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EFFECT OF FAKE NEWS ON 2023 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Since fake news is a relatively recent phenomenon in the history of Nigerian elections, this research looked at how it affected the outcome of the country's 2023 presidential election. Studies have linked voting behavior and exposure to fake news using a small sample size; nevertheless, observational studies have not been able to demonstrate that false news truly influenced the outcome of the election. We need to experimentally modify voters' exposure to fake news in actual elections and see if they change their minds about casting a ballot after learning that the material was false to determine whether fake news actually influences voting behavior.

Keywords: Effect, Fake News, Presidential Election, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

A video of military personnel practicing an operation was released, and it quickly gained popularity on social media. One of the users claimed that the exercise was taking place "live at my polling unit [right now]" and hash-tagged Surulere in Lagos, where there had been reports of isolated acts of violence. The event was "happening now in Ikorodu," a suburb of Lagos, according to another Twitter user. The video gained popularity. However, that was untrue news. The video, which received over a million views, was really a military exercise before Ghana's general elections that took place in 2020.

Social media in Nigeria was rife with this kind of false information leading up to, during, and after the election. Analysts are concerned that, if left uncontrolled, it can cause problems after the election.

A major factor that helped propel Asiwaju Ahmed Bola Tinubu to Nigeria Presidency was Alhaji Atiku Abubakar inability to retain the support of all Peoples Democratic Party's (PDP) members, many of the voters who would have voted for him and given him presidential seat were persuaded to vote for Peter Obi, Labour Party presidential candidate and Atiku's running mate in 2019 Nigeria Presidential Election or vote for Alhaji Rabiu Kwankwaso, presidential candidate of New Nigeria People's Party and former PDP member or other parties candidates or failed to vote at all in 2023 election. Our key research question are: what

factors, especially so-called "fake news," may have accounted for this result and that does fake news actually have effect on 2023 Nigeria general election?

Using secondary data gathered from social media, newspapers, and television stations, we concentrate on the dissemination of voter behavior in relation to the widespread dissemination of false or misleading information about presidential candidates, frequently in the form of "fake news" (Allcott and Gentzkow, 2017; Silverman, 2016; Silverman and Singer-Vine, 2016; Vargo, Guo, and Amazeen, 2017). Many of these bogus information pieces vilified candidates while substantially distorting the information that voters were given. The bulk of persons involved in the presidential contest had negative things to say about Asiwaju Ahmed Bola Tinubu.

For instance, a recent study of nearly 50 political social media messages circulated in the crucial battleground state of Lagos identified nearly half as "unverified WikiLeaks content and manipulated news stories" that fall "under the definition of propaganda based on its use of language and emotional appeals" (Howard et al., 2017). Another investigation of more than 50,000 election-related tweets posted by almost 5000 different users discovered that "Obedient (as the Labour Party supporters are called) retweeted manipulated news stories about 31 times more often than the BAT and produced 36 times more tweets" (the Nation April 2023) Take this a step further by determining the Facebook postings' target audiences. The 2022/23 campaign saw a substantial misinformation attempt, much of it started by the Obedients, the vast bulk of which was meant to erode support for Asiwaju Ahmed Bola Tinubu.

According to earlier studies (Gastil, Reedy, and Wells 2017; Reedy, Wells, and Gastil 2014; Weeks and Garrett 2014), voters' preferences and behavior can be significantly impacted by their acceptance of erroneous and/or misleading information. If the degree of the propaganda against Asiwaju Ahmed Bola Tinubu's image and his party is anything to go by, he is not expected to win the election given the circumstances in the nation. Concluding that it is likely that Asiwaju Ahmed Bola Tinubu would not have won the election without the assistance of BAT disinformation efforts on other candidates too. But the impact of this wide distribution of false candidate information on actual electoral behavior in the 2023 presidential election has not been directly tested; to our knowledge, there have been no empirically based studies that have systematically assessed the extent to which accepting false information about the candidates influenced voting decisions in 2023.

These researchers created the following goals to give this investigation direction:

1. To determine if Fake News actually exist in build up to 2023 Nigeria General Election
2. To find out whether Fake News peddling actually played any roles in the outcome of 2023 Nigeria General Election.
3. To bring to the consciousness of Nigerians, their civil role and social responsibility role in fight again Fake News.
4. To know how Fake News threatened 2023 Nigeria General Election
5. Determine the frequency of Fake News production that was generating insecurity in build up to 2023 Nigeria General Election.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Even though there are several theories that can be used, this study will relied on Agenda-Setting theory. This is because, according to Chinenye and Emelda (2013), theories about mass communication describe how the process of mass communication is likely to have an impact on society. The continuous influence effect (CIE), which occurs when false information persists in people's memories and inferences after it has been corrected, is a common occurrence.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, the qualitative research method's case study and content analysis research methodologies were used. It entails outlining, describing, delving into, and interpreting information on the analysis of the impact of television news production on insecurity issue in Nigeria.

It is descriptive because it uses ideas to describe and analyze the role of television station news production in the struggle against insecurity issues in Nigeria. It is qualitative because it deals with the examination of the causes and effects of insecurity issues. The study used both primary and secondary sources to accomplish this.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Elections and "Fake News": Although just a few studies have examined the dissemination of incorrect or misleading information in the setting of elections, all of them demonstrate that such information does affect voter behavior. Weeks and Garrett (2014), for instance, looked at the electoral repercussions of believing unfavorable political rumors about the leading contenders in the 2008 U.S. election. They contend that regardless of ideology or partisanship, voting decisions were influenced by the acceptance of inaccurate or misleading information about candidates. Their argument is supported by a body of research that demonstrates how voters are cognitive misers who look for clues and mental shortcuts during campaigns and who are more likely to pay attention to and be persuaded by negative information than good information. (Examples include Redlawsk, 2004, Lau, 1982, Meffert et al., 2006, and Zaller, 1992). Weeks and Garrett discovered that promoting false political rumors about Obama dramatically lowered the probability that people would vote for him in the election after conducting a post-election telephone poll following the 2008 U.S. presidential election.

Another research looked at how false news affected the result of elections. Using post-election surveys, additional research discovered relationships between fake news exposure and voting patterns, but these observational studies were unable to demonstrate that these changes were truly brought on by fake news. We need to experimentally modify voters' exposure to fake news in actual elections and see if they change their minds about casting a ballot after learning that the material was false to determine whether fake news actually influences voting behavior. Our analysis focused on the Nigerian presidential election of 2023 since it offered the best context for this aim. False information concerning an alleged drug-related incident involving Asiwaju Ahmed Bola Tinubu, a candidate for the All Progressive Party, was extensively spread throughout the campaign. His innocence has, nevertheless, always been recognized by the media.

Other research has demonstrated that believing inaccurate or misleading information about policy does affect voting behavior, in addition to misinformation regarding political individuals. Reedy and his coworkers looked at how acceptance of misinformation affected voting on three statewide ballot issues in Washington State using theories of deliberative democracy and democratic reasoning (e.g., Fishkin, 2009; Kuklinski et al., 2007, 2014 Reedey, Wells, and Gastil). Their study showed that voters who believed inaccurate or misleading information were less likely to vote for each of the ballot topics, even when partisanship and issue-specific value orientations were included in the analysis, using post-election cross-section survey data. Other researchers have revealed that, in addition to misinformation regarding political candidates, voters' choices are influenced by their acceptance of inaccurate or deceptive information about policy. In accordance with democratic reasoning and deliberative democracy theories (e.g., Fishkin, 2009; Kuklinski et al., 2007), Reedy and his coworkers looked at how voter acceptance of misinformation affected three statewide ballot issues in Washington State (2014 Reedy, Wells, and Gastil). Their investigation, which used post-election cross-section survey data, showed that respondents were less likely to support each of the ballot topics if they had received inaccurate or misleading information, even when partisanship and issue-specific value orientations were taken into account.

Numerous distinct phenomena fall under the umbrella of false news. Here, we essentially followed the advice to employ intentionally fake or deceptive content that was produced primarily to generate advertising money. Our strategy was to draw on the work of journalists and researchers who sought to record the ubiquity of this content during the course of the 2016 election campaign because it is challenging to develop a generally agreed ground-truth criteria for what defines fake news. We specifically utilized a list of fake news sites compiled by BuzzFeed News' Craig Silverman, who was the principal reporter tracking the phenomena as it emerged.

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By using the supervised learning method developed by Bakshy et al., we took this list and eliminated all domains labeled as "hard news" in order to concentrate on fake news domains rather than the more contentious category of "hyperpartisan" sites (such as Breitbart). (The authors trained a machine learning classifier on text characteristics using section IDs from article URLs posted on Facebook that are connected to hard news, such as "world," "usnews," etc. Finally, they came up with a list of 495 domains that contain both mainstream and partisan websites that generate and discuss current events. The list that results comprises 21 largely pro-Trump domains, including well-known suppliers like Ending the Fed, Denver Guardian, and ABCNews.com.co. In analyses using this list, we counted any article from one of these

domains as a fake news share. (See below for details on these coding procedures and a list of domains in what we refer to as our main BuzzFeed-based list.)

The first 948 false tales from the campaign that Allcott and Gentzkow fact-checked are on their list. We located the publishers' websites and once more deleted all hard news websites as previously said. Then, we classified every item from this collection of domains as false news. As a more stringent definition of fake news, but one that does not necessitate presuming that every item from a "fake news domain" should be labeled as fake news, we utilized only precise URL matches to any of the 948 entries in the Allcott and Gentzkow list in table S9 for robustness. Since each article on the list had its slant manually coded by the researchers, we also produced models that examined pro-Trump and pro-Clinton articles. Fake news sharing activity only. Felix Oyewole has observed an influx of political information on his social media newsfeed since last November in preparation for Nigeria's next presidential and legislative elections on February 25, 2023.

Peter Obi, the presidential candidate for the Labour Party, has been the focus of several of these posts. The unexpected front-runner was alleged to have link with the separatist organization Independent People of Biafra (IPOB) and accused of bribing church organizations to speak at their conferences. These said about Peter Obi are understood as fake news. The New Nigeria People's Party (NNPP) nominee for president, Rabiu Kwankwaso was also accused of lying about having an academic doctorate in addition to an honorary one. "I think this trend is crazy," said Oyewole, a first-time voter, to Al Jazeera. The fact that they are desensitizing individuals makes me giggle at times. In the days leading up to the election, bogus news has proliferated on social media. Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, and WhatsApp are also riddled with divisive information on issues like religion and race.

According to experts, political strategists are using social media to their advantage in advance of the next elections, even though it allows Nigerians to exchange information in real time. Idayat Hassan, the director of the Centre for Democracy and Development [CDD], an organization with headquarters in Abuja, told Al Jazeera that disinformation and rumors are "plaguing this election" and that political players are promoting their dissemination because they view it as a means to an end. "The real motivation is either to suppress and win votes or to delegitimize other candidates," she claimed.

According to a BBC story from January, Nigerian politicians paid social media influencers up to 20 million naira ($43,000) in secret or offered them political posts and government contracts in exchange for spreading false information against rivals. According to the article, some of these influencers are also being enlisted in "situation rooms" to track the dissemination of false information. Nigeria's election commission has also raised concerns over false information amid accusations of bias from various political factions. Olusegun Agbaje, the resident commissioner for the Independent National Electoral Commission [INEC] in Lagos, informed the press in January that "purveyors of fake news are not relenting in their malicious efforts to put the commission in a bad light."

Factors that Influenced 2023 Election Results

Younger voters 18 to 30 years favored the Labour candidate in which truly change the voting pattern. Age 40 and above which has previously had encounter with both APC and PDP came out to vote in mass believing they cannot trust their future in the hand of the young ones.

The election of 2023 was remarkable for its departure from historical voting trends along educational lines, with more educated voters preferring the Party they support more strongly than in previous elections when educated people don't care about election. We discover that voting behavior and education are both strongly correlated.

In election research, voter preferences are strongly correlated with dissatisfaction with the state of the economy. Many people felt that they couldn't trust the PDP candidate because he had, while serving as vice president, privatized the majority of the Nigerian company and preferred the APC candidate because of his ability to drive in revenue and his economic policies, which had revitalized Lagos State while he was governor.

Religion issue also affected the pattern of voting in 2023 presidential election, Muslim-Muslim ticket of APC generate a lot of controversy and the discussion that follows the build up to election makes has effect in the voting pattern.

Ethnic issue plays a major role in the voting pattern as most Nigerian believe it's the time for southerner to rule, while both Fulani/Hausa and Yoruba people united to rotate power among themselves due to fear of allowing an Igbo man to rule because they have caused civil war in the country before, therefore they cannot be trusted to rule the nation with their presidential candidate Peter Obi of Labour Party in which most of his followers still campaigned along this ethnic issue.

After the introduction of controls for other characteristics, including partisanship. Both the "egocentric" and the "sociotropic" measures of discontent with the state of the economy were included in our survey, and both revealed substantial bivariate associations with voting behavior. Only 12% of people who considered the economy to be "good" or "very good" did not support the APC, compared to 39% of people who believed the economy to be "poor" or "very poor". Similar to this, just 14% of those who thought their personal economic position was favorable defected, compared to 39% of people who thought it was poor or extremely poor (Tau-b =.20, p.001).

Political affiliation also shows a voting pattern to be favorable to APC candidate, this is because he has been in the politics for so long time, that he has been instrumental to some candidates' electoral victory at one time or the other and they thereby gathered support for him.

In this study, Survey analytical work was presented, simple random sampling of people's opinions was used on secondary data obtained which shows that fake news has major significant impact on the outcome of the election as the most widely abused candidate on the social media actually become Nigeria president; the elections were contested up to the

supreme court whose rulings were not accepted in many quarters as just. It is good to note that the fake news syndrome has more negative effect on Nigeria (unity) as a united entity than the candidates. Polarization on political, ethnic, religion and so on is now the order of the day.

Conclusion

During the build up to 2023 general election the request by G5 governors to request for a southerner presidential candidate, as power must return to south or Dr. Ayu to step down for southern candidate to become PDP national chairman has bought political differences in the country more than ever before now.

The Muslim/Muslim ticket of APC presidential candidates has further polarized the country on religious line, because this has given opportunity to the enemies of the country to use fake news to destroy their joint ticket and invariably running down the nation.

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