

Users' Perception of Fake News Proliferation on New Media Platforms and Threats to National Security in South-South, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated users' perception of fake news proliferation on new media platforms and threats to national security in South-South, Nigeria. The study became necessary following the assumptions that fake news poses a major threat to national security in any nation. The survey design was employed. The population was estimated at nine million new media users in three States in South-South, Nigeria (Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers). The sample was 343, though only 340 with background knowledge of all the variables actively participated in the study. Multi-stage sampling technique was employed in selecting the sample systematically from the three States. Data generated were analysed, presented and tested using frequency tables, statistical charts, simple percentage, mean scores and ordinal regression analysis. The computation was done using SPSS software. The findings in the study confirmed the assumption that there is the proliferation of fake news on new media as virtually all the users of new media who participated in this study strongly agreed that they receive fake news on a daily basis especially political news stories. Fake news proliferation on new media was found to be responsible for some of the demonstrations in some areas in South-South Nigeria. It was also empirically established that younger new media users, aged 18-25 years were more likely to share fake news to others more than other age categories. Male users of new media were also found to share the news more than their female counterparts. Therefore, the researcher concluded that whether fake news proliferation on new media platforms remains a threat to national security in Nigeria would largely depend on new media users' acceptability of such stories. It was recommended that new media users should endeavour to embrace fact-checking software so as to be able to differentiate between fake and real news stories.

Keywords: Africa, Crisis, Misinformation, New Media Users, Social Media Platforms