



## The Use of Social Media Platforms in Combating Online Fake News Phenomenon in Higher Institution Libraries in Gombe State

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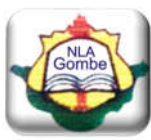
### Abstract

**Purpose:** This study investigates the use of social media platforms in combating online fake news phenomenon in Higher Institution Libraries in Gombe State. **Objectives:** The objectives of the study include: to determine the use of social media platforms in combating fake news in libraries, to identify the challenges of online fake news in the libraries and to proffer ways of finding solution solutions to the identified challenges of online fake news. **Gaps:** The popularity on the use of social media has led to spread of online fake news. The extensive spread of online fake news on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and WhatsApp are impacting on the society negatively. **Methods/ Design:** This study was guided by descriptive research design. The population of this study consisted of 62 academic librarians in Higher Institution libraries in Gombe State. The study used census technique for the population of academic librarians in the university library as participants in the study. A semi-structured questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents. **Results:** the findings shows that despites that the use of social media have influenced contemporary societies in all sectors of life including the library. The library has important roles to play to combat the spread of online fake news and to provide awareness to the society on its implication. **Conclusion:** The paper concluded that the library has great roles to play in the provision of accurate, relevant and authentic information that would improve learning and research among its users who are mostly using social media for academic and social engagement. **Recommendations:** The paper advocated strong policy statement that would checkmate the spread of online fake news on social media.

**Keywords:** Academic Libraries, Social Media, Fake News, Facebook, You Tube, Information literacy

### Introduction

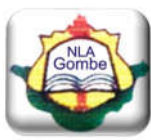
The use of social media platforms in academic libraries have become an indispensable phenomenon in global information provision and dissemination. This is because the world is driven by digital technology advancement which makes academic libraries to meet with twenty-first century information demands (Onuoha, 2013). Social Media has become a platform that everybody, organizations and institutions cannot do without (Harvard Business



Review Analytics Services, 2017). Online fake news phenomenon continues to dominate headlines as the volume of fabricated news stories circulating on social media increases (Orlando, 2017). Recent research has shown that people obtain a substantial amount of their news from social media feeds (Orlando, 2017; Premium Times, 2020). Fabricated and unfounded stories as an emerging form of information service provision has potentially influence public opinion. Social media platforms example such as Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram and Facebook attract followers, irrespective of message content (Orlando, 2017). Being able to verify the trustworthiness of information is an increasing concern for every government and societies. Globally, social media offers freedom of communication, interaction and opinion expressions. However, the current social media is regularly being misused to spread fake information, messages and comments. The concept of online fake news is defined as any communication that has no authoritative backing and credible source capable of causing social, political and moral disharmony among the people (Kim, Moravec & Dennis 2019). Therefore, in order to minimize the spread of online fake news among the people, the libraries has a greater roles to play in the provision of accurate, relevant and authentic information that would improve learning and research among its users who are mostly using social media for academic and social engagement.

The advent of social media has become an increasing familiar tools employed by libraries in marketing services and resources to current and prospective services to their patrons. However, with the proliferation of user-generated content of information on social media platforms and the shrinking influence of traditional gatekeeping, there is a growing abundance of misinformation available to the public that coexists alongside accurate information. According to Karlova and Fisher (2013) misinformation is false or misleading information that, according to them, may be false, as well as incomplete, ambiguous, or inaccurate. Fake news can be either misinformation or disinformation depending on the motives that the writer or publisher has. Despite that social media applications offer boundless opportunities for individuals to learn while also contributing to the knowledge of others, online fake news information made available for public consumption through social media create false impression or mislead the public (Narwal, 2018). Curtis (2011) opines that social media encourage people to create new knowledge and share it across their online communities rather than information that are destructive in content and context.

With the exponential growth of the use of social media such as the Facebook, Myspace, Twitter and YouTube, it became inevitable that libraries must strategize to keep their ever growing and sophisticated patrons informed through reliable information service provision. The importance of social media cannot be overemphasized because it serves as tools to interact with patrons on activities and services of libraries despite the increase rate of fake news on social media. In fact, given the present economic scenario in developing countries where library budgets have been constantly on the decline, Libraries and librarians utilized the social media as a means for serving the patrons in a more specialized, interactive, and value added way without incurring undue expenses. Adaja and Ayodele (2013) posits in a study on using social media to harness the potential for academic excellence among librarians in academic libraries that social media such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Ning, Myspace, Blogs, Wikis, LinkedIn and Flickr have assist librarians to interact, communicate and share information on a particular subject or issue, and allow users to contribute to current and up-to-date information on scholarship. (Ullah, 2015). Khan, Masrek and Nadzar (2015) maintain that social media tools are used by academic librarians mostly to provide current and up to date information to clients, provide links to other open source library resources, and give information about new arrivals in the case of books through the link to the library world cat and through the updated list of journals. However, In Nigeria and other developing countries, fake news have continue to ravage the image of the



country socially, politically, morally and academically and also diminish knowledge and intellectual interaction (Echezona and Chigbu, 2015; Orlando, 2017).

## Literature Review

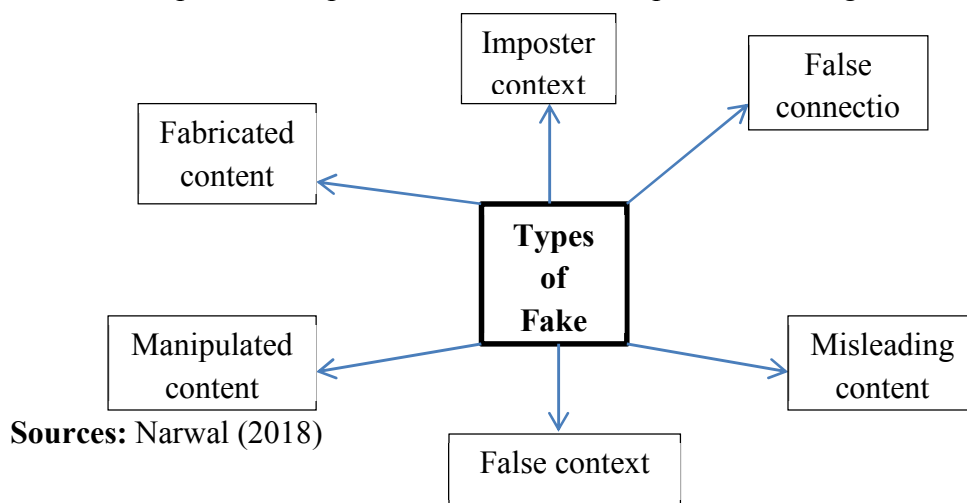
### Concepts of Online Fake News Phenomenon

In this age of digital technology, individuals are constantly receiving a substantial amount of information from various sources in a way that makes it compelling to process online content through critical eyes. Recent findings indicates that fake news that is usually circulated through some of the social media platforms can further mislead people and escalate already existing tension in the system (Orlando,2017; Mrah, 2018). Similarly, the massive diffusion of several social media content and platform has redefined information-sharing boundaries, turning digital natives from consumers to producers of knowledge (Mrah, 2017). Web 2.0 and 3.0 technologies have radically redefined the dynamics of information exchange. As breaking news unfolds, people increasingly turn to social media to stay abreast of the latest updates. The term fake news continues to dominate headlines as the volume of fabricated news stories circulating on social media increases (Orlando, 2017).

In developed countries, research has indicated that the rate of fake news among the people has become a source of concern to the government. For example, the government of Canada, the United State of America, France and Britain has brought a policy that would regulate the activities of social media with the promulgation of law of online fake news policy (Anderson & Rainie, 2017). In contrast, developing country like Nigeria, social media has contributed greatly to sparking unrest in different corners of society through the spread of fake news. Yet to arrest this ugly situation, stakeholders from government agencies, such as Nigerian Television Authority, Nigerian Centre for Disease Control, and non-state actors especially NGOs have ironically resorted to the use of social media to counter the spread of fake news. This trend recently brought about the banned of Twitter by the Nigerian government because of spread of fake news in the country. Also, Facebook has announced new measures to clamp down on the spread of unverified news. The influential social network is in a constant fight to sort verified news reports from made-up stories through partnering with outside fact- checkers. In an attempt to restrain the spread of misinformation, fake stories will be publicly "flagged as 'disputed' by third-party fact-checkers, forcing them to appear lower down in people's news feed." (Facebook, 2016)

### Types of Online Fake News Spread

There is vastness and variety in the universe of fake news having different intensity and formats to grab the attention of the audience. Narwal (2018) findings categorized fake news into six types based on their patterns, impact and format which is presented in Figure below





*Misleading content:* This means use of information to create some issue that is not completely true. As the news can be distorted to make captivating headlines and only small snippets of full article are displayed to audience in the newsfeed. These types of news deliberately create political influence, propaganda or partisanship. Misleading news promotes biased point of view. This type of news seeks to actively influence public opinions. For Example: in Nigeria, recent misleading news by Sahara reporters which shows that a certain ethnic groups wanted to dominate power for life. This misleading news nearly leads to rancour in the country. Therefore, the libraries are at the forefront of providing information literacy with the provision of current and accurate information that would improve learning and research needs of the populace

*Imposter Content:* This means genuine sources of news are purported with the false sources. The look and feel of these false, made up sources is quite similar to the real news sites. The fake news sites with down market look of the original source presents stories which misleads the audience to make them believe on these false stories. This disrupts governance in entire country. For example: acknowledging wrong reference either with wrong dates or wrong title in publication. This is notable among researchers who simply copy and paste information without credible source. Imposter takes advantage and present stories which are less credible with no publisher information and appears which tarnishes the reputation of real sites and a decrease in belief.

*Fabricated Content:* fabricated content means everything in the story is 100% false, designed to deceive with the intent to harm. In this, a new content is designed lacking truth and purely false with the intention of misinforming audience. This type of news is very sensational with the style and look of legitimate news. The sole purpose of fabricated content is to generate likes, shares and profits. News bots are generally used to widely circulate the fake news to people. The fabricated content is usually motivated for religion or political advantages. For example, the news about Ebola and COVID-19 disease in which so many fabricated information were share on social media. Another for example is about COVID 19 not having effect on black people or disease for the rich are just merely fabricated stories without credible source.

*False Connection:* When headlines, visuals and context promoting a story don't match up with the content present in the news, it shows that there is false connection. For Example, often it is seen that social media and news media introduce some flashy headlines stating some very spicy, sensational news covering. But when it is clicked through then no relation between the headline and content is present. This content is also available social media platforms in which people share information that goes contrary to the goals and objectives of the platform. A typical example is our NLA Gombe WhatsApp platforms in which members post sensational, religion or cultural information that has no links with librarianship.

*False Context:* this means that sometimes news is published without checking the context. The facts supporting the content might not be reliable. When real news is shared with false contextual information then it can mislead the audience. Sometimes, pictures or video display don't correspond with the context discussed. This happened daily either in our conventional news platforms or social media platforms. This is due to the poor and deep investigation through research.

*Manipulated Content:* Content that presents genuine information or imagery but in some way manipulated to tell a different story with the intention to deceive. Real photos or videos are morphed to create false news. Digital images opened a way for manipulators to doctor images





through powerful manipulation software and advanced techniques. Photos are altered by removing minor elements, increasing colour saturation, removing or inserting a person into image to change the context for catching the audience eye.

Therefore, the role of the libraries is of a particular interest in finding out if the inaccurate and erroneous contents of information are fake or incorrect. According to the Chair of the IFLA Advisory Committee on Freedom of Access to Information and Freedom of Expression, Martyn Wade, “Freedom of access to information is a right of all, and the increase in activities intended to deliberately mislead citizens’ leads inevitably to damaging everyone’s human rights”. This explicates how important the role of libraries is understood in the work against fake contents (IFLA 2018.)

One of the main tasks of libraries is to provide timely and reliable information to customers. It is not just fabricated or manipulated contents and propaganda that is threatening our customers as misinformation. Also pseudoscience, hoaxes and biases are materials we have to recognize as knowledge professionals.

### **Sources of Online Fake News**

Online fake news are written and circulated via different social media platforms such as Twitter, You Tube, Facebook, and other sources with the intention and purpose of misleading audiences which can have real life consequences socially, politically and morally. Traditional way of getting news is from authentic sources, journalists and media outlets which follow strict codes of practice while collecting news. However, with the advent of Internet and other digital technologies which has little regulation and editorial standard creates, shares and consumes information in its own fashion. For examples, Websites publish false stories to increase their readers, online sharing and click revenue. But the most prevalent sources of fake news are Facebook, Google, Internet news sites and Twitter, as social media acts as a low cost distribution channel, where the bogus information once posted spreads throughout the Internet as wildfire to mass through retweets, likes and sharing (Albright, 2017).

Social media acts as an easy avenue for the spread of completely manipulated, unfounded, unguided, and unreliable information for gaining maximum attention of the readers thereby creating tension and disharmony among the people. The digital world gave non-journalists a way to reach mass audience (Narwal, 2018). Mrah (2017) describes fake news with the use of social media as the fastest and easiest ways to facilitates spread and exchange of misinformation with a mass audience following it. The news having more comments, likes and shares receive huge attention of the audience and is likely to be commented, shared and liked further.

### **Implication of Online Fake News**

There are several implications of fake news that is circulated with the intention to mislead people in order to tarnish the reputation of agency, entity or person, political and financial gain. Some of the implications of fake news as provided by Narwal, (2018) are as follows:

*Societal Implication:* In past half of decades, it has been found that most of the violent acts among the groups/ people are flared up by fake news spread by Social media. This disturbs the social harmony and fraternity of the society and makes the nation weak in times of need. For example, the recent end SARS phenomena in Nigeria which creates social implication in which there were wide spread news that many protesters were killed by the army, but it was later discovered that it is merely a fabricated news.

*Financial Implication:* The information in financial sector is spread in order to break down the corporate structures and nations’ economy. For example, there was news going round social



media that Nigeria Federal Government has increased fuel prices. Various media platforms start spreading information about it, which becomes the basis of decision making and ultimately harms the nations' economy in negative way. Similarly, false information CBN monetary policy was not left out which pulls down the country's economy.

*Psychological Implication:* According to a study, when lots of information is given then people become vulnerable to manipulation. People are driven by emotions and biases. Without checking the objectives and truthiness of the information people start sharing and commenting the news. Upon receiving the information people change their minds conflicting with their belief as they spend less or no time assessing the quality of the information before sharing which ends up rippling like a contagion. Each time a person sees such stories on Facebook, Tweeter, Google or any website then it makes a subtle impression and seeps into their mind.

*Political Implication:* Fake news before the elections in the terms of fake election surveys not only misleads the citizens but also swing the result of elections. Apart from that, fake news about the political candidate/ political party just before the elections tarnish the image of political candidate/ political party and play vital role in defeating them in elections. So this can be implied that public opinion and electoral disclosure can be affected through fake news. For example, the 2019 general election that was conducted in Nigeria, fake result were spreads on social media without the knowledge of the electoral empire. This sparked controversy and political problems in the country. In order to control such fake news election machinery of many nations has come out with stricter provisions against fake news.

*Health Implication:* Fake news spread like wide fire in every country around the world. So many unreliable and unconfirmed sources of information have become norms in the society. Lies, falsehoods and propaganda about COVID- 19 were spread in social media. For example, information were spread that COVID-19 does not killed black people. Some advises that the use face masks should be discourage because it does not prevent the spread of COVID-19. Others claimed that COVID-19 vaccines were produced to eliminate African. Therefore, it is the responsibility of libraries to critically evaluate the authenticity and credibility of information from reliable source and disseminate to the right users at a right time through digital technology as means of information service provision (Liman & Shuaibu, 2021).

### **Use of Social Media to Combat Online Fake News in Academic Libraries in Nigeria**

Social network is an evolutionary development of online participation where people of common interest communicate, share and contribute content on the social cyberspace. It is a viable tool for cooperation and sharing of knowledge in an open access platform. In the Social Network, people with common interests are able to share information with each other via a huge variety of social network sites (sites created specifically to make sharing, communicating, and creating information as simple and efficient as possible). The use of social network is important in combating fake news by providing library service through two-way interaction and communication of information. With new networking tools, information can now flow in a multi-faceted dimension (library to user, user to library, library to library, and user to user), rather than the one way stereotype form of library to user. It is important to verify the source of information because social media is constantly expanding the world of participatory and collaborative scholarly communication and learning. This is to ensure that fake news is not spread to users. Information literacy is key and a new model of online service that encourages interaction, communication and flow of information from library to users and from the user back to the library (Mrah, 2018). The social media platforms are used for collaboration and sharing of ideas and it is becoming an integral part of library services. It also calls for libraries to encourage users' participation and feedback mechanism in the development and



maintenance of library services. The active participation of users enables them to contribute content, establish communication links, and stay informed of new developments in the social network space. With information and ideas flowing in both directions – from the library to the user and from the user to the library – library services have the ability to evolve and improve on a constant and rapid basis and to avoid biasness in the provision of information services that are unreliable. Some of these Social Network platforms used by libraries in Nigeria to combat fake news and provides information that would meet the needs of the users according to Williams (2021) include:

**Facebook:** Facebook is arguably one of the most popular social media platforms because it is users- friendly. Most people use Facebook to share, comment and like fake information. Therefore, there is the need for librarians to create an application with the use of Facebook to interact with users on how best to use Facebook account to share and create information with credible source.

**Myspace:** This platform is important as Williams (2021) findings indicated that University of Nigeria, Nsukka and Imo State University, Oweri libraries have taken advantage of this site to post, calendar, custom catalog search tools, and blog features to improve their presence. In this case, reliable information such as availability of various library resources, library opening and closing hours, library display services and current awareness services get to the users through this platform.

**Ning:** Libraries can get connected with users. Special and research library users utilize this platform to get information about the activities and services of the library. Also, seminar, workshop and conference announcement get to the users through the Ning platform. This prevents people from having access to fake and unreliable information.

**Blogs:** Here, libraries and librarians can periodically post messages; share information on a particular subject or issue, and allow users to contribute to content. This system ensures proper interaction among the libraries and users for effective with positive and instant reaction from users. Academic and National library use this platform mostly. This platform promotes mutual trust in information sharing.

**Wikis:** Wikis is a free online encyclopedia that gives a background knowledge and definition of concepts. It offers a platform for users to access, edit and contribute to content. This is a collaborative web page for developing web content. For example, Wikipedia relied on this platform to provide credible information without ambiguity or doubt of been fake or unreliable.

**Twitter:** Twitter is a micro blogging application that keeps staff and patrons updated on daily activities, like frequently updated collections. Users can utilize this platform to type in short messages or status update. Librarians in Nigeria can use this platform to give users firsthand information on the on-going national elections, health information, agricultural literacy programs and weather forecast. Users can send Instant Messages (IM) on complaints or ask questions on a particular issue and get a feedback on the spot using twitter. This is one of the most reliable sources of information. However, librarians must check the authenticity of the information to avoid fake sharing of the information.

**YouTube:** In academic libraries in Nigeria, events such as important highlights of inaugural lectures, conferences and workshops are disseminated via the YouTube.

**Flickr:** Libraries and Librarians in public, special and academic use this tool to share and distribute new images of library collections. Cover page of new arrivals of both books and



journals can be disseminated to users via Flickr. It can also be used to enlighten users on topical issues such as the different pictures of emblems of the political parties in Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Despite global development and transformation in digital technology services that facilitates the exchange of information, ideas, knowledge, interaction and communication via social media platforms and handles (International Telecommunication Union, 2018). The current situation of social media is being misused to spread fake information, messages and comments. Argument from recent research conducted has shown that people obtain a substantial amount of their news from social media contents such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, You Tube, WhatsApp and Tik Tok to share views and opinions on issues that are of common interest (Orlando, 2017; Premium Times, 2020). However, fabricated, misinformed, disinformed and unfounded stories as an emerging form of information service provision has potentially influence public opinions and debates.

The advent of social media has become an increasing familiar tools employed by libraries in marketing services and resources to provide current and prospective services to their patrons. However, with the proliferation of user-generated content of information on social media platforms and the shrinking influence of traditional gatekeeping, there is a growing abundance of misinformation available to the public that coexists alongside accurate information. Despite that the use of social media platforms offer boundless opportunities for individuals to learn while also contributing to the knowledge of others, online fake news information made available for public consumption through social media create false impression or mislead the public (Narwal, 2018). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the use of social media platforms in combating online fake news phenomenon in Higher Institution Libraries in Gombe State

### **Objectives of the Study**

The overall objective of this study is to investigate the use of social media platforms in combating online fake news phenomenon in Higher Institution Libraries in Gombe State. Its specific objectives are:

1. To determine the use of social media platforms in combating fake news in libraries.
2. To identify the challenges of using social media to spread online fake news in the libraries
3. To proffer ways of finding solution solutions to the identified challenges of online fake news

### **Methodology**

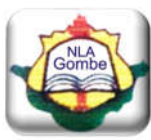
#### **Design**

This study was guided by descriptive research design. This methodology was adopted because the study focused on the use of social media platforms in combating online fake news phenomenon in Higher Institution Libraries in Gombe State

### **The Study Population**

Presently, there are eight higher institutions in Gombe State which include: Gombe State University Library, Federal University, Kashere Library, Federal College of Education (Technical), Gombe Library, Federal College of Horticulture, Dadin-kowa, Federal Polytechnic, Kaltungo Library, College of Education, Billiri Library, College of Education and Legal Studies Library, Nafada and Gombe State Polytechnic Library, Bajoga. Also, there are 62 practicing Librarians in these institutions as shown in Table 1.





**Table 1: Distribution of the Population**

<b>Programme of Study</b>	<b>Academic Librarians</b>
Gombe State University Library	12
Federal University, Kashere Library	14
Federal College of Education (Technical), Gombe Library	11
Federal College of Horticulture, Dadin-kowa	6
Federal Polytechnic, Kaltungo Library	7
College of Education, Billiri Library	5
College of Education and Legal Studies Library, Nafada	4
Gombe State Polytechnic Library, Bajoga	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>

Source: Nigerian Library Association, Gombe State Chapter

### **Sample and Sampling Procedure**

This study utilized census methods. Rani; Yadav and Jain (2016) viewed census as a study of every unit, everyone or everything in a given population. It is also known as a complete enumeration. One major advantage of the census is that every unit of the population is studied before drawing any conclusions. When more data is collected, the degree of the validity of the information also increases, and the results are less biased. In this study, since the total number of academic librarians was not large, the census method was adopted to gather the data. The population units of the study consisted of 56 academic librarians in the study.

### **Instrument**

Questionnaire was the main instrument used for data collection for this study. A questionnaire is a self-report data collection instrument that each participant fills in as part of a research study (Johnson and Christensen, 2008). A questionnaire is a very popular form of data collection tool, especially when gathering information from large groups and when standardization is important. Questionnaire was used for collecting data for this study because it gives the researcher the ability to collect data from a large number of people within a relatively short period of time.

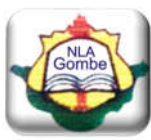
### **Data Collection**

The permission of the school authorities was sought before the instrument administration. The researcher personally distributed the instrument to the participants. Sixty two (62) copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the participants. However, thirty five (45) copies properly filled were returned and analyzed. The administration of the instrument took a span of two weeks.

### **Data Analysis**

The quantitative data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 24.0. SPSS statistical techniques are a major tool for data analysis in research. The choice of the SPSS systems was based on the fact that SPSS systems are the standard analytical tools to analyze quantitative data.

A data entry form was designed for entering questionnaire data into SPSS and the corresponding data of 10 questions was entered into the system. The study variables were presented using descriptive statistics. The data collected for the research were analyzed using frequency distribution, percentage, mean and standard deviation. Data collected from the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The analysis and interpretations of the research findings was in line with the study objectives.



## Results

This section is concerned with data presentation, analysis, interpretation and discussion of findings. The results are presented and analyzed based on the research questions by the researcher's.

**Research Objective 1:** To determine the use of social media platforms in combating fake news in libraries.

The first objective sought to determine the use of social media platforms in combating fake news in libraries. To address this objective the researcher identified sub- themes that addressed the use various social media platforms in combating online fake news in libraries. The respondents were given statements and they were to answer by stating their level of agreement with them using a Likert scale: Strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agree (A) =3, Disagree (D)=2 and , Strongly Disagree (SD)= 1 respectively. Table 2 shows the statements that the respondents were presented with and how they responded

**Table 2: The use of social media platforms in combating fake news in libraries**

The use of social media to combat fake news	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
	Count%	Count%	Count%	Count%
The use of social media creates two-way interaction and communication of information helps to eliminate fake news among the people	17 (37.7%)	12 (26.6%)	9 (20.0%)	7 (15.5%)
The use of social media enhance flow of information in a multi-faceted dimension to curb the spread of fake news	15 (33.3%)	10 (22.2%)	11 (24.4%)	9 (20.0%)
The use of social media serves as source of expanding the participatory and collaborative scholarly communication and learning between the users and librarians.	16 (35.5%)	8 (17.7%)	12 (26.6%)	9 (20.0%)
The use of social media enhance rapid information services and avoid fake and unreliable in the library	15 (33.3%)	10 (22.2%)	11 (24.4%)	9 (20.0%)
The use of social media in the library is an effective way of increasing access to effective library services	16 (35.5%)	8 (17.7%)	12 (26.6%)	9 (20.0%)

Source: field work, (2022)

The findings revealed that 29 (64.4%) of the respondents indicated that the use of social media creates two-way interaction and communication of information helps to eliminate fake news among the people, while 16 (35.5%) had a divergent view. Similarly, the finding also showed that 25 (55.5%) of the respondents revealed that the use of social media enhance flow of information in a multi-faceted dimension to curb the spread of fake news, while 20 (44.4%) had contrary view. On the aspect of the use of social media serves as source of expanding the participatory and collaborative scholarly communication and learning between the users and librarians, 24 (53.3%) of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, while 21 (46.6%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. Overall, the implication of these findings in relation to use of social media in combating fake news in the library is that most of the participants had acknowledged that the use of social media enhance rapid information services in the provision of information services to avoid fake news among users in the library



**Research Objective 2:** To identify the challenges of using social media to spread online fake news in the libraries

**Table 2: Challenges of using social media to spread online fake news in the libraries**

Challenges of using social media to spread fake news	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
	Count% (%)	Count% (%)	Count% (%)	Count% (%)
Social media tarnish the image of the people with fake news	20 (37.7%)	13 (26.6%)	7 (20.0%)	5 (15.5%)
Social media heighten tension and disharmony in the country with the spread of fake news	21 (33.3%)	12 (22.2%)	7 (24.4%)	5 (20.0%)
Social media create violence among the people	20 (35.5%)	11 (17.7%)	8 (26.6%)	6 (20.0%)
Poor social media handling as a result of fake news causes political rivalry among the people	18 (33.3%)	15 (22.2%)	9 (24.4%)	5 (20.0%)

Source: field work, (2022)

The challenges of using social media to spread false manipulated, unfounded, unguided and unreliable information are gaining momentum among the general public. It on this basis that respondents were asked the various challenges of using social media to spread fake news. The the finding revealed 33 (73.3%) indicated that social media tarnish the image of the people with fake news, while 12 (26.6%) had contrary views. Also, 31 (68.8%) of the respondents showed that social media create violence among the people, while 14 (31.1%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. On the aspects of using social media to heighten tension and disharmony in the country with the spread of fake news, the finding revealed that 33 (73.3%) of the respondents supported the statement while, 12 (26.6%) had different opinions. This implies that poor handling of social media continue to posed serious threat and challenges to the society that require serious attention to curb it.

**Objective 3:** Proffer ways of finding solution solutions to the identified challenges of online fake news

The rise in the social media usage from the past few years has been noticed in the emerging nations. Google, Instagram, Facebook, You Tube Twitter and other social media platforms are followed for checking the news online. Fake news is a great threat to the society. The following solutions were provided to fight against the spread of fake news:

1. Increase usage of fact-checkers must be encouraged. This is one way to tract fake news in our society
2. Ethical conduct with policy from the government on use of social media norms and must be promoted. It is the responsibility of the government to promulgate laws to focus on high quality investigative information to build public trust and confidence.
3. Credible and reliable information from reputable source should be the only way of getting information.
4. Electronic and information literacy of citizens must be given with great attention.
5. Online accountability should be strengthened by adopting real name registration which stops people from hiding behind fake news.
6. Think before sharing any story as many news sources are specialized in creating fake news and whatever you read on social media is not accurate.



7. Everything which is clicked, liked, shared, re-tweeted, quoted or pinned influences others. It is important to think twice before sharing any news.
8. Be careful and sceptical on what you read and share online.

### **Discussion**

Objective one of the study was to determine the use of social media platforms in combating fake news in libraries. The study found that the respondents acknowledged the use of social media to enhance rapid information services in the provision of information services to avoid fake news among users in the library. The findings indicated that 29 (64.4%) made use of social media to creates two-way interaction and communication of information to helps eliminate fake news among the people, while 16 (35.5%) had a contrary viewed. The finding also revealed that 25 (55.5%) of the respondents used social media to enhance flow of information in a multi-faceted dimension to curb the spread of fake news, while 20 (44.4%) had divergent opinions. The finding is in line with a study by Adaja and Ayodele (2013) who reported that the use of social media assist academic libraries and librarians to harness the potential academic excellence. This study is also in consonance with findings of Mrah (2018) who opined that social media platforms are used for collaboration and sharing of ideas and it is becoming an integral part of library services.

Empirical studies by Ullah, (2015); Khan, Masrek and Nadzar, (2015); Orlando, (2017) also concurred with the findings of this study. Although, gaps still exists as not all librarians in higher institutions in Gombe State had the skills and knowledge to use social media to encourage learning and research activities.

The second objective is to examine various challenges of using social media to spread online fake news in the libraries. The study established that 33 (73.3%) of the respondents maintained that social media tarnish the image of the people with fake news, while 12 (26.6%) had contrary views. Also, 31 (68.8%) of the respondents indicated that social media create violence among the people, while 14 (31.1%) had divergent opinions. The study also indicated that the use of social media to heighten tension and disharmony in the country with the spread of fake news as 33 (73.3%) of the respondents agreed with the statement while, 12 (26.6%) had different opinions. This finding corroborates with the findings of Narwal (2018) who confirmed that social media platforms are used to spread manipulated, unfounded, unguided, and unreliable information thereby creating tension and disharmony among the people. This finding also concurred with the study by Mrah (2017) who described fake news with the use of social media as the fastest and easiest ways to facilitates spread and exchange of misinformation. These findings disagreed with the finding of Echezona and Chigbu, (2015) who reported that in Nigeria fake news have continue to ravage the image of the country socially without much efforts of the libraries and information centres.

### **Conclusion**

Social media platform have influenced contemporary societies in all sectors of life; be it social, political, governance, economic, personal and professional development. The 21st century libraries depend on social media for information service delivery. For this reason, it is prudent for higher institutions in Gombe State to prioritize the use of social media to improve learning and research output. Based on the findings of this study, though not all academic librarians in the public higher institutions in Gombe State participated in this study, however, social media in the study area were found to be useful. This is because social media evolves fast and continuously, thereby changing the information needs and expectations of the users. The findings from the study suggested that social media have become pervasive, even though, daily developments are getting affected by fake news acceleration which is driven by poor





information service delivery. The study concludes that adequate policy of regulation is required to dealing with fake news.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- a. There is a need for increased usage of fact-checkers must be encouraged. The library has a role to play in ensuring that reliable information is provided to users.
- b. There is a need for libraries to champion advocacy programs for ethical conduct with policy from the government to regulate the use of social media to combat fake news among the populace
- c. There is need for individuals to protect themselves by following reputable sources for getting credible and reliable information.

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