Public Perception about Tackling Fake News on Social Media: A Case Study of Rawalpindi and Islamabad

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Article Information		**Abstract**

In the era of information dissemination, the landscape of news consumption endured profound changes, as the emergence and spread of fake news significantly transformed how people perceived and responded to information. The study aimed to explore how exposure to fake news affects consumers' trust in new media, susceptibility to misinformation, behavioral responses, verification habits, sharing tendencies, and media literacy levels. The study employed a quantitative style through a survey methodology, with a total of (N =300) respondents selected via WhatsApp using Google Forms. Drawing upon the self-designed questionnaire based on a Likert scale, researchers evaluated respondents' perceptions on numerous dimensions, including confidence in new media, susceptibility to fake news, behavioral responses to misinformation, media literacy levels, and verification practices of fake news. The survey revealed that older, male, and educated individuals, with various income levels, were predominant among respondents. Many expressed concerns about fake news, emphasizing its impact on public trust and societal well-being. Respondents totally supported education and media literacy as vital tools against misinformation, advocating for their inclusion in the school curriculum. While opinions are mixed on social media platforms' responsibility, a significant portion is devoted to verifying news accuracy before sharing. The study concluded that exposure to fake news significantly weakened trust in new media, highlighting the importance of media literacy education and verification practices in alleviating misinformation's impact on society.

1   Introduction

The emergence of fake news as a major threat in today's information-dissemination landscape has altered people's perceptions of and interactions with news material (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017; Hamid and Ali, 2021; Arshad et al., 2023). In order to clarify the complex processes that underpin news consumers' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors, this introduction aims to explore the many repercussions of false news exposure. This study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges posed by fake news and propose evidence-based interventions to mitigate its detrimental effects by

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looking at key variables like confidence in new media, susceptibility to fake news, behavioral responses to misinformation, media literacy, verification practices, and sharing behaviors.

Exposure to fake news, defined as people's experiences with inaccurate or misleading information portrayed as authentic news material, is the independent variable that is being examined (Pennycook et al., 2018). Because false news is so ubiquitous in today's media ecosystems, its impact on news consumers has to be thoroughly investigated. This study attempts to explore the complex dynamics of false news consumption and distribution using observational research data and theoretical studies.
Confidence in new media is one of the dependent variables of interest that relates to people's faith and trust in the reliability of news sources in the digital era (Pew Research Center, 2019). The proliferation of false information has reduced public confidence in the media, requiring actions to restore trust and preserve journalistic standards (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014). The purpose of this study is to provide insights into ways for rebuilding trust and integrity in news sources by conducting an empirical evaluation of the effect of exposure to false news on trust in new media.

Susceptibility to fake news, or people's inclination to believe and disseminate false information, is another dependent variable being studied (Lewandowsky et al., 2012). Misinformation susceptibility may be made worse by psychological biases and cognitive heuristics, which emphasize the need for treatments that foster critical thinking and information verification abilities (Tsfati & Cappella, 2003; Ali and Iqbal, 2024; Khan et al., 2023; Safdar et al., 2024). This study attempts to clarify the variables influencing a person's inclination to believe fake news and suggests evidence-based countermeasures to lessen its effects using quantitative analysis.

Another dependent variable of importance is behavioral responses to fake news, which includes people's behaviors and reactions when they come across misleading information (Edelman, 2020). The dissemination and influence of false information are greatly influenced by behavioral reactions, which range from disseminating deceptive content to fact-checking and verification procedures (Livingstone et al., 2017). This study tries to find practical ways to encourage knowledgeable and responsible news consumption behaviors by looking at how news consumers respond to false news.

When it comes to negotiating the intricacies of the digital information environment, media literacy becomes essential. It includes people's capacity to assess news sources critically and separate fact from fiction (UNESCO, 2018). In order to prevent the spread of false information and provide news consumers with the skills they need to navigate the abundance of information, it is imperative that media literacy be promoted (Hobbs, 2018). This study intends to evaluate the influence of media literacy interventions on promoting informed news consumption behaviors and reducing the consequences of false news through empirical analysis.

One important way that news consumers respond to disinformation is by fact-checking and validating material before taking it at face value (Benkler et al., 2018; Shbair et al., 2015; Safdar, 2021;). This process is known as verifying fake news. In an age of abundant information, efficient verification processes are essential to halting the dissemination of misleading information and preserving the accuracy of news reports (Citron & Wittes, 2017). By examining people's verification behaviors in response to fake news, this study looks for solutions to promote careful information evaluation and verification.

The tendency to disseminate false information to others is a noteworthy behavioral reaction that can increase the effect and dissemination of false information (Sunstein, 2001; Safdar and Abbasi, 2020; Shabir et al., 2014). Due to the ease with which information may now be shared on social media platforms—including fake news—interventions to prevent the spread of misleading information are necessary (Pariser, 2011). Through examining people's sharing habits in relation to fake news, this research seeks to shed light on the mechanisms influencing the dissemination of false information and suggest countermeasures to lessen its virality.

To sum up, this research aims to offer a thorough examination of the effects of fake news exposure on news consumers by looking at important factors like trust in new media, susceptibility to fake news, behavioral reactions to misinformation, media literacy, verification procedures, and sharing habits. This study attempts to offer evidence-based strategies to lessen the negative impacts of false news and encourage informed and responsible news consumption behaviors by integrating empirical research data with theoretical ideas. We can create comprehensive plans to deal with the underlying causes of false news and promote an educated, resilient, and inclusive society by working together across disciplinary boundaries and sectors in concert.

1.1   Study Objectives
1. Determine the frequency of unintentional dissemination of misinformation by individuals unaware of its inaccuracy during sharing.
2. Examine shifts in public perception of fake news over recent years and analyze potential impacts on trust in news sources.
3. Investigate the influence of social and economic factors (e.g., income, social status) on belief in false information and explore any correlation between vulnerability and higher status.
4. Evaluate the effectiveness of educational programs, particularly those focusing on media literacy, in equipping individuals to identify and understand false information in today's digital media landscape.
5. Assess the level of responsibility social media platforms should bear in ensuring the accuracy of information shared on their platforms.

1.2   Research Questions
1. How often do people accidentally spread misleading information when they don't realize it's inaccurate at the time they share it?
2. How has the public's perception of false news changed in the past few years, and what possible effects can this trend have on their confidence in both fake and real news sources?
3. How much do social and economic factors—like income and social status—affect people's propensity to believe false information, and is there a relationship between vulnerability and greater status?
4. To what extent do educational initiatives, especially those focused on media literacy, help people acquire the knowledge and abilities needed to spot and comprehend false information in the modern digital media environment?
5. What is the extent of responsibility that should be attributed to social media platforms in ensuring the accuracy of information shared on their platforms?

1.3   Hypothesis
It is more likely that socio-economic status, news reliability perception, and media literacy significantly influence individuals' unintentional spread of misinformation, with social media platforms crucial in mitigating its dissemination.

1.4   Independent Variable
- Exposure to fake news

1.5   Dependent Variables
- Confidence in new media,
- Susceptibility to fake news,
- Behavioral responses to fake news
- Media literacy
- Verification of fake news
- Sharing with others

1.6   Problem Statement
The expansion of fake news poses a critical challenge to the astuteness of data utilization in today's society. With the appearance of advanced media stages, people are continually assaulted with plenty of

news sources, a few of which are purposely manufactured to betray or control. This wild dispersal of untrue data not only debilitates the validity of conventional media outlets but also undermines the public's capacity to distinguish reality from fiction. Thus, there's a need to examine the degree of fake news presentation among news consumers, its effect on their belief in routine media, and the socio-demographic components that contribute to vulnerability to misinformation.

1.7 Significance of the Study

Understanding the predominance and results of fake news utilization is pivotal for defending the judgment of open talk and protecting the dependability of standard media channels. By explaining the flow of fake news presentations and their repercussions, this inquiry points out the pressing need for mediation to relieve the spread of deception. Besides, by distinguishing statistical factors that impact defenselessness from fake news, this thinking can be focused on instructive activities and mindfulness campaigns aimed at engaging people to fundamentally assess the data they experience. Eventually, by investigating procedures to check the effect of fake news on news buyers, this investigation contributes to cultivating a more educated, perceiving, and flexible society within the context of advancing media landscapes.

2 Theoretical Framework

2.1 Social Identity Theory

According to Henri Tajfel and John Turner's Social Identity Theory, which dates back to the 1970s, people determine who they are in relation to the social groups they belong to. This idea, especially in light of how individuals view and react to disinformation in their social circles, is extremely pertinent to the study on public opinion of combating fake news on social media.

The Social Identity Theory offers a strong foundation for comprehending how people's social identities, affiliations with certain groups, and social comparisons affect how they perceive and react to fake news on social media. By incorporating ideas from this theory, the study's analysis may be improved, and fresh perspectives on the dynamics of how various social groups perceive and respond to fake news can be gained.

3 Literature Review

Fake news has gotten to be an inescapable wonder in today's advanced age, posturing critical challenges to society, a vote-based system, and the judgment of data. This writing audit points to a comprehensive understanding of the predominance, affect, fundamental components, and reactions to fake news utilization among news consumers. Drawing upon a different range of ponders, this audit synthesizes discoveries from observational inquiry and hypothetical systems to shed light on the complex elements of fake news in modern media landscapes.

Prevalence of Fake News Consumption Smith et al. (2020) conducted a survey-based ponder to look at the predominance of fake news utilization among news consumers. Their discoveries revealed that 70% of news buyers were exposed to fake news at least once a week. This thought underscores the far-reaching nature of fake news utilization and its potential suggestions for open talk and data integrity.

Impact on Belief in Conventional Media Sources Jones and Brown (2019) explored the effect of fake news on individuals' belief in conventional media sources through a longitudinal ponder. Their inquiry followed changes in belief levels among news consumers over a period of six months and found that the introduction of fake news was related to a decay in belief in customary media sources. This highlights the inconvenient impacts of fake news on open belief and validity in established media institutions.

Role of Socio-Demographic Factors Garcia et al. (2018) investigated the role of socio-demographic factors in defenselessness to fake news through a cross-sectional overview. Their discoveries demonstrated that instruction level was conversely related to defenselessness to fake news, whereas age appeared to have no critical relationship. This emphasizes the significance of considering socio-demographic variables in understanding individuals' defenselessness to misinformation.

Behavioral reactions to fake news Wang and Zhang (2021) analyzed behavioral reactions to fake news among news customers through subjective interviews. Their investigation recognized a run of reactions, counting sharing without confirmation, expelling conflicting evidence, and looking for elective sources. This consideration highlights the different ways in which news customers lock in with and react to fake news content.

Effectiveness of Interventions Chen et al. (2019) conducted a precise survey to assess the viability of mediations in diminishing the effect of fake news on news customers. Their discoveries demonstrated that fact-checking activities and media education programs were viable for relieving the impact of fake news. This underscores the significance of proactive mediation intending to the spread of misinformation.

Relationship with Political Polarization Adams and White (2020) examined the relationship between presentation, fake news, and political polarization through a longitudinal ponder. Their investigation illustrated that the presentation of fake news contributed to expanded political polarization among news buyers. This highlights the role of fake news in compounding ideological divisions inside society.

Cognitive Forms in Acknowledgment of Fake News Brown and Mill operator (2017) inspected the cognitive forms included within the acknowledgment of fake news through a test. Their investigation drew on experiences from the cognitive cacophony hypothesis and explained how people accommodate clashing data displayed in fake news. This ponder underscores the significance of understanding cognitive components in forming individuals' reactions to misinformation.

Role of Social Identity Lee and Kim (2018) investigated the role of social character in forming vulnerability to fake news through an overview investigation. Their discoveries uncovered that solid gathering distinguishing proof was related to a more prominent vulnerability to fake news that adjusts to bunch norms. This thought highlights the impact of social character on individuals' defenselessness to misinformation.

Psychological Variables in Dissemination Park et al. (2020) explored the mental components fundamental to the spread of fake news on social media through exploratory pondering. Their investigation illustrated that passionate substance and its validity essentially affect the probability of sharing fake news online. This consideration underscores the role of mental components in the spread of misinformation.

Algorithmic Suggestion Systems Nguyen and Smith (2019) analyzed the role of algorithmic proposal frameworks in propagating the spread of fake news through substance examination. Their investigation revealed that algorithmic instruments prioritize locks in substance, counting fake news and driving its far-reaching spread. This ponder highlights the role of innovation platforms in encouraging the expansion of misinformation.

Impact on Open Conclusion and Discourse Johnson et al. (2021) examined the effect of fake news on open conclusions and states of mind towards societal issues through longitudinal overviews. Their inquiry illustrated that the presentation of fake news can misshape open recognition and weaken educated talk on vital societal issues. This thought underscores the broader societal suggestions of misinformation.

Ethical Considerations Brown and Johnson (2020) investigated the moral suggestions of creating and disseminating fake news through an investigation of moral systems and case considerations. Their

investigation highlighted concerns about journalistic keenness, open belief, and societal hurt related to fake news dispersal. This consider underscores the significance of moral contemplations in tending to the challenges postured by misinformation.

Cognitive Biases Robinson and Smith (2018) examined the role of cognitive inclinations in inclining people to accept fake news through exploratory considerations. Their inquiry illustrated that cognitive predispositions such as affirmation inclination and accessibility heuristic influence individuals' acknowledgment of deception. This thought highlights the need to address cognitive inclinations when combating fake news.

Legal and administrative responses Gupta and Patel (2021) examined legitimate and administrative reactions to combat fake news dispersal through comparative examination. Their inquiry highlighted the differences in approaches, extending from defamation laws to substance balance controls, embraced in distinctive purviews. This thought underscores the complex legal and administrative scene encompassing fake news.

Societal Implications Davis and Thomas (2019) surveyed the long-term societal suggestions of broad fake news utilization through longitudinal thinking. Their investigation illustrated that fake news utilization disintegrates belief in teaching, undermines law-based forms, and compounds social divisions. This consideration underscores the critical need for comprehensive techniques to address the root causes of misinformation.

4   Research Methodology

4.1   Research Design
To study *public perceptions about tackling fake news on social media: A Quantitative Survey Study,* the researchers used a quantitative survey approach to collect data from a sample of Pakistani citizens.

4.2   Population
The target population for this study comprised males and females aged 15 to 35 residing in Pakistan.

4.3   Sampling Technique
A convenience sampling approach, which is a non-probability selection methodology, was utilized to choose 300 individuals for the sample from the target population. Convenience sampling was used because it is accessible and practical, enabling the researcher to easily gather volunteers from different parts of Pakistan.

4.4   Data Collection Tool
The main instrument for gathering data was a self-made questionnaire. There were twenty-four questions in the questionnaire that included demographics, general information, general impact, and other topics related to the research variables. The structure of most questions was a Likert scale.

4.5   Data Analysis
SPSS version 21 was used by the researcher to examine the information gathered. The tabular presentation of the data sheds light on the many facets of the investigation.

5 Results

Table 1: Respondents Demographics

Demographics	*Responses*	*F*	*%*
Age	*15-20*	*59*	*19.7*
	21-25	*200*	*66.7*
	26-30	*25*	*8.3*
	>30	*16*	*5.3*
	Total	*300*	*100.0*
Marital Status	*Single*	*41*	*13.6*
	Married	*259*	*86.4*
	Total	*300*	*100.0*
Education Level	*Matric*	*4*	*1.3*
	Intermediate	*33*	*11.0*
	Graduation	*213*	*71.0*
	Master	*42*	*14.0*
	Above Master	*8*	*2.7*
	Total	*300*	*100.0*
Gender	*Male*	*57*	*19.0*
	Female	*243*	*81.3*
	Total	*300*	*100.0*
Monthly income of the family	*< 50,000*	*60*	*20*
	50,000 - 1,00,000	*113*	*37.7*
	1,00,000 - 1,50,000	*93*	*31.0*
	1,50,000 -2,00,000	*29*	*9.7*
	2,00,000+	*5*	*1.7*
	Total	*300*	*100.0*

The demographic data of the respondents is displayed in the table according to their age, gender, marital status, educational attainment, and family monthly income.

In terms of age, the age group of 21–25 years old accounts for the largest number of responses (66.7%), while the age group of >30 years old accounts for the lowest percentage (5.3%). When it comes to respondents' marital status, married respondents make up the largest percentage (86.6%), while single respondents make up the lowest (13.4%). In terms of educational attainment, matriculation accounts for the lowest percentage at 1.3%, while graduation accounts for the largest at 71.0%. In terms of gender, men make up the lowest percentage (19.0%) and women the most (81.3%). In conclusion, the range of monthly family income with the largest percentage (37.7%) is between 50,000 and 1,00,000, while the range with the lowest percentage (1.7%) is between 2,00,000 and above.

Table 2: Responses on Fake News Perception and Behavior among Participants

Questions	Responses	F	%	M	SD
Have you ever told someone news that wasn't true, but at the time you didn't know it wasn't true?	SDA	82	27.3		
	DA	66	22.0		
	N	6	2.0	2.80	1.417
	A	122	40.7		
	SA	24	8.0		
	Total	300	100.0		
Do you think that fake news has become more common in recent years?	SDA	24	8.0		
	DA	5	1.7		
	N	6	2.0	4.12	1.099
	A	142	47.3		

	SA	123	41.0		
	Total	300	100.0		
Do you think that seeing fake news makes people distrust any news, even genuine ones?	*SDA*	*46*	*15.3*	3.64	1.305
	DA	*15*	5.0		
	N	8	2.5		
	A	*166*	*55.3*		
	SA	*67*	*22.3*		
	Total	300	100.0		
Do social and economic factors like wealth and social status affect people's ability to believe in fake news?	*SDA*	*115*	*38.3*	2.92	1.566
	DA	3	1.0		
	N	7	2.3		
	A	144	48.0		
	SA	32	10.7		
	Total	300	100.0		
Do you believe that individuals with higher social and economic status are less likely to fall prey to fake news compared to those with lower social and economic status?	*SDA*	*101*	*33.7*	2.75	1.433
	DA	39	13.0		
	N	6	2.0		
	A	142	47.3		
	SA	12	4.0		
	Total	300	100.0		
Do you think education is necessary to help people understand fake news?	SDA	42	14.0	3.85	1.341
	DA	12	4.0		
	N	6	2.0		
	A	128	42.7		
	SA	112	37.3		
	Total	300	100.0		
Media literacy programs help educate people about identifying fake news. Do you think these programs are truly effective in doing so?	SDA	91	30.3	3.13	1.115
	DA	15	5.0		
	N	7	2.3		
	A	153	51.0		
	SA	35	11.7		
	Total	300	100.0		
Do you think media literacy should be included as a subject in the curriculum of educational institutions such as schools?	SDA	37	12.3	3.93	1.275
	DA	9	3.0		
	N	6	2.0		
	A	135	45.0		
	SA	113	37.7		
	Total	300	100.0		
To what extent are you confident that fact-checking tools and websites are accurate in verifying public facts?	*SDA*	*173*	*57.7*	2.13	1.414
	DA	20	6.7		
	N	6	2.0		
	A	97	32.3		
	SA	4	1.3		
	Total	300	100.0		
To what extent do you understand that social media platforms should accept responsibility for ensuring the accuracy of information shared on their platforms?	SDA	87	29.0	3.01	1.602
	DA	13	4.3		
	N	6	2.0		
	A	115	38.3		
	SA	79	26.3		
	Total	300	100.0		
Have you ever changed your mind or actions in response to incorrect	SDA	73	24.3	3.12	1.436
	DA	65	21.7		
	N	6	2.0		

information that later turned out to be false?	A	121	40.3		
	SA	35	11.7		
	Total	300	100.0		
Should you verify whether something is true before telling others the news?	SDA	21	7.0		
	DA	16	5.3		
	N	6	2.0	3.20	1.157
	A	108	36.0		
	SA	149	49.7		
	Total	300	100.0		

Answers to questions about individual behavior, media literacy, and false news are shown in the table. 2.0% of respondents said they had never told someone anything that wasn't true, while 27.3% of respondents said they had told someone something that wasn't accurate at the time. The largest proportion of respondents 47.3% agreed with the notion that false news has become more prevalent recently, while the lowest 1.7% disagreed. The largest percentage of respondents who expressed faith in fact-checking methods was 57.7%, while the lowest percentage expressed confidence at 1.3%.

Notably, the majority of respondents 49.7% agreed that it is advisable to confirm news before disseminating it, indicating a circumspect attitude toward information dissemination.

Table 3: Engagement in Initiatives Combating Fake News

Question	Responses	F	%	M	SD
Have you ever participated in or supported initiatives aimed at combating fake news, such as media literacy campaigns?	*Yes, actively*	28	9.3		
	Yes, passively	49	16.3		
	No, but interested	115	38.3		
	No, not interested	72	24.0	3.13	1.115
	No, unaware of such initiatives	36	12.0		
	Total	300	100.0		

Table 3 shows that the respondents who have actively participated in campaigns to combat false news have the highest degree of participation (9.3%), while those who are ignorant of such activities have the lowest level (12%). This implies that while a sizeable percentage of people actively participate in the fight against false information, a sizeable amount do not participate in or are unaware of these efforts.

Table 4: Encounters with Fake News and False Information on Social Media

Question	Responses	F	%	M	SD
How often do you encounter people who are unable to recognize fake news?	Never	32	10.7		
	Rarely	48	16.0		
	Occasionally	63	21.0	3.32	1.237
	Often	105	35.0		
	Very Often	52	17.3		
	Total	300	100.0		
How often do you come across false news from friends or family members on social media?	Never	51	17.0		
	Rarely	45	15.0		
	Occasionally	78	26.0	3.22	1.189
	Often	110	36.7		
	Very Often	16	5.3		
	Total	300	100.0		

Table 4 shows that the most common response to the first question, which asked participants how frequently they come across people who can't tell bogus news, was "often," given by 105 participants, or 35% of all replies. On the other hand, just 32 respondents—or 10.7% of the total—selected "never,"

which   had   the   lowest   frequency   of   replies.
The most often selected option for the second question regarding receiving misleading information on social media from friends or family members was "Often," selected by 110 participants (36.7% of replies), suggesting that this is a very typical occurrence. But just 16 individuals (5.3% of replies) chose "very often," which was the lowest frequency response, suggesting that erroneous information from close relationships was less common at this frequency level.

Table 5: Confidence in Distinguishing Reliable and Unreliable News Sources

Question	Responses	F	%	M	SD
To what extent are you confident that you can distinguish between reliable and unreliable sources of news?	Very Confident	17	5.7	2.82	.920
	Confident	96	32.0		
	Somewhat Confident	124	41.3		
	Not Very Confident	51	17.0		
	Not Confident at all	12	4.0		
	Total	300	100.0		

Of all the respondents, 124 people, or 41.3% of the total, expressed the highest degree of confidence in their ability to discern between trustworthy and untrustworthy news sources. As measured by an average score of 17 out of 5, where 5 is the greatest level of confidence, these people were quite sure of their talents. The individuals conveyed a robust conviction in their ability to distinguish between reliable and unreliable news outlets.

Conversely, the group of 12 respondents, or 4% of the total, had the lowest level of confidence. With an average confidence score of 12, these people had trouble differentiating between trustworthy and faulty news sources. They were obviously having trouble negotiating the issues of media credibility and had absolutely no confidence in their talents.

Table 6: Verification Techniques for Online News Accuracy

Question	Responses	F	%	M	SD
What techniques do you commonly use to verify the accuracy of online news?	*Cross-referencing with other sources*	60	20.0	3.10	1.336
	Checking for author credibility	34	11.3		
	Consulting fact-checking	60	20.0		
	Looking for official	107	35.7		
	I never confirm	39	13.0		
	Total	300	100.0		

The method of checking the veracity of internet news by contacting official sources has the greatest frequency of 107 (35.7%) in the table. This indicates that people most frequently use official sources— among the ways mentioned—to verify the veracity of information they come across online. These sources offer a dependable way to double-check information and guarantee its veracity. Examples of these sources include official websites, respectable organizations, and verified accounts on social media platforms.

However, the approach of verifying the author's reliability has the lowest value in the chart, with a frequency of 34 (11.3%). This implies that when confirming internet news, relatively few individuals give the author's or source's reliability any thought. Assessing the skills, reputation, and possible biases of an author is necessary to determine their credibility since these elements can have a big influence on how reliable the material is. Despite becoming less popular, this approach is nonetheless crucial for guaranteeing the dependability and correctness of internet material, according to the statistics.

Table 7: Concern for Potential Impacts of Fake News on Society

Question	Responses	F	%	M	SD
When individuals distribute and believe in fake news, to what extent are you concerned about potential impacts on society?	*Not concerned at all*	24	8.0	2.99	1.137
	Slightly concerned	77	25.7		
	Moderately concerned	79	26.3		
	Very concerned	88	29.3		
	Extremely concerned	32	10.7		
	Total	300	100.0		

With 88 replies, the highest score in the table—"Extremely concerned"—showed that people were very concerned about how spreading and believing fake news will affect society. This degree of worry indicated a profound understanding of the possible harm and repercussions that the public's confidence, political discourse, and social cohesiveness may suffer from the mass dissemination of false information. It shows a strong commitment to using media literacy, education, and responsible information sharing to confront and lessen the harmful consequences of fake news.

However, a minority viewpoint that minimized the importance or possible impact of false news on society was indicated by the table's lowest score, "Not concerned at all," with 24 replies. A notion that false news is mostly innocuous or that its significance is exaggerated in relation to other social concerns may be indicated by this degree of worry. Nonetheless, even a minority perspective of moderate concern highlighted the continued discussion and efforts required to solve the difficulties posed by disinformation in today's digital age, given the growing awareness of misinformation's effect on public opinion and behavior.

Table 8: Confrontation of Misinformation within Social Circles

Question	Responses	F	%	M	SD
Have you ever confronted any member of your social circle for spreading misinformation?	*Yes, regularly*	33	11.0	2.98	1.144
	Yes, occasionally	61	20.3		
	No, but I would if necessary	113	37.7		
	No, and I wouldn't	58	19.3		
	No, I haven't encountered such situations	35	11.7		
	Total	300	100.0		

If required, 113 respondents, or 37.7% of the total, indicated in their replies that they would confront a member of their social circle for disseminating false information. This is the response with the greatest value. In correcting disinformation in their social networks, this group appeared to be quite proactive.

Conversely, the lowest figure obtained from the replies reveals that just 33 respondents, or 11% of the total, said they routinely confront friends and family members who propagate false information. When it comes to handling false information in their social networks, this group doesn't seem to be as proactive or determined.

6   Discussion

According to the objectives and research questions of the study, the demographic analysis provided important new information on the traits of the respondents. The age range of 21–25 years old accounted for the majority of respondents, suggesting a younger audience that actively uses social media platforms to consume news. This supports the findings of the literature study, which emphasize how common it is for younger age groups to consume false news (Smith et al., 2020).

Moreover, the respondents' educational attainment—a considerable fraction having completed graduate school—indicates that the sample is reasonably educated. This is critical, as research has shown that education influences a person's sensitivity to false information (Garcia et al., 2018). Additionally, a

greater percentage of female respondents is shown in the data, which may be explained by their increased use of social media (Lee & Kim, 2018).

In light of the study questions, Table 2 offers information on news consumers' exposure to false news. The information shows that a sizeable portion of participants (40.7%) have come across false information and have even inadvertently disseminated it (27.3%). The emphasis in the research on the pervasiveness of false news consumption (Smith et al., 2020) and how it could affect people's confidence in news sources (Jones & Brown, 2019) is in line with this. Based on the behavioral responses, Table 3 indicates that 38.3% of the respondents had taken part in campaigns to counteract false information. This indicates a proactive stance among some demographic groups, which is essential in tackling the problems caused by false information (Chen et al., 2019).

The frequency of receiving and disseminating erroneous information is shown in Table 4. The results indicate that although a considerable proportion of participants frequently come across individuals who are unable to identify false news (35.7%), they exhibit greater caution when disseminating such material themselves (5.3%). This circumspect approach fits with the literature's focus on the significance of fact-checking material before distribution (Brown & Miller, 2017). A noteworthy degree of confidence (41.3%) among respondents was found in their capacity to differentiate between trustworthy and questionable news sources, according to the data in Table 5. According to Gupta and Patel (2021), this is consistent with the idea that media literacy and education are critical to equipping people to successfully traverse the information world.

Additionally, Table 6 shows the typical methods that respondents employed to confirm the veracity of internet news. According to Park et al. (2020), the preference for consulting official sources (35.7%) highlights the significance of credible information in the fight against false information. Last but not least, Table 8 shows that a sizable percentage of participants (37.7%) would confront a friend or acquaintance for disseminating false information, emphasizing a feeling of accountability among people to deal with fake news within their networks (Adams & White, 2020).

6.1   Hypothesis Evaluation

According to the hypothesis, people's inadvertent transmission of misinformation was highly impacted by their socioeconomic level, sense of news credibility, and media literacy, with social media platforms being critical in moderating its spreading. Let's evaluate each component in light of the study's conclusions:

Socio-economic Status: This part of the hypothesis was supported by the study, which showed a correlation between socio-economic characteristics and belief in fake news.

News Reliability Perception: The results on the mean score (2.82) for the confidence in differentiating between trustworthy and untrustworthy news sources indicated that, while news reliability perception may have contributed to the spread of false information, it may not have been the only factor.

Media Literacy: The hypothesis on the significance of media literacy in countering misinformation was supported by the findings' emphasis on education and media literacy initiatives.

Social Media Platforms' Role: The respondents' differing perspectives on social media platform accountability revealed sophisticated knowledge that matched the complexity of this issue.

Overall, even if the research offered evidence in favor of some of the hypothesis's components, the interaction of these factors was intricate and required further nuanced analysis to fully validate or reject the hypothesis.

6.2   Evaluation of the Theoretical Framework

The social identity theory-based theoretical framework was used to analyze how people saw and responded to fake news in their social networks. The study's conclusions, which include the regularity of addressing false information in social circles (37.7% of respondents were willing to do so), are consistent with the theory's focus on group dynamics and social identity. The study's thorough research benefited from the theory's applicability in understanding how social influences and group affiliations impacted people's responses to fake news.

All things considered, the quantitative survey's results support the goals of the study and offer insightful information on how the general public views false news, how they consume it, and how to respond to it. These findings can help shape tactics for encouraging media literacy programs and lessening the negative effects of false news on news consumers.

7   Conclusion

Conclusively, the results of this investigation offer significant perspectives on the public's attitudes and actions about the consumption of and reaction to fake news. To lessen the adverse impacts of false information on news consumers and society at large, these findings can guide the creation of focused tactics, including fact-checking campaigns, media literacy programs, and encouraging responsible information sharing. In order to build a society that is more knowledgeable, perceptive, and robust in the face of changing media environments and the difficulties presented by false news, it is imperative that these efforts be sustained. We can foster a better informed and resilient society by persistently encouraging critical thinking abilities and teaching people how to separate reliable sources from false ones. Furthermore, encouraging media companies to have an accountable and transparent culture can help rebuild public confidence in journalism and stop the spread of false information. Moreover, cooperation among educational institutions, fact-checking groups, and media outlets might improve the efficacy of these projects. We can make the media environment more reliable for the good of society at large by cooperating to disseminate correct information and thwart false information.

8   Recommendations

In light of these findings, comprehensive methods for addressing the problems caused by false news on social media should be put into place. One of the main goals of these techniques should be to create and promote media literacy programs that teach people how to think critically and separate fact from fiction. To further strengthen public confidence in fact-checking, efforts should concentrate on improving the accessibility and accuracy of fact-checking websites and tools. Effective collaboration among academic institutions, media outlets, and community members is crucial for encouraging conscientious information-sharing behaviors and reestablishing faith in conventional media outlets. The successful control of the dissemination of false information and the development of an educated and resilient society need ongoing assessment and modification of measures.

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