

# The dissemination of false or defamatory information online

## INTRODUCTION

Social media users continue to threaten privacy with the spread of fake news thus impacting people negatively. This study seeks not just to reveal the predominant demography of Nigerians who spread false information, but also to access how the decision to verify and share such information is made. The cluster and systematic sampling method were used to select respondents from selected geopolitical zones in Nigeria. The study revealed that adults between ages 21-35 and 36 – 50 spread misinformation on social media platforms, and those in the latter age range would not verify before sharing on Whatsapp and Facebook.

It recommends that the public needs to be educated on information verification, and the government and concerned organizations need to enforce the laws necessary to discourage the spread of misinformation.

## BACKGROUND RESEARCH

Previous studies by Finkel, et al (2019); Wilson and Umar (2019); Baum, Lazer, and Mele, (2017) have discussed the role of selected social media sites and educational status in the spread of fake news. Other research in this area also revolves around the phenomenon of fake news, the risk to society worldwide, and solutions to the spread of fake news among other research (Roozenbeek and Linden, 2018; Dentith, 2017; Egelhofer, 2019). Therefore, this study examined the demography descriptions of persons likely to be mostly involved in the dissemination of false information on social media, the rate at which they disseminate fake news, the nature of the stories they frequently forward, and the willingness or ability to verify social media contents, before dissemination. The results of this study would assist relevant stakeholders in regulating online content by guiding them to make informed decisions.

## RESEARCH QUESTION

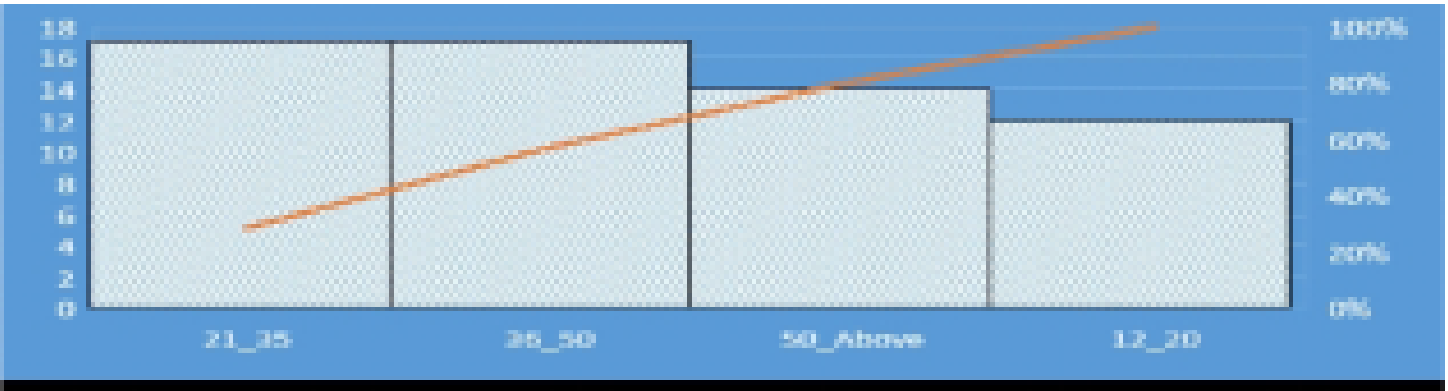
What is the role of nigerian in dissemination of fake news on social media?  
How audience use social media in dissemination fake news online?

## Methodology

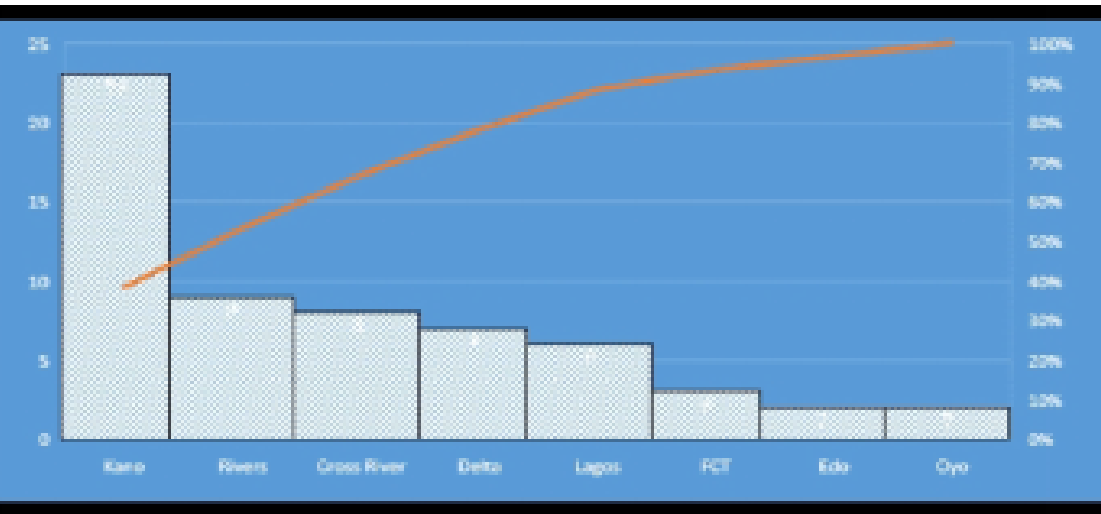
In selecting respondents for the research, the researchers randomly selected a state each from the six cosmopolitan regions in Nigeria. However, only five states were finally used for the research, because, one of the geopolitical zones was not considered cosmopolitan at the time of this research. Thus, no state was selected from the North-East region because no cosmopolitan state exists in that region. In some other regions only one was selected because only one cosmopolitan state exists there. After all the above considerations, the study selected a total of five (Cross River, Delta, Edo, Enugu, FCT, Kano, Lagos, Oyo and Rivers) states from each region to participate in the survey.

## FINDING

Dissemination of fake news on social media by age category



Dissemination of fake news on social media by location ( Nigeria state)



## Conclusion and Recommendation

- Appropriate government arms should propose and pass into law the necessary bills that punish whoever propagates fake news. Nigerian demographical involvement especially by location, age, and gender thus, the study recommends the following:
- The federal government and relevant organizations should collate research papers/materials particular to demography analysis on the dissemination of fake news in Nigeria and use results to identify the specific role of Nigerians in the dissemination of fake news based on the demography. This action will enable them to identify these categories of persons so that the educational plans can be channeled appropriately. Through this process, they can achieve the aim of creating awareness on the implications of spreading fake news.
- Since the political system is also involved in the creation and spread of fake news, it is necessary for journalists to begin to engage in proper investigations to expose this act in politicians. Considering their professionalism in the field of ‘investigative journalism’, they should engage the relevant professionals such as programmers, and IT practitioners to understand how and why people create blogs and other platforms for the sole aim of spreading false information. Such exposure will not only restrain Nigerians employed to do politicians’ dirty jobs, but it would also inform Nigerians of the importance of verifying online information.
- Appropriate government arms should propose and pass into law the necessary bills that punish whoever propagates fake news.

## REFERENCE

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