Towards a Conceptual Framework for the Ontology of Fake News Genres in Traditional Media in Kenya

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Abstract

Rationale of Study – Fake news has become a catchphrase in public discourse worldwide. Media are awash with information deemed fake. Verification and counter-verification of information shared through legacy and social media have been witnessed, causing confusion among consumers. The essence of media is to give credible and truthful information for consumers to make informed choices in a democratic society. The ongoing debate over truths and fakes of news acts as a springboard for this paper informing on genres of fake news in Kenya. This paper explores the literature on fake news in relation to the theory of propaganda and Marshall McLuhan's technological determinism theory.

Methodology – This study utilized a qualitative research approach, employing interviews as a data collection method. The units of analysis were purposefully picked from policymakers and media practitioners, both traditional media and social media – advertising and public relations.

Findings – Findings show that fake news originates in individuals who derive pleasure primarily from misinformation and the thrill of having people consume misleading information. In most cases, the purpose of disseminating fake news is to develop and sustain an angle to an issue to suit the interests of those pursuing the course through self-indulgence, hiring people, or generally paying for the service. Respondents reported that the Internet had become the greatest purveyor of fake news due to its nature of accessibility and affordability.

Implications – The findings of this study may be used to develop standards and policies to protect mass media audiences from sources of information who advertently and maliciously supply them with fake information for their publications or broadcasts.

Originality – This paper investigated the genres of fake news, the spread of fake news in conventional media, and the mechanisms media use to counter the pilferage of fake news through their organizations.

Keywords

Fake news, traditional media, new media, genres of fake news, social media, Kenya

1 Introduction

Fake news has become a popular area of discourse the world over. Both news producers and consumers do not trust the information they receive as the gospel truth. There have been claims and counter-claims of the media spreading fake news, while sources of information for media are loathed for thriving in untruths. Bloggers and other social media users have been accused of spreading untruthful information. Fake news is defined as information divergent from the truth. Levinson (2017) argues that errors or divergences in fake news are sometimes intentional. Photos, regarded as objective recordings for more than a century, can now be manipulated with the advent of computer technology, using Photoshop.

Kovach and Rosenstiel (2001) propound that the primary role of journalism and media is to provide consumers or audiences with the information they need to be free and self-governing. Consumers, on their part, expect that the news and information they receive is an aggregate of intelligence capable of empowering them and building their communities. The duo argues that journalism's first obligation is to the truth, which is, getting the facts right. The news must be reliable and useful for development. Long (2011) argues, concerning Aristotle's Metaphysics, that false is to say that what is, is not, or what is not, is. On the contrary, true is to say what is, is, and what is not, is not. It uses untruth, lies, misinformation, and fake to imply information not based on facts. Barclay (2018) avers that lying is supplying others with misinformation.

Kovach and Rosenstiel (2001) further argue that journalism must be anchored on the verification of all information obtained "The essence of journalism is a discipline of verification" (p 104). Journalists must make news comprehensive and proportional, while media must act as public debate platforms. Both legacy media and social media distribute fake news. In news production, legacy media aim to reach consumers and influence them to positive action. Social media content creators, on the other hand, seek publicity, attract clicks and following, maliciously settle scores, and sometimes aim, for the sake of fun, to see how some people will fall to falsehood. Some media houses fall for false leads – quite often unintended. Sometimes, they are baited or misled by "malicious sources" or genuine sources bent on achieving their selfish ends. As media pursue sales through deadlines and interesting stories, they unintentionally publish unverified stories. Access to publishing technology makes it easy to package false information in attractive ways using such applications as Photoshop.

Credibility and truth are part of the dogma of good journalism. Media should give credible and truthful information for the public to make informed choices. Journalism has tended to rely on a version of the realist notion of truth that stresses the accurate observation of events and presenting it as is. "Realism holds that a belief or statement is true if it accurately describes some object, fact, or state of affairs in the real world. True beliefs "fit" with or correspond to the world as it really is" (Christians & Wilkins, 2009, p. 72).

In the Internet age, there has been widespread untruths in the form of online news and blogging. This is akin to earlier days of legacy media when yellow journalism producers and pamphleteers used to influence public debate, and so does what is derogatorily called the gutter press. Bloggers publish information laced with opinions, lies, and unestablished claims. "The modern blogger generally makes no pretence of fairness or scrupulous accuracy, but rather makes a case laden more with opinion than fact, expecting the reader to find "the truth" in the cacophony of contending arguments" (Goldstein, 2007, p. vi).

The unending debate over truths and fakes of news acts as a springboard for the study of genres of fake news, while at the same time, the paper develops a conceptual framework for genres of fake news. This paper was guided by the following questions: What is the nature of fake news in Kenya's media landscape? What are the determinants of fake news? How do traditional media cope with fake news in their newsrooms?

This paper explores the literature on fake news, truth, lies, and sources of misinformation. The theoretical framework examines the relationship between the intent of propaganda and fake news; and Marshall McLuhan's technological determinism theory. The literature review extrapolates scholarly and philosophical worldviews of truth. It lies to determine fake news, what amounts to it, and in whose eyes the truth or fakeness is seen or manifested.

Barclay (2018, p.1) defines fake news as synonymous with the ancient art of lying. Humans use lies for blaming, persuading, winning arguments, exerting dominance, or entertaining. "Lying can even be used as a form of entertainment, as evidenced by the many forms of comedy - such as tall tales, pranks, and absurdist humour - that depend on the bending or breaking of the truth."

2 Research Problem Statement

Human communication, as a product of the human mind, may be hampered by various factors, rendering it unpalatable or imperfect. In this respect, receivers of information need to approach a piece of information with an open mind. An open mind helps the consumer to weigh the information and interpret it without prejudice effectively.

Fake news delays access to factual information for consumers to make informed choices. It delays information consumption and use by receivers. Some published information lacks supporting evidence, causing consumers to subject such information to due diligence before using it. It takes time to verify information that is already in the public domain. The process of verification may affect the way people consume and use news. They lose trust in information obtained through the media.

It is widely perceived that information falls into the two continuums, true or false. Barclay (2018) offers the following credibility continuum that may help identify some truth in an otherwise "false" piece of information or falsity in a supposed "true" piece. The guidelines are information, knowledge, and skill. If a person possesses information but lacks the skill to use it, it renders the information worthless to the person. The information receiver needs to interpret tricky facts to make sense of them. A person with knowledge and skill is capable of correctly interpreting pseudo-facts.

Both private and public media have been found to disseminate untruthful information. Levinson (2017) explains that fake news is disseminated by various media and sources of information, including the government. "When the truth is specifically at variance with governmental policy, the government's vehicles of news are deliberately tasked with providing stories which are not true."

This paper investigated the genres of fake news, the spread of fake news in conventional media, and the mechanisms media use to counter the pilferage of fake news through their organizations.

The objectives of this paper were to investigate the genres of fake news in Kenya, find out if traditional media publish fake news, and establish the mechanisms traditional media use to deal with fake news in their newsrooms.

3 Literature Review

The greatest pillar of journalism is truth-seeking. However, defining the term truth has been contentious since time immemorial. To claim to know is to claim to know

something. Kovach and Rosenstiel (2001) define journalism as the work that adheres to the principles of truthfulness, an allegiance to citizens and the community at large, and informing rather than manipulating—concepts that set journalism apart from other forms of communication. Peters et al. (2018) inform that a democracy cannot exist without informed citizens and public spheres and educational apparatuses that uphold standards of truth, honesty, evidence, facts, and justice.

Philosophers see 'truth' for what it is: philosophers disagree on which propositions are 'true' or 'false,' but more importantly, they disagree on what it means to say that something is 'true' or 'false' (Peters et al., 2018, p.13). Information may be deemed true when accompanied by evidence and acquaintance or associated with experts as news sources.

Wolenski (2004) affirms that "Aletheia is the most important Greek counterpart of our 'truth'; alethes (true), alethos (truly) and alethein (to speak the truth)." Rowett C. (2018) explains the Latin veritas as historically translated to the English word 'truth.' The state of being of something is true about the object or subject. In this regard, truth is what something is. False, therefore, is what something is not.

Peters et al. (2018) underscore the characteristics of trustworthy news. Reliable information embodies accuracy and fact-checking. Journalists must strive to achieve balance by actively seeking out stories that constitute professional discretion that makes moral demands on the journalist.

Although fake news is a relatively new term in communication circles, the concept is closely related to lies or untruth, which this study used synonymously. Boller and George (1989) claim that some sources of information often create gaffes that cast doubt on their opponents' honesty, integrity, and good judgment. Other forms of lying are quoting people out of context to give completely misleading information about them. Some falsity is manifested in misquoting people for partisan purposes. This is witnessed in traditional media, individual-owned websites, blogs, and other social media platforms. "Twentieth-century quote-mongers are like the ninth-century comet-makers; they dream up things that never happened but which they think should have and then insert them into history." (Boller & George, 1989, p. x).

Fake is inadvertently perpetuated, while some are advertently spread. Untruths have been told and published for a long time in human history. Astronaut Neil Armstrong made a statement after becoming the first man to land on the moon "That's one small step for a

man, one giant leap for mankind." The omission of article "a," ruined the contrast he had made between one man ("a" man) and all humanity ("man"). Although newspapers and the wire services soon reported Armstrong's correction, the faulty version circulated (Boller & George, 1989).

A journalist covering an event of Kenyan politician William Ole Ntimama reported that the cabinet minister told non-indigenous people in Maasailand to "lie low like an envelope." In the actual words of the politician, he told the people to "lie low like an antelope." He later said he was misquoted by the media "who made the envelope part" (Standard Newspaper, October 11, 2019). Coming from a game area, Ntimama's claim makes sense. An envelope does not lie low, but an antelope can.

People can make up information for purposes of suiting their interests. After the death of Charles Darwin, there were claims by a section of religious people that the British scientist regretted why he presented his theory of evolution the way he did. The family, however, insisted that Darwin never said anything of the sort and that he did not even meet one of the evangelists who claimed to have met him on his deathbed reading the Bible in Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews (Boller & George, 1989, p. 19).

The duo further illustrates how language use can distort the meaning of the originally intended message. They record, for instance, that Isaac Newton is widely known to have said: "If I have seen farther, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants." For centuries Newton's admirers have quoted the shoulders of giants remark to show how modest the English scientist was. However, Newton remarked, "Pigmies placed on the shoulders of giants see more than the giants themselves" (p. 101).

Posetti and Mathews (2018) have chronicled cases of fake news. In 1835, The New York Sun published six articles about the discovery of non-existent life on the moon, claiming to recount the findings of astronomer Sir John Herschel. In the days immediately before and after the US election, people shared nearly as much 'fake news' as real news on Twitter. One fake news story circulating during the election outlined a supposed child abuse ring allegedly led by Hillary Clinton, running out of a pizza restaurant called Comet Ping Pong (Posetti & Mathews, 2018, p.7).

In March 2017, the United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Representative on Freedom of the Media, the Organisation of American States (OAS), Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and the African Commission on Human

and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Vienna, Austria, raised the alarm at the spread of disinformation and propaganda, and attacks on news media as 'fake news.'

The declaration guides state actors, under their domestic and international legal obligations and public duties, to ensure that they disseminate reliable and trustworthy information, including matters of public interest, such as the economy, public health, security, and the environment. The media and journalists should, as appropriate, support effective systems of self-regulation, whether at the level of specific media sectors such as press complaints bodies or at the level of individual media outlets, which include standards on striving for accuracy in the news, including by offering a right of correction and/or reply to address inaccurate statements in the media. Media outlets should consider including critical coverage of disinformation and propaganda as part of their news services in line with their watchdog role in society, particularly during elections and debates on public interest matters.

Intermediaries should support the research and development of appropriate technological solutions to disinformation and propaganda, which users may apply voluntarily. They should cooperate with initiatives that offer fact-checking services to users and review their advertising models to ensure that they do not adversely impact the diversity of opinions and ideas.

Stakeholders, including intermediaries, media outlets, civil society, and academia, should be supported in developing participatory and transparent initiatives for creating a better understanding of the impact of disinformation and propaganda on democracy, freedom of expression, journalism, and civic space, as well as appropriate responses to these phenomena.

4 Theoretical Framework

This paper is informed by two theories – propaganda theory and the theory of media determinism. In propaganda theory, Laswell and Blumenstock (1939) define propaganda as controlling attitudes by manipulating symbols – words, and word substitutes like pictures and gestures. Propaganda is aimed at evoking desired emotions by the propagandist while at the same time suppressing emotions that are likely to stifle the desired goals. "(T)he problem of the propagandist is to multiply all the suggestions favorable to the attitudes which he wishes to produce and strengthen, and to restrict all suggestions which are unfavorable to them" (Lasswell, 1927, p. 630).

Herman and Chomsky (1988) introduce the propaganda model focusing on the inequality of wealth and power and its multilevel effects on mass-media interests and choices. The model traces the routes by which money and power can filter out the news fit to print or broadcast, marginalize dissent, and allow the government and dominant private interests to get their messages across to the public (Herman & Chomsky, 1988, p.2).

"Propaganda is promotion which is veiled in one way or another as to its origin or sources, secondly, the interests involved, thirdly, the methods employed, fourth, the content spread, and fifth, the results accruing to the victims — anyone, any two, any three, any four, or all five." Cull et al. (2017), in a critical view of government and private media, extrapolates that the purpose of propaganda is not to inform but sway.

This theory informs the study of the working and use of propaganda both in legacy media and social media. It informs the circumstances, nature, and causes of social and traditional media propaganda. The theory further highlights the potential users of propaganda and the general tilting of news and information for individual or group interests. Lasswell acknowledged that technological changes exacerbate propaganda. Communication channels have created a homogenous society across political, social, and economic classes, with individuals engaging one another in argument and persuasion.

On the other hand, the Medium theory contemplates that media are active components in transforming the very nature of our society. Media are, therefore, platforms for initiating changes in society. In his Understanding Media, McLuhan begins with the chapter 'The medium is the message,' which outlines the basic principle of his media theory. His thesis is that the real import of media technology is not their apparent content (the narratives, stories, genres, cultural forms, and personalities they present for our consumption) but rather their material presence as discrete technologies and, more importantly, the reticulated networks of production and consumption they create/ "His assertion of media determinism infers to an image of society as entirely defined by its means of communication" (Taylor & Harris, 2008, p. 93).

McLuhan explains that technology has extended man into other geographical regions, limiting the time and space for contact between people. This has reduced the globe into a village. "As electrically contracted, the globe is no more than a village. Electric speed in bringing all social and political functions together in a sudden implosion has heightened human awareness of responsibility to an intense degree" (McLuhan, 1994, p. 5). The

shrinking of the globe has demystified the previous separation of communities and the youth from the elderly. "They can no longer be contained in the political sense of limited association. Thanks to the electric media, they are now involved in our lives, as we are in theirs."

McLuhan argues that the medium determines how the message is conveyed and consumed. In the Internet age, those previously considered media content consumers have been empowered by technology to communicate with those perceived as media content sources easily. The medium is the message because it is the medium that shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action. The content or uses of such media are as diverse as they are ineffectual in shaping the form of human association. Indeed, it is only too typical that the content of any medium blinds us to the character of the medium (McLuhan, 1994).

The medium, or process, of our time - electric technology - is reshaping and restructuring patterns of social interdependence and every aspect of our personal life. It is forcing us to reconsider and re-evaluate practically every thought, every action, and every institution formerly taken for granted (McLuhan, 2001, p. 9).

5 Research Methodology

This study utilized a qualitative research approach, employing interviews as a data collection method. The units of analysis were purposefully picked from policymakers and media practitioners, both traditional media and social media – advertising and public relations. The method was used because these specific groups are the ones who had the information the researcher sought to address the research objectives.

Ten editors were purposively sampled from five leading media houses in Kenya to establish the genres of fake news. Ten top government officials and /or their representatives responded to the interview and offered their views on fake news, their sources, and possible ways of controlling the spread of fake news. A further ten reporters from various media houses were sampled through the sequencing method to offer their views about fake news sources. Ten bloggers were selected purposively to give their feelings about fake news and its creators. Five advertising firms and ten Public Relations personnel were selected to give information about fake news and its sources. The respondents were reached either physically – face-to-face – or through mailed interview guides. Two Focus Group Discussion sessions were conducted to brainstorm on the genres of fake news. One FGD comprised six members, while the second was composed

of eight members, all drawn from earlier mentioned groups – editors, government officials, reporters, bloggers, advertising firms, and public relations officers. The response rate was 80%, as indicated in the table below. The data was analyzed, while the theory of propaganda and the theory of technological determinism guided the researcher to establish a conceptual framework for the genres of fake news.

6 Presentation and Discussion of Findings

Out of 84 respondents, 70 participated in the interview and Focus Group Discussion groups. All 14 participants sampled for FGD turned up for the discussions. In the interviews, 56 responded, while 14 did not. The turnout was 84%. The tables below show the response rate.

Table 1: A response rate of respondents for interviews

Caliber	Sample	Response rate
Editors	10	8
Reporters	10	9
Government officials	10	7
politicians	10	8
Bloggers	10	10
Advertisers	10	6
Public Relations practitioners	10	8
Total	**70**	**56**

Table 2: The sample and turnout for two FGDs.

Caliber	Sample	Response rate
Editors	2	2
Reporters	2	2
Government officials	2	2
Politicians	2	2
Bloggers	2	2
Advertisers	2	2
Public Relations practitioners	2	2
Total	**14**	**14**

This paper found out that fake news is real and it permeates all media. This paper found out the genres of fake news based on the various news gathering and dissemination levels in the Internet age. As alluded to in the introductory part of this paper, the term "fake" refers to an object made to look real or valuable to deceive people. Levinson (2017) explains that the purpose of propaganda is not to inform but sway. The purpose of such

communication is to influence, convince, and persuade. Findings show that propaganda and fake news are two sides of a coin. Fake news, too, aims at swaying.

This paper sought to discover the genres of fake news in Kenya, to inquire whether traditional media publish fake news, and to establish mechanisms traditional media have developed to counter fake news. This paper defines fake news from the respondents' perspective in its preliminaries. Respondents reported that fake news is information presented as truthful or confirmed when it is not. Key Informant One (KI1) reported: "News is fake when something that either did not happen or distorted report is put out as a fact." KI5 said: "Fake news is a mock-up of information or report of events presented in such a manner that it is very difficult to tell the difference between genuine occurrences and fabricated information."

Findings show that fake news originates in individuals who derive pleasure primarily from misinformation and the thrill of having people consume misleading information. This implies that some individuals send out information that is false for their pleasure, whereas they fully know that it is false. Such people find pleasure or satisfaction in duping others. Findings show that some of the reasons behind the spread of fake news are to propagate certain views that ordinarily would not be carried by the mainstream media because of either being outright false or grossly libelous. Respondents reported that specific fake news sources include government, legacy media, corporations, Public Relations firms, bloggers, and attention seekers.

In most cases, the purpose of disseminating fake news is to develop and sustain an angle to an issue to suit the interests of those pursuing the course through either self-indulgence or hiring people, or generally paying for the service. Their main interest is to influence opinion through distortion. This notion is supported by propaganda theory, which informs that people resort to untruths to make themselves look better than their competitors or selectively give information that makes them look good while hiding their dark sides.

Other underlying aims are to tarnish an image, gain influence or deflect attention from certain issues. In social media and other online platforms, individuals who spread fake news take advantage of the veil of anonymity that social media provides to effectively convey their message without suffering the consequences.

Respondents reported that the Internet had become the greatest purveyor of fake news due to its nature of accessibility and affordability. One spends a negligible amount of

money or no cost on the Internet to send unlimited messages. Any individual who wants to communicate fake news does not need to go through the mainstream media, which subjects information to gate-keeping processes. Technological determinism theory contends that technology determines how people communicate and what avenues are available. Other advantages of the Internet include its wide reach and instantaneity. Because of easier interconnectivity and liberal laws currently managing the internet space, many people readily engage in fake news compared to legacy media, where multiple gate-keeping layers would not allow such news to permeate.

Responding to research objective 2, respondents reported that mainstream media, too, publish fake news inadvertently. However, the frequency is low. Since media practitioners rely heavily on sources of information, some journalists and media practitioners fall prey to mischievous news sources who supply them with inherently false information.

Information sources distribute fake news when they want to push for an agenda. They include politicians who want to portray themselves as better than their opponents. This claim is supported by Levinson (2017), who contends that the purpose of untrue information is to sway. They give information that discredits their opponents, including discounting their opponents' views even if those views are not necessarily false. Like propagandists, they come in various forms, like legal counsel and communication experts, as alluded to by Laswell and Blumenstock (1939).

Another source of fake news to both mainstream media and social media is government. The majority of the respondents reported that governments, both national and county, were major sources of fake news. They identified the following as some of the reasons why governments give out fake news:

1. to test public reaction to a change in policy;

2. to divert attention from pressing issues in society that require government action;

3. to set a certain agenda outside what is topical at that particular moment; and

4. to show that the government is doing something which they are not doing, for example, fighting corruption.

Fake news needs to be flagged as such, and an alert message tagged on it to control misleading the consumers. Regulation and penalties for those who spread fake

information, just like legacy media, have been made on certain occasions to pay severe penalties after sharing unverified information with their consumers (KII7).

There are various sources and actors in the manufacture of fake news in contemporary society. In traditional or legacy media, fake news can be generated at the source of information levels, which include governments, corporations, Public Relations firms, bloggers for hire, and attention seekers. Journalists working in legacy media also have occasionally published fake news. This is usually traced back to media information sources. However, if not checked, journalists' political, social, and economic orientations may lead to fake news publication. Journalists' ineptitude may also lead to the publication of fake news.

Politicians always want to outdo one another. They engage in fake news by producing untrue information and disseminating it to the public through various media outlets – legacy media and internet-enabled platforms. The purpose of manufacturing fake news is for them and their friends to look good or their opponents to look bad. This is confirmed by data collected during the study informing this chapter and the literature review.

Members of both FGD1 and FGD2 were unanimous in support of formulating the regulatory framework to contain the spread of fake news. However, the Joint Declaration on Freedom of Expression and "fake news," disinformation and propaganda, issued on March 3, 2017, by the United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression with other parties, recommend guidelines on how to handle what is deemed as untrue information for the protection of freedom of expression and the media.

Under the declaration, state actors should not make, sponsor, encourage or further disseminate statements that they know or reasonably should know to be false (disinformation) or demonstrate a reckless disregard for verifiable information.

Suggestions by respondents that states intervene in controlling fake news require consideration of internationally recommended standards. The Vienna 2017 declaration on fake news, disinformation, and propaganda urges states to avoid extreme measures such as blocking entire websites, IP addresses, ports, or network protocols. Laws so enacted should be only those that can only be justified to be necessary to protect a human right or other legitimate public interest. Such laws should be proportionate and

non-intrusive. The declaration abhors governments' imposing of content filtering systems, which may infringe on freedom of expression.

Since there are diverse interests in news, some persons who find some news unfavourable may declare it fake, though it has some truth. Mechanisms should be implemented to ensure that some individuals do not unduly pronounce news as fake just because they disagree.

Fake news is more pronounced in the Internet age than previously because of the freedom of expression that comes with "new" technology. One requires minimal resources to publish, and the gatekeeper role within media organizations is being circumvented by technology. McLuhan explains that technology has extended man into other geographical regions, limiting the time and space for contact between people. This has reduced the globe into a village (McLuhan, 1994). The trend is changing so that a villager angered by a grassroots leader's failure to deliver on electoral pledges can publish without the scrutiny of an editor who is a gatekeeper. The more they publish, the more they offend the leaders used to the traditional media they control. They always declare the information fake even if it has some truth.

Fake news and propaganda are two sides of a coin. As stated above, they both intend to achieve a particular or varied agenda. However, propaganda takes a small amount of calculated strategy that may involve a series of other related stories. Though damaging like propaganda, fake news may not necessarily have subsequent series to a story.

On the other hand, governments use fake news for multiple reasons, such as seeking to discredit the opposition, media which they perceive as pursuing an opposing agenda by portraying it as unreliable or serving certain anti-government agenda (KII7).

It is not easy to make people stop spreading fake news, especially online, since there is a lack of gatekeepers on social platforms. The rise of mobile phones as a tool for receiving information has heightened the spread and access to such material alongside real/verifiable news. Ethical and legal measures which do not necessarily curtail freedom of expression and the media should be encouraged.

Mainstream media need to verify every claim before republishing or broadcasting. "Regulatory frameworks must be put in place to make publishers or broadcasters account for the veracity of the fake stories" KII15. This will enhance the integrity/reputation of the media house to act as a platform to inculcate among audiences or consumers that if platforms with integrity did not publish it, it is false or did not happen.

Media houses intensified their verification of information to counter the pilfering of fake news into their platforms. Some increased sessions of internal training and refresher courses for reporters and editors. "Journalists have been guided on the possible sources of fake news and how to handle such sources" (KII20). Fact-checking computer applications assist journalists in detecting any fake news before adopting it for their publications. "Media houses are keen on ethical issues, and journalists are on high alert to examine information before considering it for a story" (KII5).

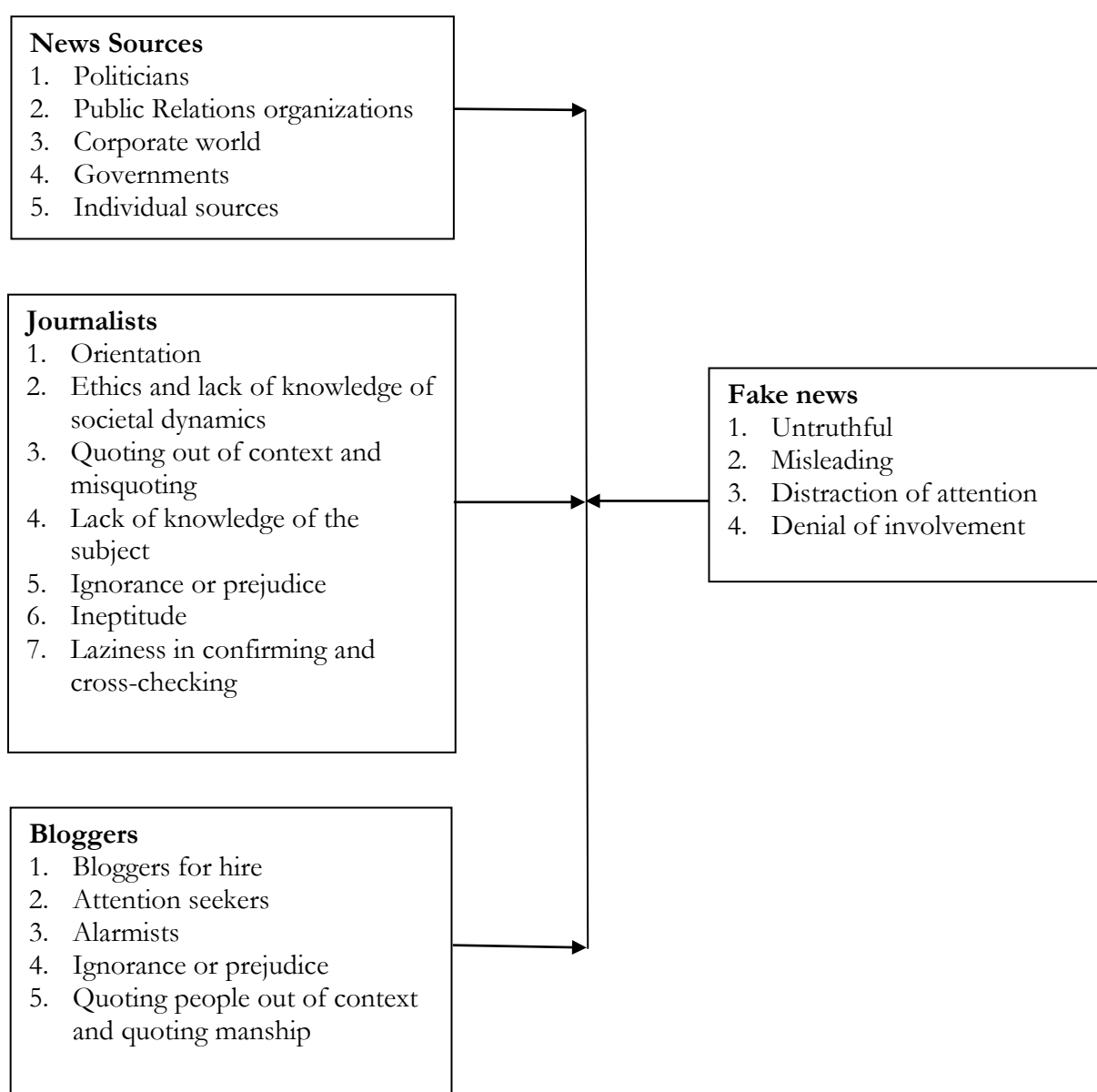**A conceptual framework for fake news genres**

News Sources
1. Politicians
2. Public Relations organizations
3. Corporate world
4. Governments
5. Individual sources

Journalists
1. Orientation
2. Ethics and lack of knowledge of societal dynamics
3. Quoting out of context and misquoting
4. Lack of knowledge of the subject
5. Ignorance or prejudice
6. Ineptitude
7. Laziness in confirming and cross-checking

Fake news
1. Untruthful
2. Misleading
3. Distraction of attention
4. Denial of involvement

Bloggers
1. Bloggers for hire
2. Attention seekers
3. Alarmists
4. Ignorance or prejudice
5. Quoting people out of context and quoting manship

Figure 1: A conceptual framework for genres of fake news.

Source: The author.

7 Conclusion

Fake news is an observable phenomenon in society today. However, some news may carry elements or portray characteristics of being fake without necessarily being wholly fake. Such partial characteristics should not be used to dismiss a fake news item wholesomely. There is a need, therefore, to scrutinize a piece of information or news to separate truth from lies.

In an attempt to regulate news, democratic states should strive to put in place frameworks that enhance freedom of information and access to information. Therefore, regulatory measures should propose civil action as opposed to criminal action.

There is a close relationship between fake news and propaganda. The difference between old propaganda and fake news is that technological shift, which enables the traditionally non-newsmakers to publish directly, has allowed individuals to articulate their concerns, however partisan or non-partisan, without going through the elite-controlled traditional media. Therefore, whereas propaganda came from the top to bottom, technology has allowed the same propaganda to come from the bottom up, disrupting the status quo.

There are various genres of fake news– based on sources and levels. Fake news may be created at the level of news sources, which include political outfits, government or the state, the corporate world, and individual sources. Governments and politicians give fake news to media houses through various channels like websites, news releases, and rallies to distract public attention from real issues that require their attention. Political outfits like political parties and other political groupings often issue fake information in their struggle to outdo their opponents. The corporate world publishes fake news to enhance and protect their businesses when in trouble.

The second genre of fake news comes from journalists themselves. Their lacking of social, political, and professional orientation distorts information and leads to the publication of unverified information or news that they are ignorant about its implication. Such journalists pick information from sources and publish it without interrogating it. Some journalists are not conversant with societal intricacies, dynamics, and setups. Some are constrained by their ignorance of ethical issues for journalists. They do not find it necessary to investigate and balance their news. Some journalists are generally inept. They do not understand the critical issues surrounding information collection, processing, and dissemination. Some journalists are lazy and do not go beyond a press release or a post they find on online platforms.

Another genre of fake news comes from bloggers. Some bloggers are hired to discredit individuals and organizations, while others are hired to perpetuate the interests of various state organs, particularly the state's executive arm and the legislature. Some bloggers are simply attention seekers who raise the alarm over unfounded threats to their or their cronies' lives. Most of these are also for hire. Some bloggers publish untrue information, and most of the time, such information has been proven false, setting bloggers at loggerheads with the state.

8 Recommendations

This paper recommends that:

1. Fake news should be regulated in its various genres to ensure that truthful and credible information is given to consumers for both societal and personal development. However, regulatory frameworks should be based on the confines of freedom of expression and the media. All the regulatory measures should aim at civil settlements instead of criminal avenues.

2. Information suspected to be fake should be scrutinized to safeguard any little truth hidden within the larger text or item. A piece of information may not be wholly untruthful. Therefore, scrutiny will salvage however small the truth contained in it.

3. Standards should be established to protect media and other communicators against sources of information who advertently and maliciously supply them with fake information for their publications or broadcasts.

4. Media houses should empower their staff with the competence to detect fake news and information supplied to them. The media should also provide journalists with facilities to verify information in media production.

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