and that it has never been so widespread or difficult to spot.

The Likert scale was used to evaluate the responses to these questions. While responding to Likert questions, "respondents specify their level of agreement or disagreement on a symmetric agree-disagree scale for a series of statements. Thus, the range captures the intensity of their feelings for a given item. The scale has 5 rating points. The options are Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree".

The table above shows that the median point of this analysis comes at 4.14, which has fallen into the agreed category. Therefore, it can be deduced that the trend among participants was mostly positive toward general agreement.

M. Your trust in media declined over the past few years?

Your trust in media has declined over the past few years	Response from Respondents	Cumulative Number of Respondents
StronglyDisagree	2	2
Disagree	6	8
Neutral	42	50
Agree	90	140
Strongly Agree	60	200
Total	200	200
Middle Point	200/2=100	Category of Middle Point – Agree
Difference	100-90=	10
Calculated Fraction	10/90=	0.11
Median	3.5+0.11	3.61

Interpretation:

About 75% of individuals who participated in the survey claimed that their level of trust in the media has significantly decreased over the last few years due to the myriad of reasons they cited in response to other questions. As a direct consequence, Fake News is often cited as one of the primary reasons for the decline in trust that has occurred in recent years. Although the rest of the 4% did not experience a decline in trust, 21% of the respondents were indifferent.

The table above shows that the median point of this analysis comes at 3.61, which has fallen into the agreed category. Therefore, it can be deduced that the trend among participants was mostly positive toward general agreement.

N. Fake News has made you more doubtful/careful about the News that you receive

Fake News has made you more doubtful/careful about the News that you receive	Response from Respondents	Cumulative Number of Respondents
StronglyDisagree	4	4
Disagree	12	16
Neutral	42	58
Agree	62	120
Strongly Agree	80	200
Total	200	200
Middle Point	200/2=100	Category of Middle Point - Agree
Difference	100-58=	42
Calculated Fraction	42/62=	0.67
Median	3.5+0.67	4.17

Interpretation:

71% of the overall respondents thought that their level of skepticism about reputable sources of information had increased due to the prevalence of Fake News. 8% of the respondents were adamantly against it. This is a strong indication of Fake News's influence on people's ability to trust sources, particularly reliable sources of News and information. A total of 21% of respondents did not have an opinion on the influence of Fake News or trusting news sources.

The table above shows that the median point of this analysis comes at 4.17, which has fallen into the agreed category. Therefore, it can be deduced that the trend among participants was mostly positive toward general agreement.

O. Social media platforms have more chances of spreading Fake News

Social media platforms have more chances of spreading Fake News	Response from Respondents	Cumulative Number of Respondents
StronglyDisagree	2	2
Disagree	8	10
Neutral	38	48
Agree	88	136
Strongly Agree	64	200
Total	200	200
Middle Point	200/2=100	Category of Middle Point - Agree
Difference	100-48=	52
Calculated Fraction	52/88=	0.59
Median	3.5+0.59	4.09

Interpretation:

This table illustrates that 76% of respondents agreed with the statement that social media platforms facilitate the proliferation of Fake News. That clearly indicates how people feel about social media platforms and how they have contributed to the problem of giving gasoline to the already rising issue of Fake News. Because the data was obtained during COVID-19, manyFake News stories about COVID-19 rapidly circulated throughout social media and among the general public.

The data shown in the table that can be seen above reveals that the median point of this study is 4.09, which shows it is within the category of agree.

Conclusion

In this day and age, information is the single most valuable resource. We are now living in times where society is fueled by information and News, which, in an ideal world, enables the general people to make well-considered decisions and fosters democracy. Suppose for a

moment that the available information is replaced with false information; this would have major repercussions, which will sooner or later render our democracy incapable of functioning. An infodemic is currently raging worldwide, and there is no question about the veracity of this statement. This infodemic has resulted in the deaths of people, the spread of health misinformation during the corona, the overthrow of governments, the restriction of press freedom as a result of Fake News, media trials based on false information that was shared, and the list goes on and on. This is a rising field of inquiry, but relatively few media academics have pondered the influence that Fake News and information disorder have had on the fundamentals and ideals of journalism.

It is unfortunate but true that the fundamentals of professional journalism have been compromised in these modern times due to the widespread use of social media. Individuals and organizations may be found all across the globe, including India, that fabricate false narratives that have absolutely nothing to do with the truth. False narratives threaten democracy. They are making it more difficult for people to exercise their right to choose freely. Social media platforms are a significant factor in the assistance provided to the actors in false narratives, also known as misinformation and disinformation. Regrettably, the number of these false narratives is expanding simply because they are popular and inaccurate. There are no gatekeepers, there is no fact-checking, there are no editors, and there are no publishers in today's world. This makes it much simpler to distribute misinformation. Everyone can now be their editor, publisher, writer, and photographer because of the widespread availability of smartphones.

Strangely, mostpeople who participated in the poll claimed that social media information platforms are their primary source of News and information. Still, at the same time, they considered that these platforms are the least reliable source of News and information. In this context, it is fascinating to understand the cognitive behavior of human people and the ways in which the conscious and the unconscious parts of the brain compete with one another. People continue to use social media for information even though it is regarded as the least reputable source of News. Social media somehow validates their preconceived notions, belief system, and ideology. These so-called "free" platforms come with several hidden fees and are not truly cost-free.

One of the most significant consequences we now bear is eroding people's trust in the media. According to the research, the majority of people admit that their trust in the media has significantly decreased due to a variety of reasons; however, one of the most important factors is the abundance of Fake News on social media platforms, which can take the form of parody, propaganda, misleading content, imposter, fabricated content, false context, and false content. This has provided an open ground for these to flourish.

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