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The Security Imperative of Fake News, Hate Speech, and Stereotypical Report in Nigeria

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Abstract

Fake news, hate speech, and stereotypical reporting represent a dangerous weaponization of information, with far-reaching implications for societal trust, cohesion, and security. In an ethnically and religiously pluralistic society like Nigeria, the media plays a pivotal role in peacebuilding and national development. However, this study highlights how, contrary to the expectations of the Social Responsibility Theory of the press, media outlets, particularly social media platforms have at times contributed to deepening divisions and instigating political, religious, and ethnic intolerance. Nigeria's history of recurrent crises over the past six decades, including those that led to predictions of state failure, has often been exacerbated by inflammatory media content. This paper critically examines how the proliferation of fake news and hate speech constitutes a significant security threat, using the Labeling and Social Responsibility Theories as analytical frameworks. Through a case study analysis of past events in Nigeria and globally, the paper underscores the urgent need for a multi-pronged response. Recommendations include implementing robust media literacy campaigns, establishing stronger regulatory mechanisms, and fostering community-driven initiatives. The study emphasizes the amplified influence of social media in spreading divisive narratives,

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especially among populations increasingly dependent on digital platforms for news. Ultimately, it calls for coordinated efforts among government bodies, civil society organizations, and technology companies to counteract misinformation and cultivate a culture of ethical journalism. Addressing these challenges is critical for safeguarding national unity, fostering peace, and enhancing Nigeria's security landscape.

Keywords: Security Imperative; Fake News; Hate Speech; Stereotypical News Reporting; Nigeria

Introduction

The proliferation of fake news, hate speech, and stereotypical reporting has become a growing concern in Nigeria, posing significant threats to the country's security and social cohesion. This trend exacerbates existing tensions, particularly in a context marked by ethnic conflicts and violent insurgencies, hindering governmental efforts to establish peace and stability (Nwozor etal 2021)

The advent of the social media has given rise to a contemporary form of journalism called citizen journalism also referred to as public journalism, participatory journalism, democratic journalism, guerilla journalism or street journalism. This term refers to a situation where citizens play an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing and disseminating news and information using the internet. Here the citizens deploy the press tools in their possession to inform one another even when they are not professionally trained to do so. Using their mobile phones or laptops citizens share through various channels that include their personal blogs, social media (Facebook, Whatsaap, Twitter, Telegram, Instagram etc.) websites, Microblogs etc. citizen journalism has been very impactful in information generation and dissemination. According to Techopedia:"when an event is small for the larger media to take notice or the media cannot report facts without censorship, citizen's journalism may be the only source of information on what is actually happening behind the media blackout. Some citizen journalist is so impactful that they have far reaching audience than most traditional media outlets. Most of them have proven to have natural nose for news than even the professional journalist who have been trained to do so.

Citizen journalist have also proven to be very effective tools in political mobilization, using social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram etc. citizen journalist has mobilized the populace against dictatorships, bad government policies and corrupt political activities across the world. The website Twitter established itself as a major outlet for the dissemination of information during the protests following the Iranian presidential elections in June 2009. Although the protests did not result in a change in the election results or a new election results or a new election, the tweets of de factor journalist showed the potential of non-traditional media to circumvent government censorship. In Egypt, activist protesting the government of President Hosni Mubarak during the uprising of 2011 often organized themselves by forming groups on the social networking site Facebook.

In Nigeria citizen journalist has been very critical in agenda setting, and influencing political, social and economic discussions, according to Uzuegbunam and Omenugha (2018) Social media have an enormous capacity for discursive role. In Nigeria Twitter has become among the political and corporate elites, a rallying point for provoking discourses and putting pressing and urgent issues in the front burner. Other social media networks such as Facebook prides itself in interactive opportunities'

Supporting this assertion (Oni 2013) said, with the proliferation of mobile telecommunications services in Nigeria, subscription to the mobile internet services has been growing exponentially. Aside major platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, indigenous social media platforms such as *Niaraland, all Africa, NAIJA.com, Online Nigeria, YNaija*, among plethora of blogs, have democratized information dissemination and sharing. This is in turn shaping informed"social-intelligence literacy"

I believe citizen journalism has more impact on the society than the traditional mass mediums like Radio, Television, Newspapers and Magazine because it has the advantage of having the instantaneity of Radio and Television and the Permanency of Newspapers and Magazines. In Nigeria almost every community, village or hamlet is covered by telecommunication mast which makes digital messages to be available to everyone, a Facebook post from one individual can reach millions of people irrespective of their location unlike traditional media that are limited by distribution network and coverage.

But despite the lofty and numerous contributions of citizens journalist to the nation building and development and like the devil which the bible explains collects from the right hand and take from the left, the activities of citizen journalist in Nigeria especially as it concerns dissemination of fake news, stereotypical reports, sharing of inciting information's, disclosure of security information's etc. are constituting huge security risk to the nation and giving cause for concern among stakeholders. in fact, the country is sitting on a time bomb if drastic actions are not taken to nip this worrisome situation on the bud. Owens-Ibie, etal (2019:13) quoting Ireton and Posetti, 2018:15) shares this view when he said"the social media symbolize development opportunities in technology use, just as it is now a veritable platform for the weaponisation of information, as evident in the spread of disinformation and misinformation"

According to (Akpan and Ekpe 2018) the case of inaccuracy in news reporting has become a worldwide concern. In 2015, The Conversation reported that the World Economic Forum (WEF) invited its 1,500 council members to identify top trends facing the world, including what should be done about them. The WEF consist of 80 councils covering a wide range of issues including social media. Members come from academia, industry, government, international organizations and wider society. The top three issues highlighted for 2014 concerned rising societal tensions in the Middle East and North Africa; surprising in the 10th place was a concern over the rapid spread of misinformation online, specifically social media role in this. At the value of 3.35 this was seen as somewhat to be very significant.

Supporting this assertion Watson and Hagen (2015) remarked that; Social media platforms help in the spreading of negative comments, speculation, misinformation, half-truths and rumors with little or no chance of evaluating their veracity; and in some type of crisis, citizens could potentially place themselves, or others, in danger of physical or social harm, expression of ethnic and religious sentiments in the New Media has led to some inter-ethnic, inter-religious disputes and crisis in the northern part of the country. For instance, the Boko Haram insurgents have been able to use the social media to post gory pictures and videos of threat, murder, bombings and other activities of the sect. when social media is used in this way it creates a state of violence and the intent of revenge which inadvertently turns the country into a state of anarchy. This position was also reiterated by Olabamiji (2014) citing Koller (2005): when he opined that new media can trigger, escalate and intensify conflict and unwittingly cause political violence. This nefarious activity by

citizen journalist is giving serious cause for concern among stakeholders. No wonder (Postman 1993) had raised an alarm in his book,"Technopoly: the surrender of culture to technology"decrying the alarming rate at which we adopt technology without considering its side effects.

Globally, the repercussions of fake news, hate speech, and stereotype are no less severe. The 2016 U.S. Presidential elections and the subsequent events surrounding them serve as a stark reminder of how misinformation can undermine democratic processes. Similar phenomena are observable in countries experiencing sociopolitical upheaval, where orchestrated disinformation campaigns can manipulate public opinion and incite conflict. In Nigeria, the damage is particularly pronounced, as the nation grapples with the complex interplay of tribalism, religion, and a history of violence exacerbated by economic inequality.

In view of the this challenges, This article therefore seeks to explores the security implications associated with these communication phenomena, aiming to highlight their impact on social stability and national security in Nigeria.

Research Questions

This study is guided by several key research questions aimed at exploring the intricate relationship between fake news, hate speech, and the prevailing security environment in Nigeria:

1. How has the dissemination of fake news and hate speech contributed to social unrest in Nigeria and the rest of the world?
2. How does stereotypical reporting, hate speech and fake news contribute in perpetuating existing divisions among different ethnic and religious groups within the country?
3. What are the implications of these communication challenges for Nigeria's national security strategy?
4. How can governmental policies and community responses address the challenges posed by these communication challenges?

Literature Review

Conceptual Review of Fake News

One of the major problem associated with digital media platforms is the high spread of fake news. According to Webwise; False information is not new, however it has become a hot topic since 2017. Traditionally we got our news from trusted sources, journalists and media outlets that are required to follow strict codes of practice. However, the internet has enabled a whole new way to publish, share and consume information and news with very little regulation or editorial standards.

Webwise expalined false information as news, stories or hoaxes created to deliberately misinform or deceive readers. It reiterated that these stories are usually created to either influence people's views, push a political agenda or cause confusion and can often be a profitable business especially for online publishers. False information can deceive people by looking like trusted websites or using similar names and web addresses to reputable news organizations.

In June 2018 the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) wrote a report decrying the huge rise in the spread of fake news in Nigeria through the social media. The first few paragraphs of the report read:"Fake pictures circulating on social media which users are falsely claiming depict inter-communal violence are inflaming already high tensions in Nigeria. It comes after three days of violence left more than 200 people dead in the centre of the country. A gruesome image of a woman faces in a pool of blood with a gaping shoulder wound is purported to be from the recent attacks. It has hundreds of retweets on Twitter, but it first appeared on the internet in 2011 in a story about domestic violence in Nigeria. Another image appears to show half a dozen people that were killed in attacks. On closer inspection it becomes clear that the picture was not taken in Nigeria and actually the scene of a 2015 traffic accident in the Dominican Republic"

Desai and Oehrli (2024) explained that within the ecosystem of fake news we have mis-and disinformation. According to them misinformation is false or inaccurate information that is mistakenly or inadvertently created or spread; the intent is not to deceive whereas disinformation is false information that is deliberately created and spread "in order to influence public opinion or obscure the truth.

Conceptual Review of Stereotype

The concept of stereotype was first introduced in 1922 by an American journalist and political scientist Walter Lippmann in his book Public Opinion (Kleg, 1993).

Lippmann explained that stereotypes are cultural products that are forced upon an individual in a manipulate one's way of perceiving certain facts and social phenomena.

According to Battle (2012) citing Gudykunst and Nishida (1984) stereotype is a held popular belief about specific social groups or types of individuals. They explained that *Stereotyping* results from the overestimation of association between group membership and individual behavior and that stereotyping occurs when a person ascribes the collective characteristics associated with a particular group to every member of that group, discounting individual characteristics highlighting that Stereotypes can be negative or positive. Ndiayeaa and Ndiayeaa (2014) explained the concept to mean; a simple and pejorative image of reality functioning in the consciousness of an individual, concerning social groups, people, situations, and institutions, perpetuated by constant repetition of said image. They are different types of stereotype which include cultural, religious, political and racial stereotypes. Stereotyping can be very dangerous and constitute a security threat especially in an era of globalization and where the media exert a great deal of impact on social life and people's perception of reality. For example, Racial profiling is stereotyping racial and ethnic groups and projecting those stereotypic characteristics on individuals in that group, which may lead to false assumptions that result in serious harm—intentional or unintentional—to individuals. (Ndiayea and Ndiayea 2014)

Stereotypes are difficult to change and most of the time they are perpetuated and transmitted from generation to generation, recognized to be values by many individuals. Mass-media, leaders of opinion, opinion polls, conversation networks, sometimes even ad speech, commercials generate first a tacit pressure on individuals and subsequently they lead to stereotypes.

Acknowledging the problem that stereotype constitute in the society Robles (2013) asserted that; The negatives effects that stereotyping causes in people are many. Some of the negatives effects are harm, poor performance in different activities, and even health problems. Stereotypes create a misconception of how people are and how they live in other cultures, religions, or countries. This misconception could cause problems such as discrimination. This is a big problem in our multicultural society. He explained that the media is the major medium of promoting stereotype, and advised that people should learn to respect and understand other cultures, religions, and countries, which will help avoid

many problems such as discrimination and emphasized the need to teach newer generations to respect each other regardless of their differences.

Stereotypes in Nigeria and Africa pose significant security challenges, often perpetuating discrimination and exclusion. The African Union's *Silencing the Guns* campaign highlights how gender stereotypes are embedded in peace and security policies, portraying women as inherently peaceful while reinforcing harmful narratives about men as violent(Mukalazi 2023). Additionally, media portrayals contribute to a perception of Africa as a high-risk region, affecting investor confidence and economic stability, with negative stereotypes linked to violence and corruption dominating coverage (Wilke etal 2024). This cycle of stereotyping exacerbates societal tensions, leading to conflict and undermining efforts for inclusive security. (Alaga 2011).

According to International Alert(2009):"Much of the violent conflict in Burundi, Rwanda and the Kivu provinces of Congo over the past fifty years has been because of discrimination– and political, social and economic exclusion. In the worst cases the extreme intolerance of people of a different ethnic identity has taken the form of massacres and genocide.

When this happens, people are being excluded or killed not for what rights or wrongs they have done– nor for what they believe, or even for what they have– but for their identity: for what they are, how they identify themselves and are identified by others"

Review of the Concept of Hate Speech

The concept of hate speech is still under discussion, especially in relation to freedom of opinion and expression, non-discrimination and equality. According to the Cambridge dictionary hate speech is public speech that expresses hate or encourages violence towards a person or group based on something such as race, religion, sex, or sexual orientation but the UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech defines hate speech as;"any kind of communication in speech, writing or behavior, that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to a person or a group on the basis of who they are, in other words, based on their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, colour, descent, gender or other identity factor."

According to Mudieen &Usman: Several attempts have been made to define the meaning of hate speech. The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe conceived

hate speech as covering all forms of expressions that spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, or other forms of hatred based on.

Hate speech can be conveyed through any form of expression, including images, cartoons, memes, objects, gestures and symbols and it can be disseminated offline or online. It is discriminatory or pejorative of an individual or group. It also calls out real or perceived identity factors of an individual or a group, including: religion, ethnicity, nationality, race**,** colour, descent, gender, but also characteristics such as language, economic or social origin, disability, health status, or sexual orientation, among many others. It'is very important to note that hate speech can only be directed at individuals or groups of individuals.

Hate speech poses significant security concerns in Nigeria and across Africa, often leading to violence and social unrest. In Nigeria, hate speech exacerbates ethnic and religious tensions, particularly during elections, contributing to violence and civil strife (Global Witnes 2023). Social media platforms have been criticized for inadequately moderating hate speech, allowing harmful content to proliferate, which can incite real-world violence (Mbagathi 2023). In South Africa, xenophobic hate speech targeting migrants has sparked violent incidents, highlighting the urgent need for effective content moderation and protective measures against hate speech on social media(Scheffler 2023).

Ethical Expectations for Citizen Journalist and Media Practitioners

Media in the hands of an unprofessional is like a gun in the hands of a lunatic, everyone is at risk including himself. According to Rich (2010): Print and broadcast journalists and public relations practitioners have codes of ethics that govern their media. Although codes do not resolve ethical dilemmas, they can serve as guides. But who tells bloggers and citizen journalists what is ethical principles to follow? The blogosphere is like an unruly wild west with no sheriffs to enforce law and order. According to (Nosa 2019) there are indeed concerns about the absence of control and the misuse of freedom available on social media which leaves participants on social media interactions, some of who are considered journalist, uncensored. While there is no advocacy for gagging of journalistic expressions and initiatives in any form, the rate at which fake news permeate social Media's cape has activated variable responses.

Journalism has evolved over the years with the rise of new media technologies and news sources that have changed the way journalists write and consumers perceive the news they read. New media is any form of audio, visual or written material found online either on the Internet, on smartphone and tablet apps or online radio shows and podcasts. Journalism methods of old may still apply to how news is recorded and shared today, but media's constant evolution always finds ways to create new forms of news and storytelling— some trustworthy, others questionable. As a result, citizen journalists who involve themselves in the analysis and dissemination of such news must be held accountable to the public for their discussions of news topics, lest the public may consume inaccurate or biased forms of news stories.

Also, during crises, media outlets have a crucial role to play. They must engage in responsible reporting that focuses on individuals'narratives rather than reinforcing harmful stereotypes that can promote understanding and compassion.

Citizen journalists are accountable to their readers, many of who depend on their reports for new perspectives on news stories from a regular citizen's perspective. In order to be reliable to them, we must ensure our sources are verified, accurate and not based on mere rumors and/or speculations. Do not ever take unconfirmed reports as facts due to fear of misleading readers into thinking those are absolute truths. Always credit sources.

Whenever possible, include excerpts, clips or direct quotes from sources. Paraphrase only when necessary and state when you are doing so. Too much paraphrasing may lead readers to interpret a quote wrongly and this may not be in line with what the actual quote meant to say. Additionally, provide readers with enough background information on the topic of report so that quotes from sources are read in an appropriate context.

When reporting on a controversial or national topic, be sure to include a diversity of sources in order to avoid bias, especially when reporting on nationwide or global issues. A one-sided view on the topic may result in unfair coverage and/or ill treatment of other parties interested in the issue. To give the public an all-rounded and inclusive news report, sources need to cover a range of people's views from various backgrounds, social status and demographics. Give coverage to both the powerful and the powerless, but more towards the latter, because part of a citizen journalist's job is to give a voice to the voiceless.

Clearly state if you have made an update or correction to your article either at the beginning of the article. Grammatical and spelling corrections need not be noted but content changes or corrections must be made mention of.

Never delete news posts unless they may cause potential harm to the public. If the article contains outdated information, append" This article contains outdated information"and provide a link to an up-to-date article on the topic.

Never plagiarize. Plagiarism is cheap, unoriginal and a journalistic sin. You will lose your reputation as a citizen journalist if you plagiarize.

Do not make condescending remarks towards a party or group of individuals.

Ensure that all your sources approve of you publishing their names in a news report.

Avoid subscribing to Facebook or any other social media pages or groups that will make you seem biased towards a certain side of an argument— politics especially.

Don't accept payments for any form of news coverage. If paid, make a note of it in your article. Similarly, do not pay for information.

In the case of having to include provocative or graphic images in articles and reports, be sure to only include them if absolutely necessary. (Uzuegbunam C. E. & Omenugha, N. O 2010).

Theoretical Framework

Framing Theory

Propounded by Erving Goffman (1974) the concept of framing is an offshoot of the agenda-setting theory it expands the research by focusing on the essence of the issues at hand rather than on a particular topic. The basis of framing theory is that the media focuses attention on certain events and then places them within a field of meaning.

The theory insinuates that how something is presented to the audience (called"the frame") influences the choices people make about how to process that information. Frames are abstractions that work to organize or structure message meaning. The most common use of frames is in terms of the frame the news or media place on the information they convey. They are thought to influence the perception of the news by the audience, in this way it could be construed as a form of second level agenda-setting–

they not only tell the audience what to think about (agenda-setting theory), but also how to think about that issue (second level agenda setting, framing theory)

Case studies have shown that the framing of events related to ethnic conflicts often lacks nuance and depth, focusing instead on dramatic narratives that vilify particular groups (Ogunyemi, 2020). The implications of such framing are profound, as it not only skews public perception but also incites reactions that compromise security and social stability.

Social Responsibility Theory

Propounded by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm and considered as one of the normative theories, the theory of social responsibility is built on a system of ethics, in which decisions and actions must be ethically validated before proceeding. If the action or decision causes harm to society or the environment, then it would be considered to be socially irresponsible.

Crisis Communication Theory

Crisis Communication Theory emphasizes the role of communication in managing public perception during crises (Coombs, 2007). In the Nigerian context, the rise of fake news has complicated crisis narratives, often leading to misinformation that exacerbates conflicts. The government's response to misinformation, especially during periods of unrest, is critical. Failures in addressing this issue can lead to a loss of faith among citizens.

A case study examination of the government's communication strategies in response to incidents of fake news—such as those surrounding the #EndSARS protests—illustrates this theory's relevance. Mismanagement of information can result in escalated violence and distrust towards authorities (Nwokeafor, 2021).

Methodology

The study adopted a case studies and survey method of data collection and analysis. A list of historical events across the globe were presented and analyzed while interviews were conducted of five security and five communication experts to obtain their opinion on the research topic.

Data Presentation and Analysis:

Case Study 1: The Rwanda Crisis of 1994

The Rwandan Genocide of 1994 stands as one of the darkest chapters in modern history, resulting in the mass extermination of approximately 800,000 people, primarily Tutsis and moderate Hutus, over the course of 100 days. Central to this tragically swift and brutal campaign of violence were the pervasive stereotypes and hate speech that permeated Rwandan society, inflaming long-standing ethnic tensions and facilitating the systematic slaughter that followed. that depicted Tutsis as aristocratic and cunning, while Hutus were portrayed as noble peasants. These oversimplifications not only disregarded individuals'humanity but also perpetuated the idea of a'natural'superiority or inferiority between the groups. Leading up to the genocide, Tutsis were labeled as "inyenzi" or "cockroaches" through propaganda disseminated by extremist Hutu groups. This dehumanizing language was not just a rhetorical device; it served to dissociate Hutus from their Tutsi neighbors, rationalizing violence against them as a necessary purification of the Rwandan social body.

Hate speech played a crucial role in escalating tensions and inciting violence. Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM), a station with ties to the Hutu extremist leadership, became a vital vehicle for disseminating hate speech, advocating for the extermination of Tutsis, and inciting the population to participate in the violence. They employed inflammatory language that painted Tutsis as an existential threat to Hutu society.

This constant barrage of hate speech contributed to a climate of fear and paranoia. It blurred the lines between truth and fiction, leaving many Hutus believing that violent actions against Tutsis were not only justified but also necessary for their own survival. Instead of viewing their Tutsi neighbors as fellow citizens, they came to see them as an enemy to be eradicated.

The consequences of these stereotypes and hate speech were devastating. Once the genocide began, many Hutus who may have been sympathetic or neutral instead found themselves either forced to participate in the violence or complicit through silence. The brutalization of society meant that Deeply entrenched prejudices overshadowed personal relationships. Friends, neighbors, and even family members turned against one another, driven by the propaganda that had dehumanized the Tutsi population. The enduring legacy of genocide in Rwanda has left palpable scars, not only in the collective memory but also in

societal structures. Post-genocide, Rwanda has worked hard to foster reconciliation and create a cohesive national identity, moving away from ethnic classifications.

Case Study 2: The Myanmar Crisis

While misinformation is rampant in Nigeria, it is a global issue. The Rohingya crisis in Myanmar provides a harrowing example of how fake news can exacerbate humanitarian catastrophes. The conflict in Myanmar, chronicled through a complex web of political, ethnic, and humanitarian crises, has garnered international attention since the military coup in February 2021 (United Nations2023). In this case, a concerted campaign of disinformation emerged during the mounting tensions between the Rohingya Muslim minority and the Buddhist majority.

Horrific claims that Rohingya Muslims were attacking Buddhist communities fueled retaliatory violence and acts of ethnic cleansing initiated by the military. This disinformation campaign not only escalated the crisis but also led to the mass displacement of Rohingya people. The narrative surrounding the crisis became entrenched in prejudice and violence, with social media platforms being used as vehicles for inciting hate and fear, which prompted discussions about media responsibility, censorship, and the nature of free speech in the context of disinformation.

Case Study 3: The U.S. Capitol Insurrection

The events of January 6, 2021, in the United States serve as another study on the destructive potential of fake news. Leading up to and during the insurrection at the Capitol, a deluge of false claims regarding the legitimacy of the 2020 presidential election circulated online. The insurrection unfolded shortly after a rally where Trump repeated false claims of a stolen election. Standing before thousands of supporters on the National Mall, Trump urged them to march to the Capitol, saying, "If you don't fight like hell, you're not going to have a country anymore" (Trump, 2021). These fabricated narratives, propagated by various social media users and even some political figures, convinced a significant faction of the public that the election had been stolen.

Inspired by this rhetoric, many attendees swiftly made their way to the Capitol, where Congress was in the process of certifying the Electoral College results. As the crowd swelled, so did tensions. Moments later, rioters breached security barricades, overwhelmed

Capitol Police, and broke into the building, vandalizing offices and chambers (Hennessey, 2021). The outcome was a violent insurrection, where misinformation clearly served as a catalyst for unrest and violence. The aftermath revealed the deep-seated divisions within the American populace.

Case Study 4: The 2002 Miss World Crisis in Nigeria

In 2002, Journalist and This Day newspaper fashion columnist Isioma Daniel sparked off a religious crisis that consumed the lives of more than 200 people and the destruction of properties worth billions of naira.

Isioma in reaction to the stiff opposition by the northern community over the Miss World contest that was to be hosted in Nigeria had taken a swipe at prophet Muhammed when she said ”the prophet would have likely taken a wife from the array of beautiful women that would be on parade during the contest. The muslim community didn’t take the statement lightly, they regarded it as not only an insult to their revered religious leader but to their religion as a whole. And lashing on the existing tensions that had already been generated they sparked off a crisis. And From 20 to 23 of November 2002 the city of Kaduna was soaked with blood as 100s of people were killed and properties worth billions of naira destroyed.

A statement intended for pun had cost the lives of hundreds and destroyed the properties of thousands of people and was on a verge of causing a civil war in the country. (Human Right Watch 2003)

Case Study 5: The Holocaust: Anti-Semitic Stereotypes

The holocaust, was a systematic state-sponsored killing of six million Jewish men, women, and children and millions of others by Nazis Germany and its collaborators during the World war. Long before the Nazis came to power in Germany in 1933, they openly expressed their anti-Semitism. As early as 1919, Adolf Hitler wrote, "Rational anti-Semitism must result in systematic legal opposition. Its ultimate aim must unswervingly be the removal of the Jews altogether." In Mein Kampf (1925–27), Hitler further developed the idea of the Jews as an evil race striving for world domination. The Nazi anti-Semitism was based on religious and political anti-Semitism, which was later intensified by racial anti-Semitism. Nazi racial ideology depicted the Jews as Untermenschen (German: "subhumans"). Unlike religious anti-Semitism, which could be resolved by conversion, and political anti-Semitism, which could be resolved by expulsion, the Nazis saw Jews as a race

rather than a religious group. The logic of Nazi racial anti-Semitism ultimately led to annihilation.

The Holocaust stands as one of the most extreme examples of stereotype-influenced violence in the world history today, driven by deep-rooted anti-Semitic beliefs. Jews were stereotyped as greedy, deceitful, and responsible for societal ills, leading to systematic genocide during World War II. This tragic event underscores the lethal potential of stereotypes and their destructive consequences

Summary of Data Collated From Interview Guide

On The Role of Fake News in Exacerbating Security Risks

All the respondents agreed that play a vital role in aggravating security risk in the country especially in this age of social media. They noted that it fosters distrust among communities and undermines the credibility of legitimate institutions. They all cited different situations to buttress their point.

On The Intersection of Hate Speech and Stereotypes with Digital Platforms

They all agreed that Hate speech and stereotypes intersect with digital platforms to fuel conflicts in Nigeria in various ways. They largely posited that Social media serves as a potent medium for disseminating hateful narratives and stereotypes, which can dehumanize marginalized groups. They argued that digital platforms like Facebook, Twitter(X) Whatsaaps etc, not only amplify these messages but also create echo chambers where individuals interact exclusively with like-minded people, reinforcing extremist viewpoints.

On the Preventive Measures to be Taken to Mitigate The Impact of Fake News, Hate Speech on Nigeria's National Security

They agreed that mitigating the impact of fake news and hate speech on Nigeria's national security will require a multi-faceted approach. They posited that media literacy programs aimed at educating citizens about identifying reliable sources of information and recognizing misinformation should be prioritized, they agreed that such education can empower individuals to critically assess news content rather than accepting it at face value. They also advocated for the implementation of stringent laws governing digital platforms insisting that technology companies should be held accountable for the content shared on their platforms and encouraged to develop algorithms that prioritize the visibility of credible information. Additionally, they advocated that government

agencies should create quick response teams to address and debunk emerging fake news and hate speech narratives swiftly.

On their assessment of the existing legal frameworks

They noted that the effectiveness of Nigeria's existing legal frameworks regarding hate speech, stereotypes, and fake news should be reevaluated. They opined that even though current laws, such as the Cybercrime Act and the Anti-Terrorism Act, provide some basis for action; they are frequently seen as inadequate. They advocated that they is a need for comprehensive legislation that will specifically address the nuances of fake news and hate speech without infringing on freedom of expression. Furthermore, they decried that the enforcement are usually inconsistent, which allows perpetrators to operate with a high degree of impunity and advocated for an independent judiciary and a transparent legal process that ensures that laws are applied justly.

On Collaborative Efforts to Address the Challenges

They largely noted that tackling the challenges posed by fake news and hate speech in Nigeria will require a concerted effort from various stakeholders. They also advocated that the government should lead initiatives to establish clear guidelines on hate speech and misinformation that prioritize education and awareness rather than punitive measures alone.

Finally they opined that NGOs and civil society organizations have crucial roles to play in raising awareness and promoting dialogue as they can serve as bridges between communities, fostering understanding and promoting tolerance

On the Role of Education in Addressing this Challenges

They all agreed that education is a foundational tool in combating the effects of fake news, stereotypes and hate speech among Nigerian youths. They opined that by incorporating critical thinking, media literacy, and conflict resolution into the educational curriculum, young people can develop the necessary skills that is needed to navigate the complex information landscape. They insisted that education must also advocate for tolerance and understanding of Nigeria's diverse cultures, which is expected to help break down the stereotypes that fuel division. Finally, they noted that encouraging the active engagement with diverse perspectives can help create a generation that is more equipped to challenge prejudice and misinformation that now dominated our media space

Answers to Research Questions:

How has the dissemination of fake news and hate speech contributed to social unrest in Nigeria and the rest of the world?

Fake news and hate speech have been identified as primary catalysts for social unrest across various contexts. As evident in the Miss World Crisis of 2002 where violent protests incited by misinformation surrounding a beauty pageant and its perceived assault on Islamic values. Such sensationalized information, amplified by the media, led to deadly riots that claimed numerous lives.

Similarly, the Rwandan Genocide of 1994 discussed above was exacerbated by propaganda spread through local radio stations that promoted ethnic divisions and incited violence against the Tutsi population. The ease of disseminating inflammatory content in both Nigeria and Rwanda highlights how fake news and hate speech create an environment conducive to conflict and unrest.

The Endsars protest against police brutality in Nigeria is another prove of how misinformation can aggravate tensions between protesters and government officials. Likewise, the insurrection at the US Capitol in January 2021 was seen to be fueled by false narratives surrounding electoral fraud, showcasing how misinformation can undermine democratic processes and incite violent rebellion.

How does stereotypical reporting, hate speech and fake news contribute in perpetuating existing divisions among different ethnic and religious groups within the country?

Stereotypical reporting and hate speech fuel existing tensions and deepen divisions among ethnic and religious groups. Media portrayal amplifies stereotypes and presents certain communities in a negative light, ignoring the complexities of their realities.

In Nigeria, the reporting of ethno-religious conflicts fails to address the underlying socio-economic factors, emphasizing religious identities or ethnic affiliations and perpetuating a binary perception that fuels communal discord. The ongoing crisis in Myanmar, characterized by violence against the Rohingya people, showcases how negative

portrayals dehumanize specific groups, reinforcing existing prejudices and justifying acts of violence against them.

The Holocaust serves as a historical warning about the dangers of hate speech and stereotypical representations. Anti-Semitic propaganda dehumanized Jewish communities and served as a precursor to one of the darkest chapters in human history, illustrating the catastrophic potential of unchecked stereotypes and hate narratives.

What are the implications of these communication challenges for Nigeria's national security strategy?

The proliferation of fake news and hate speech presents complex challenges for national security strategies, particularly within the context of Nigeria. The pervasive spread of misinformation carries the potential to erode the authority of the state, exacerbate existing social tensions, and galvanize various groups towards violent actions.

Within the Nigerian context, the government's struggle to effectively address the surge of violent extremism, including conflicts involving groups such as Boko Haram and the Fulani herdsmen, is compounded by an environment of mistrust perpetuated through ineffective communication and the dissemination of divisive narratives. Responses from the state that overlook the profound implications of narratives and misinformation are likely to be ineffective, potentially resulting in further alienation of populations.

Furthermore, the widespread acceptance of dangerous myths and conspiracy theories can serve as a barrier to cooperation with security forces, posing significant obstacles to the maintenance of peace and security. Consequently, there is an urgent need for a comprehensive recalibration of national security strategies. This entails integrating robust communication strategies aimed at fostering social cohesion and disseminating accurate, fact-based narratives to counteract the damaging effects of misinformation.

How can governmental policies and community responses address the challenges posed by these communication challenges?

To combat the damaging effects of fake news, hate speech, and stereotyping, governments must implement strong policies that promote media literacy and ethical reporting. Nigeria, for instance, must develop stringent frameworks to regulate the dissemination of information, with a clear emphasis on holding accountable those who perpetuate false narratives or incite hatred.

Investing in education that nurtures critical thinking and media discernment among citizens is absolutely essential. Community responses, such as grassroots initiatives that actively promote dialogue and understanding among conflicting groups, are crucial in creating a protective barrier against divisive narratives. It is imperative for the government, civil society, and the media to collaborate in order to provide accurate information and effectively counter harmful narratives.

Furthermore, promoting platforms for story-sharing is essential to humanize divided groups and challenge stereotypes. Additionally, supporting fact-checking organizations is vital in swiftly debunking misinformation.

Conclusion

The various case studies presented above is sufficient evidence of how deeply ingrained fake news, stereotypes and hate speech can escalate to unimaginable levels of violence. It calls for a collective commitment to combat hate speech and prejudice, seeking a future where diversity is celebrated rather than demonized. Only through a concerted effort to recognize our shared humanity can societies hope to heal from the scars of the past and build a peaceful future for all.

The high rate of fake news, hate speech and stereotypical reports associated with the use of the New Media has set the nation on a path of destruction. They are so much hatred, distrust and suspicions and divisions among the various ethnic and religious groups that make up the entity called Nigeria. Recently they have been attacks and counter attacks by various groups, this is largely as a result of fake news, hate speech and stereotypical reports that suggest one section of a country is planning to dominate another section of the country or one religion is trying to dominate another religion.

A lot of Nigerians confused free speech to be hate speech, classifying both, Hylton conceived hate speech as negative while free speech is landmark achievement of democracy. No wonder most developed societies added a clause on freedom of speech against the use of hate speech. For example, Article 10 (2) of the European Convention on Human Rights provides that the"the exercise of freedom of expression may be subject to such formalities, conditions, restrictions or penalties as are prescribed by law… the interest of national security… for the protection of the reputation or rights of others"

Nigeria because of its diversity has gone through a lot of religious and ethnic crisis that has affected the growth of the nation and threatened the unity of the country. The new security threat that is occassioned by the high use of technological equipments that has made everyone a purveyor and receiver of information which has culminated to the spread of fake news, hate speech and stereotypical reports if not properly handled will spell doom for this country.

Government, Media and the public must jointly put up measures to tackle this raging monster that is threatening the peace, unity and development of the country headlong.

Recommendations

1. There is an urgent need for government to regulate the social media to stop the various infractions that are constituting security threat to the country.
2. Citizen journalist and social media users must be conscious of how their activities can threaten the peace and security of the nation and ensure they are socially responsible.
3. Fact-Checking Initiatives: Organizations such as Africa Check or the Poynter Institute in the U.S. focus on verifying information and providing accurate context. Increasing support for such institutions is vital.
4. Digital Literacy Campaigns: Educating the public, particularly vulnerable demographics, about discerning facts from misinformation can bolster resistance to fake news. Schools and community programs must prioritize digital literacy.

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