

# Examining How Fact-checking Hubs Counter Information Disorder in Africa

Isiaka Zubair Aliagan<sup>a)</sup>, Habeeb Opeyemi Daranijo

Department of Mass Communication, Kwara State University, Malete, Nigeria

<sup>a)</sup>Corresponding author, e-mail: isiakaliagan@yahoo.com

DOI: <https://doi.org/jkm.v17i1.25725>

## Article Info

### Article history:

Received 30 Jan 2025

Revised 04 Apr 2025

Accepted 26 May 2025

## ABSTRACT

As fake news, misinformation, and communication disorders continue to raise societal concerns, several countermeasures are emerging to combat this growing challenge. This study examines the role of social media in the spread of information disorder in Africa and evaluates how effectively three prominent fact-checking websites—FactCheckHub, Dubawa, and Africa Check—are addressing this communication crisis. Using a content analysis methodology, the research identifies common types of misinformation circulating on Nigerian social media, analyzes existing fact-checking techniques, and assesses the contributions of the selected platforms in mitigating information disorder. Drawing on academic frameworks related to misinformation, disinformation, and verification, the study explores how social media facilitates the spread of false narratives and the societal consequences that ensue. It contributes to broader discussions on media literacy, information integrity, and the cultivation of an informed society in the digital age by providing insights into the dynamics of disinformation in Nigeria and the critical role of fact-checking initiatives in addressing it.

**Keywords:** Africa; Fact-Checking; Fake News; Information Disorder

## ABSTRAK

Karena berita palsu, informasi, dan gangguan komunikasi terus menimbulkan kekhawatiran di masyarakat, beberapa langkah penanggulangan pun berkembang untuk memerangi momok komunikasi tersebut. Studi ini meneliti peran media sosial dalam gangguan informasi di Afrika dan menilai seberapa baik tiga situs web pemeriksa fakta populer - FactCheckHub, Dubawa, dan Africa Check - mengatasi kelesuan komunikasi. Studi ini mengadopsi metodologi analisis konten untuk mengidentifikasi jenis misinformasi umum di media sosial Nigeria, meneliti teknik pemeriksa fakta yang ada, dan mengevaluasi peran platform pemeriksa fakta yang dijadikan sampel dalam memerangi gangguan informasi. Studi ini menyelidiki bagaimana media sosial mendorong penyebaran narasi palsu dan dampak sosial yang mengikutinya, dengan menggunakan kerangka akademis yang terkait dengan gangguan informasi, disinformasi, dan pemeriksaan fakta. Studi ini berkontribusi pada percakapan yang lebih luas tentang literasi media, integritas informasi, dan promosi masyarakat yang terinformasi di era digital dengan menawarkan wawasan tentang dinamika disinformasi di Nigeria dan fungsi kegiatan pemeriksaan fakta dalam memeriksanya.

**Kata Kunci:** Afrika; Pemeriksaan Fakta; Berita Palsu; Gangguan Informasi

## INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary digital era, the proliferation of social media platforms has fundamentally transformed the way in which information is disseminated and consumed. This development has consequently brought about the phenomenon of information disorder, which encompasses the constructs of misinformation, disinformation, and mal-information (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). Nigeria, characterized by its heterogeneous populace and dynamic online communities, has not escaped the adversities associated with information disorder.

The notion of information disorder comprises misinformation, disinformation, and mal-information, each signifying distinct aspects of problematic information distribution (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). Misinformation pertains to the inadvertent propagation of inaccurate information, whereas disinformation is defined by intentional deceitful practices (Fallis, 2015). Mal-information, though a less frequently addressed yet equally detrimental occurrence, entails the malicious employment of accurate information (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). These classifications are essential for comprehending the intricate landscape of information pollution prevalent in the digital epoch.

The escalation of misinformation and disinformation presents substantial societal dilemmas, undermining public confidence, intensifying social fractures, and obstructing informed decision-making processes (Bradshaw & Howard, 2019). The swift dissemination of erroneous information through digital platforms has exacerbated these challenges, thereby necessitating robust countermeasures (Vosoughi et al., 2018). The capacity of misinformation to sway political dynamics, public health responses, and social unity highlights the pressing need to confront this global issue (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017).

Fact-checking has emerged as an indispensable instrument in the struggle against information disorder. This methodical process entails the verification of claims against credible sources and expert knowledge to delineate truth from falsehood (Graves, 2016). Global initiatives in fact-checking have multiplied, with organizations committed to refuting false assertions and furnishing the public with accurate information (Amazeen, 2020). The efficacy of fact-checking in rectifying misperceptions and mitigating the proliferation of misinformation has been evidenced in numerous studies, although challenges persist in engaging audiences entrenched in their convictions (Walter et al., 2020).

Theoretical frameworks have been constructed to augment the effectiveness of fact-checking endeavours. The “truth sandwich” model proposes a tactic of presenting accurate information both prior to and subsequent to addressing misinformation, thereby effectively situating the correction within a truthful framework (Curry et al., 2020). This methodology seeks to diminish the likelihood of inadvertently reinforcing false beliefs through repetition. Furthermore, the “trust-through-transparency” strategy underscores the necessity for fact-checkers to be forthcoming regarding their methodologies, sources, and potential biases to cultivate trust and credibility among the public (Stencel & Perry, 2016).

The digital milieu presents both opportunities and challenges for fact-checking initiatives. Social media platforms, while frequently serving as conduits for misinformation, also offer channels for the swift dissemination of fact-checks (Pennycook & Rand, 2019). Nonetheless, the sheer volume and rapidity of online information frequently outstrip fact-checking efforts, thereby necessitating innovative methodologies such as automated fact-checking systems and collaborative networks of fact-checkers (Hassan et al., 2019). The incorporation of artificial intelligence into fact-checking processes holds promise for enhancing efforts to counter misinformation, although ethical considerations and the imperative for human oversight remain critical (Graves, 2018).

In the African context, fact-checking confronts distinctive challenges and opportunities. Constraints related to resources, linguistic diversity, and disparate levels of digital literacy significantly influence the efficacy of fact-checking initiatives (Cheruiyot & Ferrer-Conill, 2018). Nonetheless, the increasing acknowledgement of the necessity to combat misinformation has precipitated the formation of local fact-checking organizations and partnerships with international networks (Cunliffe-Jones, 2022). These endeavours are vital for addressing region-specific misinformation and fostering trust in fact-checking processes among the diverse populations of Africa.

Because information disorder is ever-changing, fact-checking procedures must be constantly researched and adapted. Studies have investigated the psychological aspects that influence the belief in and spread of misinformation, informing more targeted approaches to fact-checking and correction (Lewandowsky et al. 2012). Furthermore, research into the long-term effects of fact-checking on public discourse and information ecosystems continues to influence industry best practices (Nyhan & Reifler, 2015). As information disorder remains a chronic concern, the role of fact-checking as a cornerstone of information integrity is expected to rise, supported by breakthroughs in technology, interdisciplinary research, and worldwide collaboration.

Compared to previous studies that predominantly focused on isolated aspects of information disorder or specific platforms within limited geographical contexts, this research offers a comprehensive cross-platform analysis of fact-checking data from three leading African organisations, providing unique insights into the ecosystem of misinformation across the continent. While existing literature has examined social media’s role in disseminating false information (Vosoughi et al., 2018) or analysed political misinformation in specific regions (Bradshaw & Howard, 2019), this study

uniquely synthesises data across multiple content types, platforms, and thematic categories to map the complete landscape of information disorder in Africa. By employing a rigorous content analysis methodology to examine a substantial dataset spanning multiple years and countries, this research fills a critical gap in understanding the distinctive characteristics, patterns, and challenges of misinformation in African contexts, thereby informing more targeted and culturally appropriate interventions for enhancing information integrity across the continent.

Research has consistently demonstrated the role of social media in facilitating information disorder across multiple domains: in politics, where fabricated news and disinformation campaigns influence electoral outcomes and public opinion (Bradshaw & Howard, 2019; Woolley & Howard, 2018); in healthcare, where social platforms became breeding grounds for misinformation, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, undermining public health initiatives (Bridgman et al., 2020; Cinelli et al., 2020); and in regional contexts like Nigeria, where studies by Okoro and Okolie (2021) revealed how low media literacy and coordinated campaigns exacerbated the spread of misinformation, highlighting the need for enhanced digital literacy interventions among social media users across various sectors, including education, finance, security, and environmental issues. The ramifications of misinformation driven by social media extend beyond health crises to affect fundamental democratic processes. Nnanwube et al. (2020) analyzed the impact of fake news on electoral mechanisms in Nigeria, emphasizing how misinformation can compromise the integrity of democratic institutions. Their research underscores the urgent necessity for strategies designed to protect electoral processes from the destabilizing influences of misinformation propagated through social media. The distinctive characteristics of social media platforms amplify their effectiveness as conduits for misinformation. Algorithms engineered to optimize user engagement often favour sensational or emotionally charged content, which may encompass misinformation. This algorithmic amplification can foster echo chambers and filter bubbles, wherein users predominantly encounter information that reinforces their pre-existing beliefs, further entrenching false narratives (Spohr, 2017).

Moreover, the commercial frameworks of numerous social media platforms, which predominantly depend on advertising income, promote the generation and dissemination of content that commands user attention, irrespective of its authenticity. This financial incentive paradigm can unintentionally endorse the production and proliferation of misinformation, thereby establishing a formidable environment for fact-checkers and truth-seekers (Bakir & McStay, 2018) to operate.

In light of the complexities introduced by information disorder, a variety of fact-checking initiatives have emerged within the Nigerian context. Three distinguished platforms – FactCheckHub, Dubawa, and Africa Check – have taken leading roles in mitigating misinformation and fostering the dissemination of accurate information.

FactCheckHub, which was established in 2019, represents a collaborative initiative among several Nigerian media entities and civil society organizations (FactCheckHub, n.d.). This platform implements a stringent fact-checking protocol that encompasses comprehensive research, verification, and adherence to journalistic standards to evaluate the veracity of claims and narratives prevalent within the Nigerian information landscape.

Dubawa, which commenced operations in 2018, functions as a non-profit organization committed to advancing truth and accountability within the public domain (Dubawa, n.d.). The platform harnesses the expertise of a diverse team comprising researchers, journalists, and subject matter experts to conduct fact-checks across a multitude of sectors, including politics, health, and societal issues. The methodology employed by Dubawa includes exhaustive investigations, consultations with authoritative sources, and the provision of contextual analysis to counteract misinformation effectively.

Africa Check, which was established in 2012, stands as a significant fact-checking organization with operations spanning various African nations, including Nigeria (Africa Check, n.d.). This platform utilizes a meticulous verification framework, relying on a network of researchers, journalists, and subject matter experts to scrutinize claims and furnish accurate information to the populace. The scope of Africa Check's endeavours encompasses an extensive array of subjects, ranging from political and governance issues to health and social matters.

These fact-checking platforms have assumed a pivotal role in the fight against misinformation in Nigeria, employing a variety of methodologies and specialized knowledge to authenticate claims and deliver accurate information to the citizenry. Nevertheless, their efficacy in engaging and influencing a wide array of audiences, along with their capacity to challenge deeply entrenched misinformation narratives, continues to be an area ripe for further inquiry and scholarly investigation.

Through the exploration of the theoretical underpinnings of information disorder, misinformation, and fact-checking, in conjunction with an examination of previous studies regarding the role of social media in the proliferation of misinformation and a comprehensive overview of the three fact-checking platforms under scrutiny, this literature review lays a solid groundwork for the study's aims and methodological approach.

The significance of fact-checking platforms in countering misinformation cannot be overemphasized. By equipping citizens with trustworthy information, these platforms fulfil a critical function in nurturing an informed public discourse, promoting transparency, and holding institutions and individuals accountable (Amazeen, 2020). Nonetheless, the efficacy of these platforms within the Nigerian milieu necessitates further scholarly inquiry.

The extensive proliferation of social media platforms and the simplicity of disseminating information online have engendered an environment conducive to spreading misinformation in Nigeria. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp have evolved into fertile breeding grounds for rumours, conspiracy theories, and erroneous narratives, frequently amplified by orchestrated disinformation campaigns (Okoro & Okolie, 2021). These misleading narratives can exploit pre-existing societal divisions, exacerbating polarization and eroding trust in institutions and democratic processes.

The implications of information disorder in Nigeria are extensive and multifaceted. In the political arena, the circulation of false information can significantly impact electoral outcomes, shape public perception, and compromise the integrity of democratic processes (Nnanwube et al., 2020). Moreover, the dissemination of health-related misinformation poses considerable threats to public health initiatives, potentially obstructing efforts to combat diseases, advocate for vaccinations, and disseminate accurate medical information (Adamu & Rasheed, 2020).

Fact-checking platforms assume a pivotal role in mitigating information disorder through the verification of claims, the debunking of falsehoods, and the provision of accurate information to the public. FactCheckHub, Dubawa, and Africa Check have emerged as significant entities within the Nigerian fact-checking landscape, utilizing diverse methodologies and leveraging expertise from various disciplines (Chiluwa & Ifukor, 2015). However, the effectiveness of these platforms in engaging and influencing diverse audiences, as well as their capacity to combat entrenched misinformation narratives, remains an area ripe for further investigation.

The study has three main objectives as follows:

1. To identify the types of misinformation prevalent on social media platforms in Nigeria,
2. To analyze the fact-checking approaches employed by FactCheckHub, Dubawa, and Africa Check, and
3. To assess the impact and reach of these platforms in combating information disorder within the Nigerian context.

This study intends to contribute to the larger conversation on media literacy, information integrity, and the development of a well-informed society by focusing on the dynamics of information disorder in Nigeria and the role of fact-checking platforms.

## METHODS

To investigate the role of social media platforms in contributing to information disorder in Nigeria and evaluate the effectiveness of three fact-checking platforms (FactCheckHub, Dubawa, and Africa Check) in addressing this issue, this study employs a content analysis methodology. Content analysis is a widely used research technique for systematically and objectively examining various forms of communication, including text, images, and multimedia content (Neuendorf, 2017). Content analysis allows researchers to make inferences about the characteristics, meanings, and potential effects of the analyzed content (Krippendorff, 2022). In the context of this study, content analysis enables a thorough examination of the types of misinformation prevalent on social media platforms in Nigeria, as well as an assessment of the fact-checking approaches employed by the three platforms under investigation. The content analysis approach aligns with the research objectives, as it facilitates the identification of misinformation narratives, the analysis of fact-checking methodologies, and the evaluation of the platforms' impact and reach in combating information disorder. This study uses quantitative and qualitative analyses to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study.

The data collection process involved manual examination of checks on the website of selected fact-checking hubs to know the frequency of information fact-checked for the period, as well as other

variables associated, such as source, content type, subject, and others (e.g., January 2022 to December 2022). For the fact-checking platforms, a comprehensive collection of fact-checks, reports, and analysis published by FactCheckHub, Dubawa, and Africa Check during the same time frame was conducted. This included both the platforms' public-facing content and any additional documentation or data provided by the organizations themselves. To ensure a comprehensive and diverse sample, the data collection process encompasses various topics and domains, including but not limited to politics, health, social issues, and governance. Additionally, the sampling considered the geographical distribution and demographic characteristics of the content to capture potential regional and cultural variations.

The data analysis procedures involve a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches to address the research objectives comprehensively. The procedure for using quantitative analysis is as follows,

1. Frequency analysis: Identifying the prevalence and distribution of various misinformation narratives on social media platforms.
2. Content categorization: Classifying the misinformation narratives and fact-checking content based on predefined categories (e.g., topic, type of misinformation, source, etc.).
3. Comparative analysis: Evaluating the volume and characteristics of fact-checking activities across the three platforms.

Then, the procedure for using qualitative analysis is thematic analysis to identify and analyze recurring themes, patterns, and narratives within the misinformation content and fact-checking approaches.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Result

The data shows that Africa Check conducts 80% of the fact-checking, while Dubawa and Fact Check Hub only handle 13% and 7%, respectively. Africa Check's large share suggests it has more resources, staff, and possibly a broader geographic reach than the other two organizations. This allows it to handle more fact-checking requests. Africa Check is likely better known and trusted, which helps it carry out a larger volume of fact-checks. Dubawa and Fact Check Hub's smaller contributions might be due to fewer resources, staff, or smaller operating areas. They may focus on specific countries or topics rather than a broad range. These two organizations might still grow or have a more niche focus, limiting their overall fact-checking output. With Africa Check doing most of the fact-checking, there could be a risk of limited perspectives or coverage in certain regions or issues. Smaller organizations might not have enough reach to cover all areas. Gaps in Coverage: Misinformation in less-covered areas might go unchecked, especially where Dubawa and Fact Check Hub are less active.

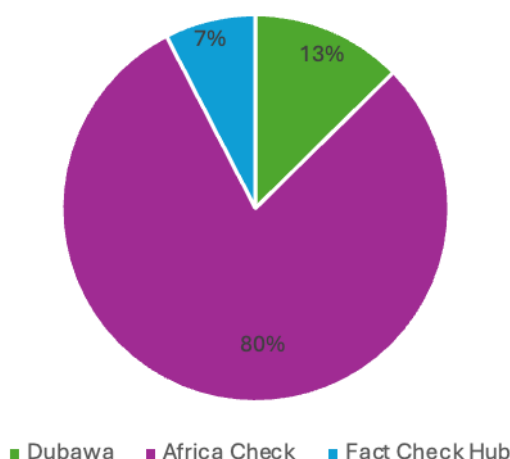


Figure 1. Frequency of Fact-checks by selected organizations

Africa Check emerged as the dominant fact-checking organization, handling 79.8% of the total fact-checks. This suggests that Africa Check has a more extensive reach or resources than Dubawa and Fact Check Hub. The disparity in fact-checking volume among these organizations might influence the overall representation of information disorder in Africa.

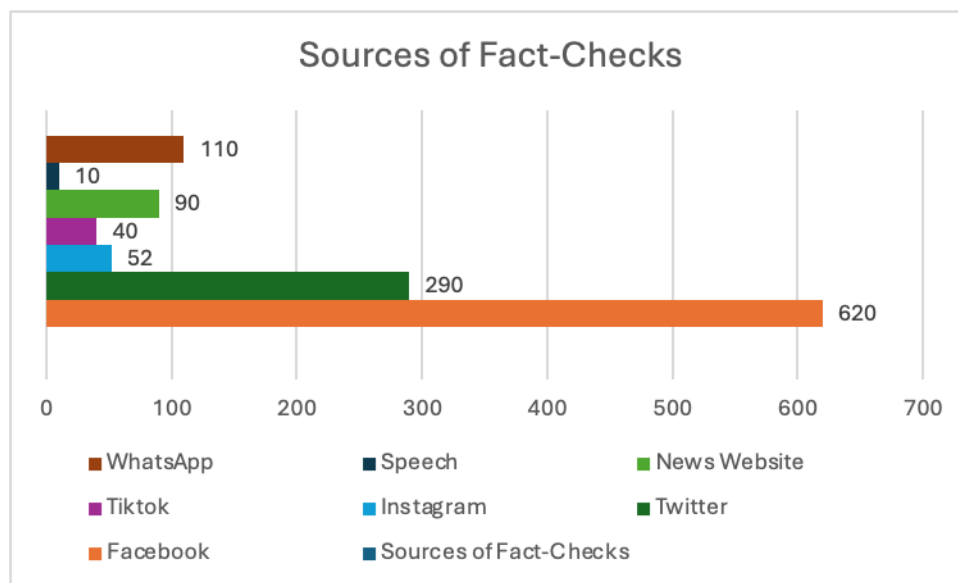


Figure 2. Sources of Information Disorder for Fact-Checks

Social media platforms account for the majority of fact-checked claims. Facebook leads with 620 instances, followed by Twitter (290) and WhatsApp (110). This highlights the significant role that social media plays in the spread of information (and misinformation) in Africa. The presence of newer platforms like TikTok (40 instances) indicates an evolving nature of information dissemination.

Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and emerging ones like TikTok are key in the spread of misinformation in Africa. While Facebook leads in fact-checked claims, the rise of platforms like TikTok signals a shift in how information is shared. To combat misinformation effectively, fact-checkers must adapt to the unique features and rapid evolution of these platforms.

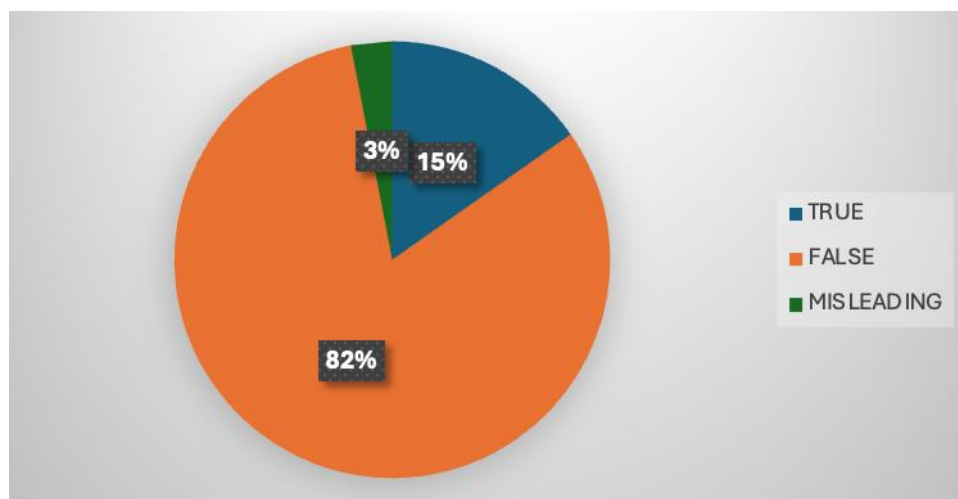


Figure 3. Result of Claims Fact-Checked

Of the 1,212 fact-checked claims, 990 (81.7%) were found to be false, while only 185 (15.3%) were true, and 37 (3%) were misleading. This alarming ratio underscores the severity of information disorder in the region and the crucial role of fact-checking organizations in combating it. The fact that more than 80% of fact-checked claims are false indicates that misinformation is widespread and a significant challenge in the region. Only a few claims were verified as true, suggesting that misinformation often outweighs reliable information in public discourse. The 3% of misleading claims also points to the subtleties of misinformation, where information may seem partially true but is still distorted. This data highlights the critical role of fact-checking organizations in addressing

misinformation. The high percentage of false and misleading claims underscores the need for continuous monitoring and correction of information to ensure the public receives accurate news and updates.

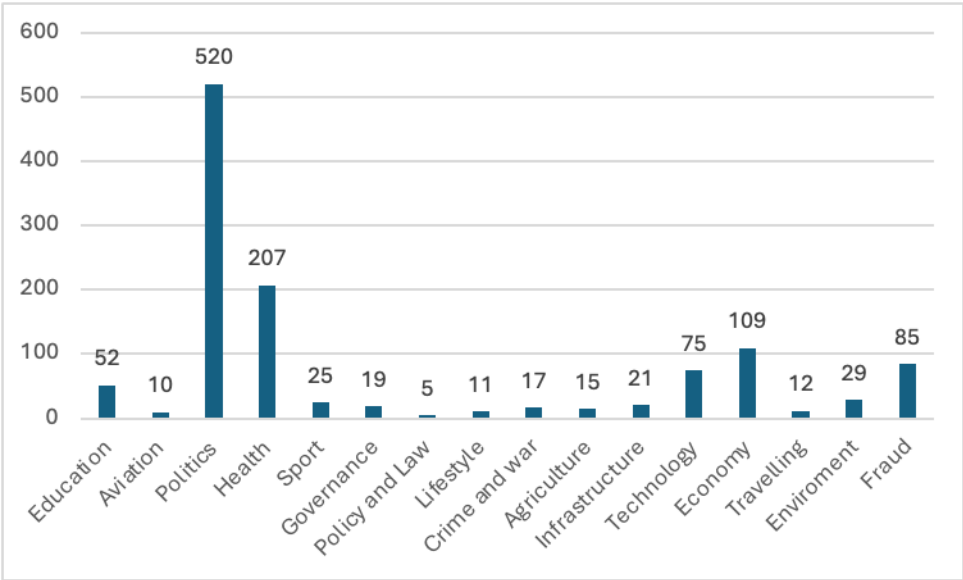


Figure 4. Subjects of Claims Fact-Checked

Politics dominates the subjects of fact-checked claims with 520 instances, followed by health (207) and economy (109). This distribution reflects the areas most vulnerable to misinformation and might indicate public interest or concern in these topics. The significant presence of health-related claims could be attributed to the global health situations (e.g., the COVID-19 pandemic).

Politics, as a dominant topic, reflects its significance in public discourse. Misinformation in this area can majorly impact elections, governance, and public opinion, making it highly vulnerable to distortion. Next, the high number of health-related claims, especially during global events like the COVID-19 pandemic, shows how health issues can be a major source of misinformation. During health crises, people are more likely to encounter false or misleading information, affecting public behavior and trust in health guidelines. Then, while fewer claims were related to the economy, the presence of economic misinformation still signals concern, as it can influence financial decisions and public trust in economic policies.

The focus on politics, health, and the economy reflects the areas where misinformation has the most potential impact. Fact-checking organizations play a crucial role in clarifying facts and preventing the spread of false information in these high-stakes subjects.

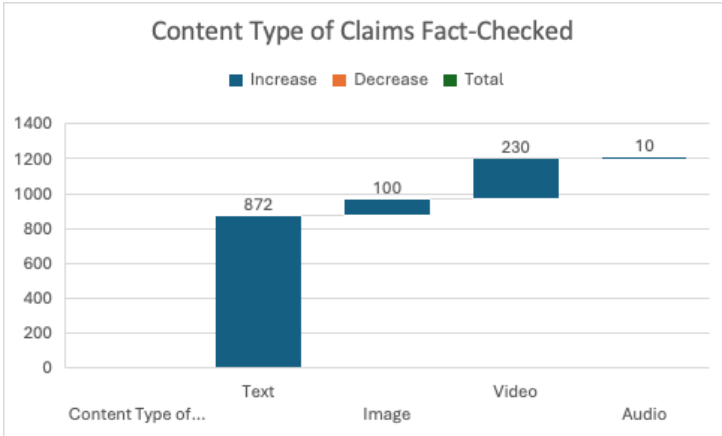


Figure 5. Content Type of Claims Fact-Checked

Text-based content, 872 (73%) instances, is by far the most common format for claims requiring fact-checking. Text-based content remains the primary format for misinformation, likely because it is easy to create, share, and manipulate, especially in written posts, articles, or social media updates. Followed by video, 230 (19%), and image, 100 (8%). This distribution suggests that while text remains the primary vehicle for information, visual content (videos and images combined) accounts for a significant proportion (27.2%) of fact-checked claims. Videos and images are becoming increasingly important in spreading misinformation. Visual content, such as videos and manipulated images, can often have a stronger emotional impact and spread quickly, making them key areas for fact-checking. The fact that nearly 30% of fact-checked claims are visual (videos and images) emphasizes the growing need for fact-checkers to focus on these formats in addition to text. While text remains the dominant format for misinformation, the substantial presence of video and image-based claims highlights the evolving nature of misinformation. Fact-checking organizations must address text and visual content to effectively combat misinformation.

## Discussion

This study has three primary objectives. The findings are discussed in relation to existing literature to highlight the new insights they contribute to understanding misinformation and fact-checking. Regarding the first objective, which is to identify the prevalent types of misinformation circulating on social media platforms in Nigeria, our analysis of fact-checking data indicates that political misinformation is the most dominant, representing the largest share of fact-checked claims across all platforms. This observation supports Brennen et al. (2020), who noted that politically motivated misinformation is particularly widespread in politically tense environments. Health-related misinformation ranks second, especially prominent during public health crises, aligning with findings by Oyeyemi et al. (2014) on health misinformation within African contexts. Economic and fraud-related misinformation forms the third major category, reflecting societal anxieties about economic instability, consistent with the fake news typology outlined by Tandoc et al. (2020).

The formats of misinformation are notably varied. Although text-based content predominates, a considerable amount of misinformation is disseminated through visual formats such as images and videos. This pattern corresponds with Highfield and Leaver's (2016) observations regarding the increasing role of visual media in spreading information. Our results also show that Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp are the main platforms through which misinformation spreads in Nigeria, reinforcing the findings of Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) and Wasserman and Madrid-Morales (2019). The appearance of newer platforms like TikTok in our data reflects the constantly evolving nature of the misinformation ecosystem, underscoring the need for adaptable fact-checking approaches.

In terms of the second objective—examining the fact-checking methods used by FactCheckHub, Dubawa, and Africa Check—we found that these organisations employ distinct strategies that reflect their differing capacities and priorities. Africa Check notably conducts a higher volume of fact-checks than the other two, illustrating disparities in operational scale, a pattern also identified by Graves and Cherubini (2016) in their study of global fact-checking efforts. All three organisations concentrate on verifying claims shared via mainstream social media, particularly Facebook and Twitter, recognizing the outsized role these platforms play in information dissemination.

Methodological differences are evident: Africa Check utilizes a detailed rating system that provides nuanced evaluations, whereas FactCheckHub and Dubawa typically classify claims in a binary manner. Transparency in methodology and sourcing is emphasized by all three, and it is in line with best practices identified by Amazeen (2020). Furthermore, these organisations contextualize claims within broader sociopolitical frameworks, enhancing the educational impact of their fact-checks, as recommended by Walter et al. (2020). Each organisation also specializes thematically: FactCheckHub focuses more on health misinformation, Dubawa prioritizes political misinformation, and Africa Check maintains a balanced thematic coverage. These strategic distinctions contribute to the comprehensive coverage of misinformation in Nigeria.

The third objective investigated the impact and reach of these fact-checking platforms in mitigating information disorder. Our findings reveal both significant achievements and ongoing challenges. The large volume of fact-checked claims, with 81.7% identified as false, highlights the crucial role these organisations play in promoting information integrity, supporting Nyhan and Reifler's (2015) findings on fact-checking's corrective effects. Nonetheless, the rapid spread of misinformation



on social media often exceeds the capacity of fact-checkers to intervene promptly, a dynamic noted by Vosoughi et al. (2018). The encrypted nature of private messaging apps like WhatsApp further complicates fact-checking efforts, as observed by Resende et al. (2019).

The influence of these organisations is particularly visible in mainstream media citations and policy discussions, consistent with Cunliffe-Jones's (2022) analysis of fact-checking's institutional impact in Africa. However, their reach is uneven, showing stronger engagement among urban, educated populations and limited penetration in rural or less digitally connected communities. This digital divide reflects broader patterns of information inequality, as documented by Wasserman and Madrid-Morales (2019).

Collectively, these findings offer a comprehensive view of Nigeria's information disorder landscape, emphasizing the critical role of social media, the predominance of political and health misinformation, and the varied methodologies employed by fact-checking organizations. The similarities between these patterns and global trends highlight the universal nature of misinformation challenges, while also pointing to Nigeria's unique characteristics. These insights can guide more targeted interventions to improve information integrity and support democratic engagement in Nigeria's distinctive media environment.

## CONCLUSION

This comprehensive analysis of fact-checking data from three leading African organizations reveals a complex information disorder landscape that demands urgent attention. Our findings indicate that social media platforms—especially Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp—are the main channels through which misinformation spreads in Africa, with 81.7% of fact-checked claims being false. Political misinformation is the most widespread, followed by health-related and economic misinformation, reflecting global trends and Africa-specific patterns that call for tailored responses. While text-based misinformation remains predominant, the notable volume of images and videos, along with the growing presence of platforms like TikTok, highlights a shifting landscape that demands flexible and evolving fact-checking approaches. Significant differences in fact-checking output, with Africa Check leading in volume, reveal disparities in organizational resources that must be addressed to enhance information integrity efforts continent-wide. These findings fulfill the study's aims by charting the distribution of misinformation across platforms and themes, exposing gaps in fact-checking capacity, and identifying emerging trends that require strategic intervention. Given the ongoing risks misinformation poses to democratic governance, public health, and economic development in Africa, our study underscores the urgent need for improved digital literacy initiatives, targeted platform strategies, and reinforced fact-checking infrastructures adapted to Africa's specific challenges.

## REFERENCES

- Allcott, H., & Gentzkow, M. (2017). Social media and fake news in the 2016 election. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 31(2), 211–236. <https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.31.2.211>
- Amazeen, M. A. (2020). Journalistic interventions: The structural factors affecting the global emergence of fact-checking. *Journalism*, 21(1), 95–111. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884917730217>
- Auxier, B., & Anderson, M. (2021). Social media use in 2021. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2021/04/07/social-media-use-in-2021/>
- Bakir, V., & McStay, A. (2018). Fake news and the economy of emotions: Problems, causes, solutions. *Digital Journalism*, 6(2), 154–175. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2017.1345645>
- Bradshaw, S., & Howard, P. N. (2019). The global disinformation order: 2019 global inventory of organised social media manipulation. Project on Computational Propaganda. <https://comprop.oii.ox.ac.uk/research/cybertroops2019/>
- Brennen, J. S., Simon, F., Howard, P. N., & Nielsen, R. K. (2020). Types, sources, and claims of COVID-19 misinformation. Reuters Institute. <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/types-sources-and-claims-covid-19-misinformation>
- Bridgman, A., Merkley, E., Loewen, P. J., Owen, T., Ruths, D., Teichmann, L., & Zhilin, O. (2020). The causes and consequences of COVID-19 misperceptions: Understanding the role of news and social media. *Harvard Kennedy School Misinformation Review*, 1(3). <https://doi.org/10.37016/mr-2020-028>

- Cheruiyot, D., & Ferrer-Conill, R. (2018). "Fact-checking Africa": Epistemologies, data and the expansion of journalistic discourse. *Digital Journalism*, 6(8), 964–975. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2018.1493940>
- Chiluwa, I. E., & Ifukor, P. (2015). 'War against our children': Stance and evaluation in #BringBackOurGirls campaign discourse on Twitter and Facebook. *Discourse & Society*, 26(3), 267–296. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926514564737>
- Cinelli, M., Quattrocioni, W., Galeazzi, A., Valensise, C. M., Brugnoti, E., Schmidt, A. L., ... & Scala, A. (2020). The COVID-19 social media infodemic. *Scientific Reports*, 10(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-020-73510-5>
- Cunliffe-Jones, P. (2022). The rise of fact-checking in Africa. *Digital Journalism*, 10(1), 55–77. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2021.1989315>
- Fallis, D. (2015). What is disinformation? *Library Trends*, 63(3), 401–426. <https://doi.org/10.1353/lib.2015.0014>
- Graves, L. (2016). *Deciding what's true: The rise of political fact-checking in American journalism*. Columbia University Press.
- Graves, L. (2018). Understanding the promise and limits of automated fact-checking. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/our-research/understanding-promise-and-limits-automated-fact-checking>
- Graves, L., & Cherubini, F. (2016). The rise of fact-checking sites in Europe. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/our-research/rise-fact-checking-sites-europe>
- Hassan, N., Arslan, F., Li, C., & Tremayne, M. (2019). Toward automated fact-checking: Detecting check-worthy factual claims by ClaimBuster. *Proceedings of the 25th ACM SIGKDD International Conference on Knowledge Discovery & Data Mining*, 1803–1812. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3292500.3330665>
- Highfield, T., & Leaver, T. (2016). Instagrammatics and digital methods: Studying visual social media, from selfies and GIFs to memes and emoji. *Communication Research and Practice*, 2(1), 47–62. <https://doi.org/10.1080/22041451.2016.1155332>
- Krippendorff, K. (2022). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology* (4th ed.). Sage. <https://methods.sagepub.com/book/mono/content-analysis-4e/toc>
- Lewandowsky, S., Ecker, U. K., Seifert, C. M., Schwarz, N., & Cook, J. (2012). Misinformation and its correction: Continued influence and successful debiasing. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 13(3), 106–131. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1529100612451018>
- Neuendorf, K. A. (2017). *The content analysis guidebook* (2nd ed.). Sage. <https://methods.sagepub.com/book/mono/the-content-analysis-guidebook-2e/toc>
- Nnanwube, E. F., Ani, K. J., & Ojatorotu, V. (2020). Social media, fake news and the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. *African Renaissance*, 17(1), 11–26.
- Nyhan, B., & Reifler, J. (2015). The effect of fact-checking on elites: A field experiment on US state legislators. *American Journal of Political Science*, 59(3), 628–640. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12162>
- Okoro, E. M., & Okolie, U. C. (2021). Analysis of social media misinformation during COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 39(2), 291–308. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02589001.2021.1926310>
- Oyeyemi, S. O., Gabarron, E., & Wynn, R. (2014). Ebola, Twitter, and misinformation: A dangerous combination? *BMJ*, 349, g6178. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.g6178>
- Pennycook, G., & Rand, D. G. (2019). Fighting misinformation on social media using crowdsourced judgments of news source quality. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 116(7), 2521–2526. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1806781116>
- Resende, G., Melo, P., Sousa, H., Messias, J., Vasconcelos, M., Almeida, J., & Benevenuto, F. (2019). (Mis)Information dissemination in WhatsApp: Gathering, analyzing and countermeasures. *The World Wide Web Conference*, 818–828. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3308558.3313688>
- Spohr, D. (2017). Fake news and ideological polarization: Filter bubbles and selective exposure on social media. *Business Information Review*, 34(3), 150–160. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0266382117722446>
- Stencel, M., & Perry, K. (2016). *Superpowers: The digital skills media leaders say newsrooms need going forward*. Tow-Knight Center for Entrepreneurial Journalism.

- [https://webdesign.cindyroyal.net/handouts/Superpowers\\_%20Digital%20Skills%20Newsrooms%20Need\\_.pdf](https://webdesign.cindyroyal.net/handouts/Superpowers_%20Digital%20Skills%20Newsrooms%20Need_.pdf)
- Tandoc, E. C., Jenkins, J., & Craft, S. (2020). A typology of fake news: A multidimensional examination of different types of fake news based on content, intent, and source. *Journalism Studies*, 21(9), 1130–1153. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2020.1807378>
- Vaccari, C., & Chadwick, A. (2020). Deepfakes and disinformation: Exploring the impact of synthetic political video on deception, uncertainty, and trust in news. *Social Media + Society*, 6(1), 2056305120903408. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305120903408>
- Vosoughi, S., Roy, D., & Aral, S. (2018). The spread of true and false news online. *Science*, 359(6380), 1146–1151. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aap9559>
- Walter, N., Cohen, J., Holbert, R. L., & Morag, Y. (2020). Fact-checking: A meta-analysis of what works and for whom. *Political Communication*, 37(3), 350–375. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2019.1668894>
- Wardle, C., & Derakhshan, H. (2017). Information disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policy making. Council of Europe. <https://edoc.coe.int/en/media/7495-information-disorder-toward-an-interdisciplinary-framework-for-research-and-policy-making.html>
- Wasserman, H., & Madrid-Morales, D. (2019). An exploratory study of “fake news” and media trust in Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa. *African Journalism Studies*, 40(1), 107–123. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23743670.2019.1627230>
- Woolley, S. C., & Howard, P. N. (2018). Computational propaganda: Political parties, politicians, and political manipulation on social media. Oxford University Press. <https://academic.oup.com/book/25859>