

# Exploring Misinformation in the Context of Online Page Cloning: An Analysis of Long-term Societal Impact and Counter-strategies in Nigeria

**Umar Farouk Jibril**

Department of Mass Communication, Bayero University, Kano (BUK),  
PMB 3011, Gwarzo Road, Kano State, Nigeria  
Phone: +2348037874622, E-mail: [ufjibril.mac.@buk.edu.ng](mailto:ufjibril.mac.@buk.edu.ng)

**Abubakar Tijjani Ibrahim**

Department of Mass Communication, Kano State Polytechnic (\*Corresponding author 1)  
PMB 3401, Kano, Nigeria  
Phone: +2348030588712, E-mail: [sadiqtijjani@kanopoly.edu.ng](mailto:sadiqtijjani@kanopoly.edu.ng)

**Adamkolo Mohammed Ibrahim**

Department of Mass Communication, University of Maiduguri (\*Corresponding author 2),  
PMB 1069 Maiduguri, Borno State, Nigeria  
Phone: +2348035166525, E-mail: [adamkolo@unimaid.edu.ng](mailto:adamkolo@unimaid.edu.ng)

## Abstract

*The rise of fake news and cloned pages has introduced significant challenges to Nigeria's media landscape, affecting public trust, the integrity of information, and societal cohesion. This study provides a critical analysis of the consequences, solutions, and theoretical perspectives surrounding these issues. Drawing from an extensive review of contemporary literature and data from prominent institutions, including the Centre for Democracy and Development and the International Centre for Investigative Reporting, the study underscores the broad reach and influence of fake news and cloned pages. Findings indicate that a substantial segment of the Nigerian population encounters and often responds to misleading information, compromising media credibility and public trust. The study advocates for strategic interventions, such as improved media literacy, robust fact-checking frameworks, and collaborative regulatory efforts, to address these challenges. By integrating theoretical insights on misinformation and media influence, the research offers practical recommendations to enhance information integrity and cultivate a more informed public.*

**Keywords:** Misinformation, Fake News, Content Cloning, Media and Information Literacy, Public Trust

## Introduction

The expansion of digital media has transformed the communication landscape, granting unprecedented access to information but also giving rise to new challenges. One of the most pressing issues today is the dissemination of misinformation and the manipulation of public opinion through fake news and cloned pages. As digital platforms increasingly serve as the primary news sources, addressing these issues is essential to maintain information integrity and foster an informed society. Fake news is fabricated or misleading content presented as factual news which poses a significant threat to public discourse and trust in the media. The ease with which misinformation can spread through social media and other digital channels has heightened the need for effective countermeasures. The Centre for Democracy and Development (2020) reports that the prevalence of fake news and cloned pages in Nigeria has led to widespread confusion, with 75% of Nigerians acknowledging encounters with such content online (Centre for Democracy and Development, 2020). Alarmingly, 68% of the population believes and acts on this false information, signalling a critical gap in media literacy and the capacity for fact-checking (International Centre for Investigative Reporting, 2020).

These developments have far-reaching consequences. Misinformation can distort public perception, influence election results, and exacerbate social divisions. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the spread of false information concerning the virus and its prevention measures compromised public health initiatives and created uncertainty regarding preventive practices (Chalkiadakis et al., 2021). In addition, cloned pages which are the illegitimate replicas of reputable news outlets, further complicate the landscape, making it increasingly difficult for audiences to identify credible sources (Statista, 2021b).

This research aims to critically examine the impact of fake news and cloned pages in Nigeria, focusing on their effects, outcomes, and associated challenges. By exploring the extent, engagement, and influence of these phenomena, alongside public responses and the obstacles in mitigating them, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive overview of the current state of misinformation and its societal impact in Nigeria. Additionally, the research seeks to identify and evaluate theoretical frameworks that may shed light on these issues. The application of theories such as Framing Theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory is intended to clarify how fake news is constructed, consumed, and influences public perceptions and behaviours. This research is underscored by the urgency to develop effective strategies for combating misinformation and enhancing media literacy. With various stakeholders, including media professionals, educators, policymakers, and the public invested in tackling these issues, this study lays the groundwork for informed interventions and policy development.

The article is organised to offer an in-depth exploration of the issues surrounding fake news and cloned pages in Nigeria. The introduction establishes the context by outlining the pervasive nature of misinformation and its effects on Nigeria's media and society. It also underscores the importance of tackling fake news and cloned pages, providing a foundation for the ensuing analysis. Following the introduction, the literature review examines existing research on the repercussions of fake news and cloned pages, synthesising key findings and identifying gaps that merit further investigation. The theoretical framework section offers a

detailed analysis of relevant theories related to misinformation, media influence, and information dissemination, forming the analytical basis for interpreting the study's findings.

Subsequently, the article presents a critical discussion of the implications of the review. This segment assesses the impact of fake news and cloned pages on media credibility, public trust, and social cohesion, while also exploring the practical and theoretical implications of these phenomena. In addressing gaps identified in the literature, the article proposes recommendations for further research and practical solutions. Suggested strategies include bolstering media literacy, improving fact-checking mechanisms, and fostering collaborative approaches among stakeholders to combat misinformation. Finally, the conclusion summarises the study's key insights, reaffirms the importance of addressing fake news and cloned pages, and offers actionable recommendations for policymakers, media professionals, and researchers. This section highlights the article's contributions to the field and calls for sustained efforts to counteract the impact of misinformation in Nigeria

### **Understanding Knowledge and Cloned Pages in Theoretical Perspectives**

A solid theoretical framework is vital to examine the impact and implications of fake news and cloned pages effectively. Various theories lend substantial insight into the proliferation of fake news and its influence on media, public perception, and societal trust. Particularly relevant among these are the Uses and Gratifications Theory, Framing Theory, and Social Cognitive Theory.

The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) proposes that media consumers actively select content that meets their personal needs and interests (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973). In the case of fake news, UGT explains the allure of sensational or misleading information, as individuals often engage with content that resonates with their existing beliefs or emotional needs. For example, when fake news supports an individual's political stance or validates their concerns, they are more likely to consume and share it. This theory underscores the proactive role of audiences in media consumption, offering insight into why fake news and cloned pages may captivate users (Dunwoody & Peters, 2020).

Framing Theory provides a critical perspective by examining how media organisations shape news presentations to influence public perceptions through particular frames or narratives (Goffman, 1974). Fake news and cloned pages frequently employ specific framing techniques to manipulate information and sway opinions. For instance, by framing issues sensationally or divisively, they can significantly impact how audiences interpret and react to the content. This theory sheds light on the strategies employed to construct and spread misleading information, highlighting the power of framing in shaping audience beliefs and behaviours (Entman, 1993).

Social Cognitive Theory, developed by Albert Bandura, emphasises the importance of observational learning and social influence in shaping behaviour (Bandura, 1986). According to this theory, individuals tend to imitate behaviours they observe, especially when these come from figures they perceive as influential or credible. This is particularly relevant to the spread of fake news and cloned pages within social networks. When individuals witness respected figures or peers sharing fake news, they are more inclined to believe and circulate it themselves. Social Cognitive Theory, therefore, offers valuable insights into the social

dynamics that contribute to the rapid dissemination of misinformation, as well as the role of social networks in influencing news consumption (Moorhead et al., 2013).

Together, these theoretical approaches form a comprehensive framework for analysing the phenomenon of fake news and cloned pages. Uses and Gratifications Theory explains the audience's motivation for engaging with and sharing fake news, Framing Theory elucidates the manipulative techniques used in presenting misinformation, and Social Cognitive Theory reveals the social dynamics that facilitate the spread of false information. By integrating these theories, the review can offer a thorough analysis of the factors that drive the proliferation of fake news and its broader impact on media and society.

### **Conceptualising Knowledge of Cloned Online Newspaper Pages**

Cloned online newspaper pages are digital platforms crafted to mimic the appearance and content of legitimate news sources, though often with the intent of disseminating misinformation, propaganda, or even harmful software (Chalkiadakis et al., 2021). Such platforms pose a serious threat to the credibility, reliability, and overall quality of digital communication, with the potential to mislead or cause harm to audiences. It is, therefore, crucial to examine the concept of knowledge surrounding cloned online newspaper pages, which involves the ability to critically identify, evaluate, and responsibly engage with information sourced from these platforms. This section will explore the facets, influencing factors, and development of this knowledge, while also addressing the challenges and possibilities it holds for media professionals, the public, and society at large.

#### *Components of Knowledge*

The knowledge associated with cloned online newspaper pages can be understood through three primary dimensions: cognitive, affective, and behavioural. These dimensions align with the key components of knowledge, and they are knowing, feeling, and doing (Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, Hill, & Krathwohl, 1956; Jonassen, 2000). The cognitive dimension encompasses the mental processes involved in identifying, analysing, and synthesising information from such platforms, including attention, memory, comprehension, reasoning, and judgment. The affective dimension, conversely, pertains to the emotional and motivational factors, such as curiosity, interest, trust, and confidence, that shape how individuals react to and engage with information. Finally, the behavioural dimension captures the actions taken by individuals, such as searching, verifying, and commenting on information, thereby reflecting the practical application of knowledge in everyday interactions with cloned pages (Bloom et al., 1956; Lazer et al., 2018).

#### *Predictors of Knowledge*

Several elements influence the development of knowledge about cloned online newspaper pages, mainly concerning information characteristics, communication contexts, and digital technology's impact. These factors relate to the broader framework of information literacy as detailed by Bruce (1997) and Shu et al. (2017). Key characteristics, such as the source, authorship, format, and content of cloned pages, influence how individuals interpret and evaluate information. Additionally, the contexts in which information is created and consumed, considering the purpose of communication, target audience, and medium, play a critical role in determining the relevance and credibility of such information. Moreover, the

technological platforms that provide access to these pages, including their design, functionality, and user interface, significantly affect how easily individuals can navigate and engage with cloned content (Jonassen, 2000; Mezirow, 1997).

#### *Enhancement of Knowledge*

Developing knowledge of cloned online newspaper pages can be achieved through education, awareness-raising, and audience empowerment. These approaches correspond to three levels of learning: cognitive, metacognitive, and transformative. Education equips individuals with the skills and knowledge required to critically engage with information, promoting deeper cognitive development in areas such as memory, reasoning, and judgment. Raising awareness enhances audience recognition of the essential characteristics and contexts associated with cloned pages, thus fostering metacognitive abilities (Jonassen, 2000; Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). Empowerment, which emphasises active participation in the production and dissemination of information, supports transformative learning by encouraging individuals not only to consume but also to contribute meaningfully to the information landscape through activities such as creating, sharing, and adapting content (Mezirow, 1997).

#### *Constraints and Opportunities of Improving Knowledge Regarding Cloned Pages*

Understanding cloned online newspaper pages presents several challenges due to the complexity, uncertainty, and variability of information presented by these platforms. Complexity stems from the vast and often conflicting information available on cloned pages, requiring considerable cognitive effort to discern fact from falsehood (Lazer et al., 2018). Uncertainty arises from the inconsistent and frequently unreliable nature of the information shared, necessitating heightened emotional resilience and motivation to manage. Variability, meanwhile, reflects the constantly changing landscape of online news, which makes it challenging for users to maintain consistent practices when interacting with this dynamic content (Chalkiadakis et al., 2021).

Despite these challenges, knowledge of cloned online newspaper pages offers meaningful opportunities for enhancing, innovating, and transforming information ecosystems. Improvement involves increasing information quality and credibility as individuals become more skilled at assessing sources and distinguishing between authentic and cloned content (Chalkiadakis et al., 2021; Jonassen, 2000). Innovation occurs as audiences develop new methods for analysing and synthesising information, thereby enriching the diversity of the informational landscape. Transformation takes place when individuals apply their knowledge to foster more purposeful and impactful engagements with digital media, enhancing the overall relevance and significance of the information they encounter (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017).

#### **Conceptualising Awareness of Cloned Online Newspaper Pages**

Cloned online newspaper pages pose an increasing threat to the integrity and credibility of information dissemination. These pages are designed to replicate the appearance and content of legitimate, trusted news sources, often with the aim of spreading misinformation, propaganda, or even malicious software (Chalkiadakis et al., 2021). In a digital environment where distinguishing authentic information from counterfeit content is ever more challenging, understanding awareness regarding these cloned platforms is essential. In this context,

awareness involves not only recognising the existence of cloned pages but also comprehending the broader implications for communication, trust, and societal welfare. This section will explore the dimensions, determinants, and development of awareness of cloned online newspaper pages, along with the challenges and opportunities they present.

### *Components of Awareness*

Awareness of cloned online newspaper pages can be divided into three main dimensions: cognitive, affective, and behavioural. These dimensions correspond to the core aspects of awareness: knowledge, emotional engagement, and action (Bloom et al., 1956; Chalkiadakis et al., 2021). The cognitive dimension refers to the mental processes involved in recognising and analysing information from cloned sources, including critical skills such as attention, memory, reasoning, and judgement. This dimension is crucial for discerning reliable information from misleading content amid the deceptive presentation of cloned pages.

The affective dimension, meanwhile, encompasses the emotional and motivational responses that individuals experience when interacting with information from cloned sources. Emotions like curiosity, trust, or scepticism significantly influence how people respond to the content they encounter (Tsfati & Ariely, 2014). Lastly, the behavioural dimension involves the actions taken when engaging with information from cloned pages, including searching, reading, verifying, and sharing content. For instance, the practice of verifying information before sharing it demonstrates a heightened level of behavioural awareness (Kohring & Matthes, 2007).

### *Predictors of Awareness*

Awareness of cloned online newspaper pages is shaped by multiple factors, notably the characteristics of the information, the context of its communication, and the digital platforms that distribute it. These factors align closely with the dimensions of information literacy: information, communication, and technology (Bruce, 1997). Characteristics such as the source, authorship, and date of publication greatly influence individuals' perceptions and interactions with content from cloned pages. While a well-written article might initially appear legitimate, inconsistencies in authorship or date may raise doubts about its authenticity.

The context in which information is communicated is equally important. Medium, channel, and cultural context all shape the audience's perception of the information's relevance and value. In Nigeria, for example, cloned versions of prominent media outlets such as *Vanguard* or *Daily Trust* frequently exploit cultural or regional biases to influence public opinion. The design and functionality of the platforms where cloned news is hosted also play a part in shaping awareness. Indicators like poor website design or suspicious URLs can act as red flags, prompting audiences to scrutinise content more closely (Jones & Jones, 2010).

### *Enhancement of Awareness*

Developing awareness of cloned online newspaper pages is an ongoing process, fostered through education, public awareness campaigns, and empowerment. Education is fundamental in equipping individuals with the cognitive tools needed to assess and analyse information. This includes teaching information literacy skills, such as evaluating sources and verifying facts. By enhancing cognitive abilities, people become better equipped to detect

inconsistencies or questionable aspects in cloned content.

Awareness is further enhanced through metacognitive processes, which encourage individuals to reflect on their interactions with and consumption of information. This deeper awareness entails not only recognising the information's attributes but also considering the context and potential motives behind its creation. Empowering the public by offering platforms for active engagement, such as options to report misinformation or participate in digital literacy workshops can further strengthen awareness (Kohring & Matthes, 2007).

### *Constraints and Opportunities of Developing Awareness of Cloned Pages*

Despite its importance, the concept of awareness faces significant obstacles, especially due to the complexity, uncertainty, and variability of information. The sheer volume of information produced daily can lead to cognitive overload, requiring audiences to process large amounts of conflicting information. In the context of cloned pages, this complexity can make it challenging for even well-informed users to distinguish between factual content and falsehoods (Chalkiadakis et al., 2021).

Uncertainty is another key issue. Information from cloned newspaper pages is often unreliable or incomplete, complicating the task of determining its legitimacy. Such uncertainty can erode public trust, leaving audiences more vulnerable to misinformation (Tsfati & Ariely, 2014). Finally, the variability of information, driven by the constantly evolving digital space, demands continuous vigilance. As tactics used by those creating cloned pages evolve, users must adapt their practices to remain discerning and critical.

Despite the challenges, several opportunities exist to enhance public awareness of cloned online newspaper pages. Initiatives aimed at improving the accuracy, quality, and credibility of online information, such as fact-checking services and partnerships between media organisations and digital platforms hold great potential (Jones & Jones, 2010). The increasing availability of digital tools designed to identify and flag false information also offers hope for cultivating a more informed and discerning audience.

Advancements in media literacy education provide further opportunities to counter the spread of cloned pages. New methods for teaching critical thinking and information assessment, including gamified learning platforms or interactive workshops, engage audiences more effectively. On a broader level, transformation can occur across society as informed individuals not only resist misinformation but also contribute to a more transparent and accountable information ecosystem.

### **Examples of Cloned Online Pages**

#### *Notable Examples of Nigerian Incidents of Cloned Online Pages*

In Nigeria, cloned online newspaper pages have become a significant issue in recent years, especially as access to the internet and social media continues to grow. There have been numerous cases where cloned pages or fake news websites mimicked legitimate Nigerian news outlets, spreading false information to deceive the public, disrupt political processes, or even cause social unrest. Some notable examples include:

a) *The Fake Premium Times Page*: In 2018, a notable incident involving a cloned version of *Premium Times*, a reputable Nigerian investigative journalism platform, emerged online. This

cloned page meticulously replicated the design and format of the official *Premium Times* website, thereby deceiving many readers. The fabricated stories published on this fake page often featured sensationalist headlines, aimed at discrediting political figures and disseminating unverified claims. This incident sparked considerable public concern, as numerous readers initially struggled to differentiate the cloned page from the authentic *Premium Times* website (Premium Times, 2018).

b) *The Vanguard Newspaper Clone*: In 2021, a cloned version of *Vanguard*, one of Nigeria's leading newspapers, surfaced online. This cloned page, known as 'Vanguard Hausa', disseminated fabricated stories about the Nigerian government and its officials. The primary objective of this cloned page was to spread disinformation, particularly concerning sensitive political issues in the run-up to elections. The cloned page meticulously replicated the logo, fonts, and overall design of the original *Vanguard* Facebook page, making it difficult for the public to distinguish between the genuine and the fake Facebook pages of this newspaper (Ibrahim, A. T. et al., 2024).

c) *Cloned Channels Television Social Media Pages*: In 2020, a significant case emerged involving the cloning of the official *Channels Television* social media pages. These fake pages were utilised to spread misinformation during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly concerning public health measures and vaccination. The cloned pages disseminated posts that either denied the existence of the virus or propagated conspiracy theories about vaccines. *Channels Television* had to address the issue publicly, warning its viewers and followers about the existence of these cloned pages (Bitdefender. (2021).

d) *Nigerian Tribune Fake Pages*: In 2019, *Nigerian Tribune*, one of Nigeria's oldest newspapers, faced a cloned website that published fake stories regarding economic policy and security issues. These stories, often containing exaggerated or false claims, were widely shared on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. The cloned website sought to capitalise on the credibility of the *Nigerian Tribune* to spread misinformation. This fake page misled readers and influenced public discourse, particularly on topics critical to the nation at the time (Global Voices (2019).

e) *The Incident of the Fake Daily Trust Page*: In 2022, *Daily Trust*, another respected Nigerian newspaper, was targeted by a cloned Facebook pages, spreading false reports about regional conflicts in Northern Nigeria. The fake page, known as 'Daily Trust Hausa', published inflammatory stories intended to incite tension and deepen existing ethnic and religious divisions. This case highlighted the potential dangers of cloned newspaper pages, not only in terms of misinforming the public but also in exacerbating already volatile situations (Trust Check. (2022).

These examples illustrate the far-reaching consequences of cloned online newspaper pages in Nigeria. In a country where political, ethnic, and religious tensions are often high, these cloned platforms can easily exploit divisions by spreading fake news that is difficult for the public to detect. Such platforms can undermine public trust in genuine media outlets and complicate efforts to maintain a well-informed populace.

Moreover, cloned pages pose a significant challenge to journalism in Nigeria, as they tarnish the reputations of established news outlets, leading to confusion and scepticism among

readers. Journalists and media houses have had to work harder to reaffirm their credibility while simultaneously educating the public on how to verify news sources. Campaigns promoting media literacy and digital verification skills have been rolled out, but the problem persists as these fake pages evolve in sophistication (Ibrahim, A. T. et al., 2024).

The cloned 'Daily Trust Hausa' newspaper Facebook page is an example of how digital manipulation has affected credible media outlets in Nigeria. This specific cloned page targeted Hausa-speaking audiences, primarily located in the northern regions of Nigeria. The fake page mimicked the authentic branding of *Daily Trust* newspaper and gathered a significant following by posting content that resembled legitimate news but focused on spreading misinformation or sensationalist stories (Trust Check, 2022).

The purpose of the 'Daily Trust Hausa' Facebook page was to exploit the trust that readers had in the *Daily Trust* brand. It targeted Hausa speakers by publishing content in the Hausa language, making it easier to gain credibility among this particular demographic. The cloned page often shared fake news stories, including misinformation about political events, social issues, and regional conflicts. This content was designed to stir controversy, create confusion, and at times incite division among ethnic and religious groups in Northern Nigeria (Trust Check, 2022).

### **Explicating Differences and Similarities between Knowledge and Awareness**

The concepts of knowledge and awareness are fundamental to epistemology, the philosophical study of the nature and limits of human understanding. While these two terms are often used interchangeably, they carry distinct meanings and implications. To elucidate their nuanced differences, this section explores both knowledge and awareness by examining their definitions, types and sources, followed by a comparison of their unique features. The analysis concludes by discussing the mutual exclusivity of these concepts, particularly in the context of this research.

The concept of knowledge is traditionally defined as a justified true belief, where an individual holds a belief about a proposition or fact based on sound reasons or evidence (Bruce, 1997). Knowledge implies that the individual's belief aligns with reality and they are not misled by falsehoods or illusions (Plato, 1997). For instance, someone may know that Paris is the capital of France if this fact is learned from reliable sources and is indeed accurate. In this sense, knowledge is more than just holding an opinion; it is the possession of truths substantiated by evidence.

Awareness, on the other hand, is the state or quality of being conscious of something or someone (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). It involves the recognition or perception of an object, event, or individual and typically arises either directly or indirectly through sensory experience. For example, a person may be aware of a bird singing outside a window simply because they hear the sound. This suggests that awareness is contingent on the immediate environment or state of perception of an individual (Mezirow, 1997). Unlike knowledge, awareness may not necessarily be tied to truth; it is simply the acknowledgment of the presence or existence of something.

Knowledge can be categorised into several forms, depending on the nature of the information acquired (Plato, 1997). Some prominent types of knowledge include:

- Propositional knowledge: Knowledge about the truth or falsity of a proposition, such as “the Earth is round”.
- Factual knowledge: Knowledge about events or facts, like “Julius Caesar was assassinated”.
- Conceptual knowledge: Knowledge of abstract ideas or principles, such as “justice” or “democracy”.
- Procedural knowledge: Knowledge on how to perform certain tasks, such as “how to solve a maths problem”.
- Practical knowledge: Skills-based knowledge, like “how to swim”.
- Experiential knowledge: Knowledge derived from personal experience, like “what pepper soup tastes like”.

Similarly, awareness can also be divided into various categories (Mezirow, 1997):

- Self-awareness: Consciousness of one’s identity, personality and emotions.
- Social awareness: Recognition of the thoughts, feelings and actions of others.
- Environmental awareness: Perception of the surrounding physical, biological, or cultural environment.
- Situational awareness: Understanding of the current context or situation.
- Temporal awareness: Awareness of time, including past, present, or future events.
- Spatial awareness: Awareness of the physical location, direction, or movement of objects or individuals.

The origins of knowledge are multifaceted, drawing from various sources depending on the nature and reliability of the information (Mezirow, 1997). Some of the key sources include:

- Observation: Knowledge gained through direct or indirect sensory experiences, such as sight or hearing.
- Reasoning: Knowledge derived from logical or rational inference, such as deductive or inductive reasoning.
- Testimony: Knowledge obtained from others, be it through verbal or written communication.
- Intuition: Knowledge that arises from spontaneous understanding without relying on observation or reasoning.
- Memory: Knowledge that stems from recollecting past experiences, facts, or events.
- Similarly, awareness is sourced from various stimuli that engage the senses and cognitive faculties (Chalkiadakis et al., 2021):
- Sensation: Direct perception through the senses, such as touch or smell.
- Attention: Focused awareness, where certain stimuli are given priority.
- Cognition: Mental processing and interpretation of sensory data.
- Emotion: Awareness arising from affective responses, such as fear or joy.
- Action: Awareness developed through interaction with the physical environment.

### **Differences and Similarities in Implications**

Although knowledge and awareness share some commonalities, particularly in their connection to information, they differ significantly in their implications. Knowledge involves a justified true belief that something is factually accurate, while awareness refers to an

immediate recognition or perception without necessarily requiring proof or justification (Jonassen, 2000).

Both knowledge and awareness are multidimensional, yet they operate on different planes. Knowledge can be cognitive, affective, or behavioural, meaning it influences thoughts, emotions and actions. Similarly, while awareness operates across these dimensions, it is however, more rooted in perception, sensation and immediate recognition rather than in deep understanding or factual validation (Plato, 1997).

Moreover, knowledge and awareness derive their content from different sources. Knowledge comes from a combination of observation, reasoning, testimony, intuition and memory. These sources help in constructing a well-rounded, justified belief. On the contrary, awareness stems from more immediate stimuli such as sensation, attention, cognition, emotion and action. This implies that while knowledge is often deliberate and rational, awareness is more spontaneous and perceptual (Mezirow, 1997).

#### *Mutual Exclusivity*

In the context of this research, knowledge and awareness are treated as mutually exclusive concepts. This mutual exclusivity arises from the differing conditions required to attain each (Jonassen, 2000).

Knowledge, as defined in this study, requires a justified true belief grounded in propositional, factual and objective criteria. In contrast, awareness is rooted in perceptual, experiential and subjective aspects. Knowledge demands evidence or reasoning, while awareness only necessitates a conscious recognition of a situation or object. As a result, the two cannot overlap in the same context or situation. Additionally, their respective effects on an individual also differ: knowledge influences cognition, attitudes and behaviours through deeper understanding, while awareness shapes perception, emotions and actions in more immediate ways (Mezirow, 1997).

In essence, this research maintains that knowledge and awareness are distinct constructs, each playing a different yet complementary role in shaping human cognition and perception.

#### **The Proliferation of Fake News and Cloned Pages**

In the contemporary digital media landscape, the emergence and proliferation of fake news and cloned pages have become pressing concerns, significantly undermining the quality, credibility and integrity of information and communication. Fake news refers to fabricated or misleading information presented as factual, often aimed at deceiving, influencing, or financially benefiting from the audience (Statista, 2021a). Conversely, cloned pages are social media entities designed to replicate the appearance and content of legitimate news sources, frequently to disseminate fake news, propaganda, or malware (Chalkiadakis et al., 2021). This section delves into the causes, characteristics and consequences of fake news and cloned pages, alongside exploring potential solutions and responses to mitigate their impact.

**Causes:** The proliferation of fake news and cloned pages can be traced to several interrelated factors rooted in technological, economic, political and social shifts that have reshaped the media environment and information ecosystem. Among the primary causes are:

1. *Technological Advancements:* The rise and diversification of digital media platforms

have expanded the availability and accessibility of information, but also introduced complexity and variability, complicating the information landscape (Buntain & Golbeck, 2017; YaleGlobal Online, 2016a, b).

2. *Personalisation of Media Consumption*: The capacity of digital media for personalisation allows users to tailor their information sources, often reinforcing echo chambers and filter bubbles that contribute to confirmation bias (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011).
3. *Democratisation of Media Production*: The ease with which users can create and disseminate content has led to an increase in misinformation and disinformation, as individuals can now contribute to the spread of both false and misleading information (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017).
4. *Commercialisation of Digital Media*: The competitive nature of the digital media market has driven some outlets to compromise journalistic standards in favour of sensationalism and clickbait, thereby exacerbating the spread of fake news (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017).
5. *Polarisation and Fragmentation*: The increasing diversity of information sources has led to greater division in public opinion and erosion of trust, as differing beliefs and values become more pronounced within fragmented media ecosystems (Lazer et al., 2018).

**Characteristics:** The nature of fake news and cloned pages is defined by a range of features, including their types, formats and genres, as well as the strategies and techniques employed in their creation and dissemination (Tandoc Jr, Lim, & Ling, 2018). Key characteristics include:

1. *Types*: Fake news and cloned pages vary based on their motives, for example, political, ideological, economic, or social; and their veracity, for example, whether completely false, partially false, or misleading (Buntain & Golbeck, 2017; Guess, Nagler, & Tucker, 2019; Tandoc et al., 2018).
2. *Formats*: These can encompass various media types such as text, images, audio and video and can appear in different modalities such as written, spoken, or visual.
3. *Genres*: The spectrum of fake news and cloned pages includes traditional formats like news articles and press releases, as well as news forms such as blogs, memes, tweets and videos.
4. *Strategies*: Manipulation tactics range from fabrication and distortion to omission and exaggeration.
5. *Techniques*: Methods of deception include plagiarism, impersonation, spoofing, phishing, hacking and trolling.
6. *Tools*: Technologies employed in the production and spread of fake news and cloned pages include bots, algorithms, artificial intelligence and deepfakes.

**Consequences:** The impacts and implications of fake news and cloned pages are multifaceted, affecting media credibility, public perception and societal trust (Shu, Sliva, Wang, Tang, & Liu, 2017). Notable consequences include:

- *Effects*: Metrics for assessing the reach, engagement and influence of fake news and cloned pages, as well as audience exposure and reactions.

- *Outcomes*: Evaluation based on the accuracy, quality and credibility of information and its impact on public knowledge, attitudes and behaviour.
- *Challenges*: Difficulties in detecting, verifying and correcting false information, alongside efforts to enhance public education and awareness.

Solutions: Addressing the challenges posed by fake news and cloned pages requires a concerted effort from various stakeholders, including the media, public, government, academia, civil society and private sector (Zannettou et al., 2019). Potential solutions include:

1. *Media Initiatives*: Adoption of professional standards and ethical codes, implementation of fact-checking mechanisms and development of verification tools (Zannettou et al., 2019).
2. *Public Actions*: Promotion of critical and digital literacy, evaluation and verification of information and support for media literacy education (Tandoc et al., 2018).
3. *Collaborations*: Establishment of legal frameworks, regulatory policies and cross-sectoral partnerships to tackle misinformation and support accurate information dissemination (Zannettou et al., 2019).

### **The Proliferation of Fake News and Cloned Pages in Nigeria**

The emergence and proliferation of fake news and cloned pages have posed significant challenges to the quality, credibility and integrity of information and communication in Nigeria. Fake news, characterised by false or misleading information presented as factual, often aims to deceive, influence, or profit from the audience (Statista, 2021b). Cloned pages, on the other hand, are social media accounts designed to mimic legitimate news sources, with the intent of disseminating fake news, propaganda, or malware (Chalkiadakis et al., 2021). This section delves into the rise of these phenomena within the Nigerian context, examining their causes, characteristics and consequences. Furthermore, it will explore potential solutions and responses to mitigate the impact of fake news and cloned pages in Nigeria.

*Causes*: The proliferation of fake news and cloned pages in Nigeria can be attributed to a range of factors influenced by technological, economic, political and social changes. First, the rapid expansion and diversification of digital media platforms have increased the availability and accessibility of information. However, this expansion has also introduced complexity and variability into the information landscape (YaleGlobal Online, 2016a, b). As of 2021, Nigeria was one of the largest and fastest-growing internet markets in Africa, with over 104 million internet users and 33 million social media users (Statista, 2021b).

Secondly, the personalisation and customisation of digital content have allowed users to filter and tailor their information preferences. While this personalisation enhances user experience, it also reinforces echo chambers, filter bubbles and confirmation biases. A survey by the Centre for Democracy and Development (2020) highlights that 67% of Nigerians rely on social media as their primary news source, and 77% trust the information encountered on these platforms (Oyedele, 2020).

Thirdly, the democratisation of media production and distribution has empowered individuals to create and disseminate their own content. This empowerment extends to the spread of misinformation and disinformation. The International Centre for Investigative Reporting (2020) revealed that Nigeria experienced over 800 instances of fake news and misinformation

between January and October 2020, predominantly related to COVID-19 and the #EndSARS protests (Chalkiadakis et al., 2021).

Fourthly, the competitive and commercialised nature of the digital media industry often incentivises media outlets to prioritise sensationalism and clickbait over journalistic integrity. Research by the Premium Times Centre for Investigative Journalism indicates that some Nigerian media outlets have engaged in or propagated fake news for political or economic gain (International Centre for Investigative Reporting, 2020).

Lastly, the polarisation and fragmentation of the Nigerian media and societal landscape exacerbate divisions in opinions, values and beliefs, leading to increased conflict and diminished trust. Nigeria's rich ethnic and linguistic diversity, with over 250 ethnic groups and 500 languages, frequently contributes to societal tensions (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017).

**Characteristics:** The characteristics of fake news and cloned pages in Nigeria are varied and complex. First, these phenomena can be classified based on their motives, for example, whether political, ideological, economic, or social; and their veracity, ranging from false to misleading. Examples include the unfounded claim that President Muhammadu Buhari had been replaced by a clone and the false report that former President Goodluck Jonathan had joined the ruling party (Chalkiadakis et al., 2021; Statista, 2021b).

Secondly, the formats of fake news and cloned pages can include text, images, audio and video; and it may be presented in written, spoken, or visual modalities. Examples are the fabricated article alleging that the US embassy denied a visa to a prominent Nigerian pastor, a manipulated image showing protesters holding a "Buhari must go" banner and a doctored video featuring a politician allegedly confessing to election rigging (Oyedele, 2020).

Thirdly, the genres of fake news and cloned pages encompass a wide array of formats, including news articles, press releases, interviews, speeches, blogs and memes. For instance, cloned websites mimicking BBC to spread fake news, fake press releases about political resignations and erroneous tweets attributing controversial statements to public figures exemplify this diversity (Lazer et al., 2018).

Fourthly, the strategies employed can vary from fabrication and falsification to distortion and exaggeration. Notable examples include fabricated stories about a woman giving birth to a goat, falsified documents endorsing herbal COVID-19 cures and distorted headlines suggesting government bans on generators (Chalkiadakis et al., 2021).

Fifthly, the techniques used in spreading fake news include plagiarism, impersonation, spoofing and phishing. Instances include plagiarised news articles without proper attribution, impersonated social media accounts asking for money and spoofed emails claiming to be from Nigerian banks (Centre for Democracy and Development, 2020).

Lastly, the tools used in the production and distribution of fake news include bots, algorithms, artificial intelligence and deepfakes. Examples are bot-generated stories, algorithm-driven content promotion and deepfake videos using face-swapping technology to create deceptive content (Centre for Democracy and Development, 2020; Chalkiadakis et al., 2021).

### **Consequences and Solutions**

**Consequences:** The proliferation of fake news and cloned pages in Nigeria has had profound

and multifaceted impacts on the media, public and societal fabric of the nation. The consequences of these phenomena can be discerned through various dimensions including their reach, influence and the challenges they present.

To begin with, the effects of fake news and cloned pages in Nigeria are evident through several indicators, such as their reach, engagement and the degree of influence they wield over audiences. A significant study conducted by the Centre for Democracy and Development (2020) reveals that approximately 75% of Nigerians have encountered fake news and cloned pages online, with 25% of individuals having shared such content. Further, research by the International Centre for Investigative Reporting (2020) highlights that 68% of Nigerians tend to believe the content of fake news and cloned pages, and 32% take actions based on these misleading materials. These statistics underscore the pervasive nature of misinformation and its potential to shape public perceptions and behaviours.

Secondly, the outcomes of fake news and cloned pages can be evaluated in terms of the accuracy, quality and credibility of information disseminated. These phenomena have severely undermined public trust in media and information sources. Reports indicate that fake news and cloned pages have played a significant role in spreading misinformation, disinformation and malinformation, thereby eroding trust and accountability within both media institutions and the general public (Chalkiadakis et al., 2021; Statista, 2021b). Additionally, such misinformation has influenced critical areas such as electoral processes, public health responses and the escalation of social conflicts.

Thirdly, addressing the challenges posed by fake news and cloned pages involves recognising the difficulties in detecting, verifying and correcting such content. According to a survey by the Premium Times Centre for Investigative Journalism, 82% of Nigerian journalists report struggling with the verification of fake news and cloned pages, with 18% having fallen victim to such misinformation themselves. Furthermore, the Centre for Democracy and Development (2020) notes that 58% of Nigerians lack the knowledge to identify fake news and cloned pages, and 42% do not know how to report them effectively. These challenges highlight the urgent need for enhanced skills and resources to combat misinformation.

**Solutions:** Addressing the rise of fake news and cloned pages in Nigeria necessitates a multifaceted approach involving various stakeholders including the media, public, government, academia, civil society and private sector. Effective solutions and responses can be grouped into several key areas:

Firstly, media organisations can play a pivotal role by adhering to professional and ethical standards. This includes adopting rigorous fact-checking mechanisms and tools. Noteworthy examples include Nigerian media outlets like *Premium Times*, *Punch* and *The Guardian*, which have established fact-checking units such as Dubawa, FactCheckNigeria and Africa Check to combat misinformation (International Centre for Investigative Reporting, 2020; Centre for Democracy and Development, 2020).

Secondly, the public can be empowered through the promotion of digital literacy and media education. Cultivating skills in critical evaluation and verification of information can help individuals discern credible content from falsehoods. Nigerian organisations such as the Centre for Democracy and Development, the Centre for Information Technology and

Development and Paradigm Initiative have been proactive in organising training sessions, seminars and literacy campaigns to enhance public awareness and resilience against fake news (International Centre for Investigative Reporting, 2020; Centre for Democracy and Development, 2020).

Thirdly, collaborative efforts among government bodies, academic institutions, civil society organisations and the private sector are crucial. Establishing and enforcing legal frameworks and policies, as well as fostering multi-stakeholder partnerships, can enhance the collective response to fake news and cloned pages. Initiatives such as the Coalition Against Fake News and Hate Speech and the Nigerian Media Code of Election Coverage exemplify such collaborative efforts (National Broadcasting Commission, 2019).

### **Analysis of Observed Literature Voids**

A comprehensive analysis of existing literature reveals notable gaps that must be addressed to enrich the current understanding of the subject. While significant progress has been made in examining the effects of fake news and cloned pages, various underexplored areas remain that could deepen the scope and impact of scholarly work in this field.

Firstly, studies, including those by the Centre for Democracy and Development (2020) and the International Centre for Investigative Reporting (2020), offer valuable perspectives on the incidence and consequences of fake news in Nigeria. However, these studies often overlook an in-depth examination of the demographic and socio-cultural factors that shape vulnerability to misinformation. Further investigation could focus on how variables like age, education, and socio-economic status influence individuals' interactions with fake news. Such targeted segmentation is crucial for crafting more effective countermeasures and educational programmes.

Secondly, while the immediate effects of fake news such as decreased trust in the media are well documented, there is a distinct lack of research on its long-term societal consequences. Although the immediate impacts on electoral results and public health initiatives are extensively covered, less attention is given to how these outcomes evolve over time and influence public attitudes and behaviour in the long term. Adopting a longitudinal approach could provide a fuller perspective, capturing both immediate and enduring societal changes.

A further gap lies in the limited exploration of the effectiveness and implementation challenges of current anti-misinformation strategies. Many studies reference various interventions, such as fact-checking platforms and media literacy initiatives. However, few delve into a rigorous evaluation of these solutions' practical efficacy or the challenges faced during their implementation. Critical assessments of these interventions, including considerations around resource allocation, public engagement, and institutional support, are necessary for refining and improving these strategies.

Moreover, the role of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence and machine learning in both spreading and detecting fake news remains inadequately explored. While some literature mentions technological tools for combating misinformation, there is insufficient discussion on how advancements in these fields can be harnessed more effectively. Examining how these technologies can aid in identifying and curtailing the spread of fake news, alongside understanding their limitations, would greatly contribute to the

development of more robust anti-misinformation measures.

Lastly, there is an absence of cross-national studies that compare effective anti-misinformation strategies from other countries with Nigeria's context. While most studies centered on Nigeria, comparative analysis with other nations facing similar issues could yield valuable insights. Understanding how other contexts address fake news and misinformation could offer alternative strategies that may be adapted to suit Nigerian conditions.

### *Implications of the Study*

This review study's findings bear implications across theoretical, practical, and policy-making domains, offering valuable insights to advance both academic understanding and the practical management of misinformation.

**Theoretical Implications:** The study enriches the theoretical discourse by highlighting gaps that suggest new frameworks or adaptations to existing theories. For instance, where inconsistencies arise in established frameworks like Framing Theory or Uses and Gratifications Theory, this study suggests the need for theoretical refinement. New variables or context-specific factors may be incorporated, enhancing these theories' ability to explain the interaction between media and public perception. The review also underscores the inadequacy of existing frameworks in accounting for modern phenomena, such as fake news proliferation, suggesting that contemporary theoretical constructs like elements of Postmodernist Theory could be integrated for a more nuanced understanding.

**Practical Implications:** The findings yield practical insights for media practitioners, educators, and policy makers. For journalists, this study informs anti-misinformation strategies, such as more effective fact-checking processes, higher editorial standards, and specialised training on digital media challenges. Educators may use the insights to design curricula addressing current trends, equipping students with critical skills for evaluating information sources. For example, modules on digital literacy and critical thinking could improve students' ability to discern credible information from false content.

**Policy Implications:** Policymakers stand to benefit from these findings, particularly in formulating regulatory frameworks to counteract misinformation. This may involve developing regulations that hold social media platforms accountable for fake news, as well as implementing public campaigns to educate citizens on recognising and reporting misinformation. The study also advocates for collaborative initiatives between government bodies, technology firms, and civil society groups to build more effective monitoring and intervention mechanisms.

**Societal Implications:** On a societal level, the implications of addressing misinformation extend to promoting social cohesion and enriching public discourse. Misinformation can significantly influence societal behaviours, impacting issues from electoral decisions to public health. By tackling these concerns, the study aims to foster a more informed citizenry. For example, if the study reveals misinformation's role in deepening social divides, it could highlight the importance of fostering accurate information dissemination and encouraging constructive dialogue across social groups.

## Conclusion

The pervasive spread of fake news and cloned pages poses substantial challenges to Nigeria's media landscape, with serious implications for public trust, information credibility, and societal cohesion. This study underscores the significant influence of misinformation on public perception and behaviour, emphasising the need for comprehensive strategies to safeguard information integrity.

The analysis reveals that fake news and cloned pages have a wide-ranging impact, undermining media credibility, eroding public confidence, and exacerbating social divisions. With 75% of Nigerians encountering fake news and 68% believing it (Centre for Democracy and Development, 2020; International Centre for Investigative Reporting, 2020), there is a critical need for improved media literacy and verification mechanisms. The existence of cloned pages further complicates the issue, challenging individuals' ability to distinguish genuine content from deceptive information (Statista, 2021b).

## Recommendations

To address these challenges, several recommendations are proposed:

**Enhanced Media Literacy Education:** There is a pressing need for widespread media literacy programmes to develop critical thinking and digital literacy skills, empowering individuals to evaluate online content's credibility. Initiatives from organisations like the Centre for Democracy and Development and Paradigm Initiative offer a foundation, but broader, more integrated educational efforts are essential (International Centre for Investigative Reporting, 2020).

**Strengthened Fact-Checking Mechanisms:** Media organisations should refine fact-checking procedures to ensure information accuracy. Establishing dedicated fact-checking units, as seen in outlets like *Premium Times* and *The Punch*, could verify news authenticity and reduce misinformation (Centre for Democracy and Development, 2020).

**Collaboration and Regulation:** Government, civil society, and private sector collaboration is needed to enforce regulations against fake news and cloned pages. Efforts like the Coalition Against Fake News and Hate Speech should be supported and expanded, encouraging a unified response to misinformation (National Broadcasting Commission, 2019).

**Public Awareness Campaigns:** Broad public awareness campaigns should educate citizens on the risks of fake news and guide them on identifying and reporting such content. These campaigns should utilise various media platforms to reach diverse audiences and strengthen public understanding.

**Research and Monitoring:** Ongoing research and monitoring are crucial for staying ahead of misinformation trends. Continued investigation into misinformation strategies will provide critical insights for developing effective countermeasures and shaping future policies.

## References

- Allcott, H., & Gentzkow, M. (2017). Social media and fake news in the 2016 election. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 31(2), 211-236. <https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.31.2.211>
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Prentice-Hall.
- Bitdefender. (2021, June 28, 2021). "Facebook clone wars: How to check for social media impersonators who use your info to scam friends and family." *Bitdefender Blog*. <https://www.bitdefender.com/blog/hotforsecurity/facebook-clone-wars-how-to-check-for-social-media-impersonators-who-use-your-info-to-scam-friends-and-family/>
- Bloom, B. S., Engelhart, M. D., Furst, E. J., Hill, W. H., & Krathwohl, D. R. (1956). *Taxonomy of educational objectives: The classification of educational goals* (Vol. 1). David McKay.
- Bruce, C. S. (1997). *The seven faces of information literacy*. Auslib Press.
- Buntain, C., & Golbeck, J. (2017). Friends and neighbours in social media: The role of social networks in the dissemination of misinformation. *Proceedings of the 2017 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, 100-110. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3025453.3025495>
- Chalkiadakis, G., Eickhoff, C., & Korkontzelos, I. (2021). Fake news and disinformation in digital media: The impact on democracy and public opinion. *Journal of Information Ethics*, 30(1), 24-35. <https://doi.org/10.3172/JIE.30.1.24>
- Centre for Democracy and Development. (2020). *Fake news and misinformation in Nigeria: An analysis*. Retrieved from <https://www.cddwestafrica.org/publications/fake-news-and-misinformation-in-nigeria>.
- Dunwoody, S., & Peters, H. P. (2020). *The role of media in a democracy*. Routledge.
- Ekott, I. (2018, November 27). "Premium Times warns public of cloned website." *Premium Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.premiumtimesng.com>
- Entman, R. M. (1993). *Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm*. *Journal of Communication*, 43(4), 51-58.
- Global Voices (2019, August 24, 2019). "Nigeria's reputation takes a hit as three online fraud cases make international headlines." *Global Voices*. <https://globalvoices.org/2019/08/24/nigerias-reputation-takes-a-hit-as-three-online-fraud-cases-make-international-headlines/>
- Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame analysis: An essay on the organisation of experience*. Harper & Row.
- Guess, A., Nagler, J., & Tucker, J. A. (2019). Less than you think: Prevalence and predictors of fake news dissemination on Facebook. *Science Advances*, 5(1), eaao0580. <https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.aao0580>
- Ibrahim, A. T., Jibril, U. F., & Ibrahim, A. M. (2024). Between trust and misinformation: A study of user engagement with cloned pages of 'Daily Trust' and 'Vanguard' newspapers on Facebook. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 15(3), 34-50.

<https://doi.org/10.36941/mjss-2024-0034>.

- International Centre for Investigative Reporting. (2020). *The state of fake news and misinformation in Nigeria*. Retrieved from <https://icirnigeria.org/the-state-of-fake-news-and-misinformation-in-nigeria>.
- Jonassen, D. H. (2000). *Computers as Mindtools for Schools: Engaging Critical Thinking*. Merrill/Prentice Hall.
- Jones, M. C., & Jones, R. L. (2010). *Media literacy education: Lessons from the classroom*. Routledge.
- Katz, E., Blumler, J. G., & Gurevitch, M. (1973). *Uses and gratifications research*. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 37(4), 509-523.
- Kietzmann, J. H., Hermkens, K., McCarthy, I. P., & Silvestre, B. S. (2011). Social media? Get serious! Understanding the functional building blocks of social media. *Business Horizons*, 54(3), 241-251. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2011.01.005>
- Kohring, M., & Matthes, J. (2007). Trust in news media: Development and validation of a multidimensional scale. *Communication Research*, 34(2), 231-252. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650206298071>
- Lazer, D. M. J., Baum, M. A., Benkler, Y., Berinsky, A. J., Greenhill, K. M., Menczer, F., ... & Rothschild, D. (2018). The science of fake news. *Science*, 359(6380), 1094-1096. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aao2998>
- Mezirow, J. (1997). Transformative Learning: Theory to Practice. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 74, 5–12. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ace.7401>
- Moorhead, S. A., Hazlett, D. E., Harrison, L., Carroll, J. K., Irwin, A., & Hesse, B. W. (2013). *A new era in public health: The role of social media in public health communication*. *Health Affairs*, 32(1), 21-28.
- National Broadcasting Commission (NBC). (2019). *Coalition against fake news and hate speech: Annual report*. Retrieved from <https://www.nbc.gov.ng/coalition-against-fake-news-and-hate-speech-annual-report>.
- Nigerian Communications Week. (2021, July 30). “The rise of cloned news pages on Facebook in Nigeria.” Retrieved from <https://www.nigeriacommunicationsweek.com>
- Nigerian Tribune. (2019, June 12). “Nigerian Tribune warns of fake website.” Retrieved from <https://www.tribuneonlineng.com>
- Ojo, E. (2020, April 4). “Channels Television warns public against fake social media pages.” *Channels Television*. Retrieved from <https://www.channelstv.com>
- Oyedele, O. (2020). *Social media usage and trust in Nigeria: A comprehensive survey*. Centre for Democracy and Development, Abuja, Nigeria.
- Plato. (1997). *Theaetetus* (J. McDowell, Trans.). Oxford University Press.
- Premium Times. (2018, December 29). “Top 20 Premium Times’ reports that helped shape 2018.” *Premium Times*. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/303218-top-20-premium-times-reports-that-helped-shape-2018.html>

- 
- Shu, K., Sliva, A., Wang, S., Tang, J., & Liu, H. (2017). Fake news detection on social media: A data mining perspective. *ACM SIGKDD Explorations Newsletter*, 19(1), 22-36. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3137597.3137600>
- Statista. (2021a). *Share of people who believe they have been misled by fake news or disinformation on social media worldwide as of 2020, by age group*. Statista. Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1149197/fake-news-disinformation-social-media-age-group>
- Statista. (2021b). *Number of internet users in Nigeria from 2015 to 2021*. Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1103251/nigeria-number-of-internet-users>.
- Tandoc Jr, E. C., Lim, Z. W., & Ling, R. (2018). Defining "fake news": A typology of scholarly definitions. *Digital Journalism*, 6(2), 137-153. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2017.1362956>
- The Guardian Nigeria. (2020, August 10). "Fake news and social media manipulation in Nigeria." Retrieved from <https://www.guardian.ng>
- Trust Check. (2022, September 22). "Trust check is a news verification and fact-check project of Daily Trust newspapers committed to fostering accountability and tackling the scourge of fake news and misinformation." *Trust Check*. <https://trustcheck.dailytrust.com/>
- Tsfati, Y., & Ariely, G. (2014). Individual and contextual correlates of trust in media across 44 countries. *Communication Research*, 41(6), 760-782. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650213485972>
- Vanguard News. (2021, February 17). "Beware of cloned pages, Vanguard warns readers." Retrieved from <https://www.vanguardngr.com>
- Wardle, C., & Derakhshan, H. (2017). *Information disorder: toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policymaking*. Council of Europe Report. Retrieved from <https://rm.coe.int/information-disorder-toward-an-interdisciplinary-framework-for-research/168076277c>
- YaleGlobal Online. (2016a). *The proliferation of fake news and its implications*. Retrieved from <https://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/proliferation-fake-news-and-its-implications>.
- YaleGlobal Online. (2016b). *The digital era: Challenges and opportunities for global media*. YaleGlobal Online. Retrieved from <https://yaleglobal.yale.edu/print/388256>
- Zannettou, S., Malliarakis, C., & Kourtellis, N. (2019). The role of social media in the spread of fake news. *Proceedings of the 2019 ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work and Social Computing*, 1263-1275. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3293663.3293678>

### **Authors' Biodata**

*Umar Farouk Jibril* is a Professor at the Department of Mass Communication, Bayero University, Kano (BUK), Kano State, Nigeria. In addition, he is the Dean of the Faculty of Communication of the university.

*Abubakar Tijjani Ibrahim* is a PhD Research Scholar at the Department of Mass Communication, Bayero University, Kano and a Lecturer at the Department of Mass Communication, Kano State Polytechnic, Kano, Nigeria.

*Adamkolo Mohammed Ibrahim* is a PhD Research Scholar at the Department of Mass Communication, Bayero University, Kano and Lecturer at the Department of Mass Communication, University of Maiduguri, Borno State, Nigeria.