

## FACTORS AFFECTING NEWS MEDIA CREDIBILITY: A PERCEPTION STUDY

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### ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the factors affecting news media credibility by examining two potential key factors; news trust and reporter's credibility. Study also explores minor themes such as students' media preferences for news, news consumption habits, fact-checking behaviors and trust in news sources. Students from three educational institutions participated in the study: Government College Samanabad Faisalabad, Agriculture University Faisalabad, and Government College University Faisalabad (GCUF). Students (n=250) were given a survey questionnaire which measures variables on a 5.0 Likert scale. Regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses. Findings show good model fit value for news trust (Adjusted  $R^2=.393$ ) and for reporter credibility (Adjusted  $R^2=.115$ ). Furthermore, the results demonstrate a high-level association for the model of news trust and news media credibility and the model of reporter credibility and news media credibility. Descriptive statistics demonstrate that social media was the most popular news source (76.4%), followed by TV (12.8%) and newspapers (5.6%). Students' fact-checking behavior varies, with 49.6% occasionally verifying news, 18.0% who rarely do so, and 5.2% who never verify information.

**Keywords:** news credibility, source credibility, reporter credibility, news perception, trust, fact-checking

### Introduction:

Information is consumed by people for various purposes such as gaining additional knowledge, decision-making, psychological comfort, motivation, and empowerment. In fact, information is always considered credible as it helps to alleviate uncertainty in people; yet it also leads to increased uncertainty and cognitive dissonance if the information's credibility is in question (Buckland et al., 2010). On the other hand, people are confronted with a massive amount of information in daily life; yet only the information perceived as credible and important

is stored (Rogers, 2009). The most influential key within this particular phenomenon is considered to be credibility and it has a central role within the acceptance of information (Rogers, 2009).

Over the past decades, there has also been a lack of trust in news media across the world, and this is also true in Pakistan. Owing to the dramatic growth of digital media, mainstream news media in Pakistan has also faced charges of bias, politics, and sensationalism. These have also led to very hot debates about news content credibility, especially in younger people and new media professionals. The assessment of news trust has

long been the focus of researchers through the two most important aspects of credibility—medium credibility and source credibility (Golan & Day, 2010). Source credibility in mass media has been extensively studied first in the context of the communicative traits of the message that affect the message processing outcomes, audience beliefs about the accuracy of the message, the ability of the message sender to deliver the message as is, and the audience attributes in the perception of the message. (Markham, 2010) Decades of studying news trust have been replaced in recent years by the rising need to address the concern about the differing levels of trust that media institutions face.

There are a number of issues that affect perceptions of the credibility of news, such as accuracy, objectivity, and professional news behavior, source transparency, independence from external influences, and professional ethics on the part of journalists. These issues have been exacerbated by the changing online news context (Guess et al., 2019). Viewers are now overwhelmed by information, such that they must pick their news choices from a variety of online sources that all compete to get attention in the very competitive news market (Mulac et al., 1975).

Public trust in news media has plummeted; misinformation, partisan politics, and sensationalism are seen to carry the day (Tariq & Zeib, 2023). Global surveys also show a sustained decline in confidence, as audiences tend increasingly to question the integrity of journalism and the reliability of its institutions. Fairness, transparency, and perceived impartiality appear to be important factors in choosing to trust news sources. For instance, Turcotte et al. (2015) note that people are more likely to trust news sources perceived as fair, transparent, and impartial. More traditional outfits like BBC and The New York Times are often considered to carry more credibility due to their editorial standards and institutional reputation, while online-only platforms and social media sources face far more skepticism (Johnson & Kaye, 2014; Luo et al., 2022).

Beliefs of the audience and their psychological biases further complicate credibility assessments (Lemert, 2016). Humans are more inclined to believe news that reflects their prior views and to reject news, even if it is factually correct, because it conflicts with those prior views. Emotional appeal does affect credibility assessments, as information that evokes fear or anger or excites readers is seen as more credible, even when it is false. Repeated exposure to misinformation makes people further believe it; this effect is called the illusory truth effect (Goovaerts, 2022; Strömbäck et al., 2020).

While digital platforms act increasingly as mediators of news consumption, various metrics of engagement, such as likes, shares, and comments, have started to substitute for traditional credibility cues (Chung et al., 2012). This trend presents serious challenges to mainstream media, since popularity is usually mistakenly perceived as reliability. Thus, increasing media literacy and reinforcing journalistic standards are indispensable prerequisites for reviving people's trust and enhancing news trust in contemporary media landscapes (Belair -Gagnon et al., 2019).

This research aims to cover this issue and explore the impact of common news experiences concerning the overall credibility of news content in mainstream news media in Pakistan. This is very crucial since overall news trust directly impacts trust, engagement, and use of news media for making informed decisions (Zeib & Shahzad, 2025).

### Literature Review

The question of media credibility has emerged as a very critical research domain in academia, in view of the massive changes that have been caused in the current digital age due to the advent of new communication technology. The emergence of new online news media platforms and social networking sites has significantly altered the way in which information has been produced, consumed, and disseminated. Among numerous groups of individuals who are targeted by news channels in the new world order, young individuals form a very distinct segment in view

of their huge reliance on digital news media platforms (Duncan et al., 2022).

Media credibility can be defined generally as the level at which consumers of news believe in the credibility and truth of the information presented in the news sources. This factor of credibility in news media could only be measured in relation to traditional news establishments that followed a certain journalistic professionalism in relation to news verification, editing, and integrity in news dissemination (Cassidy, 2007). The challenge of credibility in the modern world of decentralized information may have shifted the burden of news verification from the sources of information to the consumers in general, especially the youth who are constantly bombarded with a lot of information. On the other hand, news trust refers to a quality that informs how audiences make sense of information and establish judgments about information. It is a cognitive process whereby individuals assess messages in terms of trustworthiness, accuracy, expertise, completeness, and bias. These dimensions have widely been used to assess credibility not only within traditional media platforms such as newspapers and television but also in news online and digital environments (Entman, 2007).

### **Media Credibility and News trust**

Factors involved in the audience affect the credibility of the news that they follow. Some demographic factors include age, educational levels, income, and political involvement. Younger readers will likely access online news sources, while the aged will rely on sources categorized under traditional news outfits that earn favor because of a strong reputation. Higher educational levels will likely relate to critical news consuming.

The recent spate of fake news and misinformation that has characterized the digital era has become one of the most serious challenges facing media institutions in the contemporary era (Graefe, 2016; Williams, 2012). Technological advancements in the realm of communication technology and the popularity of social media platforms have significantly changed the way news is generated, disseminated,

and consumed. Although the new technologies have increased access to news, the speed with which fake news is generated and disseminated has also significantly increased. Consequently, the perception of the media has changed dramatically.

The rapid spread of fake news through social media aggravates this problem and is often instigated by the state. Misinformation has seriously compromised the credibility of the media and the confidence that people have on journalism (Self, 2020). This disturbing fact does not prevent the users to continue to consume various news items and articles that they do not trust or even believe. The effect of misinformation has far reaching consequences that have to be well analyzed so that appropriate understanding can be reached on how information processing is influenced as well as the overall societal consequences.

This selective viewing then results in polarization in terms of media consumption (Zeib & Tariq, 2025). Then there is affiliation with politics that tends to increase these processes. These processes are further reinforced by the role of social influence, particularly within online communities. The idea of 'social proof' suggests that social validation is the most significant factor when it comes to people engaging with information because it is recommended by someone within their social circles.

Technology is constantly changing the nature of news trust evaluation. The development of deep fake technology and immersive news media like virtual reality content poses a challenge to news trust evaluation. Immersive content like virtual reality news media is likely to increase engagement and empathy but pose the risk of manipulation and feeling realistic. Credibility of news media is an intricate and complex phenomenon, whereby the dynamics between the different stakeholders, technology, and the nature of the audiences play important roles. For the youth, the perception of credibility is mediated by digital habits, social endorsement possibilities, the level of media literacy, and certain mental dispositions (Gaziano, 2010). Rapid changes in the digital world present

challenges, some of which, have never been faced by media consumers (Kim, 2022). Perceiving and making inferences about youth in relation to the evaluation of news trust is very significant in creating an enduring culture of citizenship in modern societies. Improving media literacy education and establishing pledge guidelines in journalism have become very essential in revamping the culture (Amazeen & Muddiman, 2018). Further studies in the future will be needed to cover the continuous perspectives in journalist-technological behavior. Hence, we propose

H1: News trust is positively related to Credibility of the Media

### Source Credibility and News Trust

Source credibility has been a pivotal part of trust in news media and has been a concern for communication study for a significant period (Lee, 2016). Early conceptualizations of source credibility in news media have been based on Source Credibility Theory, where expertise and trustworthiness have been highlighted as primary components shaping audience perception (Hovland and Weiss, 1951). Media credibility not only refers to the qualities of specific media but also includes institutional factors such as transparency, consistency, objectivity, and accountability. Studies have found that audiences tend to prefer media institutions that are editorially independent, disclose their ownership and funding sources, and correct their mistakes openly (Metzger et al., 2010). It has been found that transparency is an institutional factor that plays an important role in facilitating media credibility, as it reflects integrity on the part of the journalists and helps build trust with the audience.

Initial research efforts in this area were centered on print media but eventually extended to include radio and television. Many studies that were undertaken in the middle part of the last century tended to conclude that television offered more credibility than print media because television is a visual medium, and print media offered in-depth analysis through newspapers. The omnipresent internet has shifted research

interest in media credibility to online news media (Flanagin & Metzger, 2008). The role played by web mediums such as "social networks" further complicates information credibility since they are centered around "likes," "shares," and "comments," among others.

Among many other reasons, algorithmic content curation also has a paramount role in influencing the attitude of the youth towards the credibility of news. Algorithms in social media platforms are primarily driven by content with a high level of engagement and interaction. Such platforms prioritize the sharing of news with which the audience can readily engage and connect in terms of content with a high psychological appeal and ability to trigger emotions (Tufekci, 2015). Media literacy has recently come to the fore as a key component in enabling young audience members to effectively navigate a complicated media environment. Individuals who are media literate have a better opportunity to analyze the source's credibility and ultimately form a well-rounded view by comparing information with other sources. Research has indicated a significant relationship between increased media literacy and a skeptical attitude towards sensationalist media as well as increases in source credibility assessments (Rieh, 2010).

Credibility of source is a crucial factor that impacts the development of credibility of journalism (Chung et al., 2022). The most significant attributes that affect journalist credibility are expertise, honesty, and objectivity. Journalists that show high-level expertise and research and offer contextual information stand a better prospect of being taken as credible sources by the audience (Kohring & Matthes, 2007). These findings led us to hypothesize

H2: News trust is positively related to Credibility of the News Source

### Theoretical framework

The presented study is based on important conceptual foundations in the field of media studies which describe the perception of audiences toward the credibility of news media in the modern complex information environment. The core theoretic basis of this research lies in

the Media Credibility Theory, which assumes that media credibility is actually a function of audience perception rather than something innate in the media organizations themselves (Flanagin & Metzger, 2000). Credibility in media is identified by the theoretic constructs of trustworthiness, which implies a lack of deceit, dishonesty, or ulterior motives, and expertise, which measures the professionalism of the sources of news.

To address these issues, the framework also uses Information Overload Theory and Selective Exposure Theory. Information Overload Theory (Chung et al., 2023) states that "information overload occurs when the information-processing system is bombarded with so much information that it cannot effectively process it, so that information processing efficiency is impaired." The abundance of conflicting information seen within digital and social media sources causes cognitive overload, reducing readers' critical capabilities to evaluate information effectively. This automatically shifts towards heuristic methods, including familiarity, ideology, and reputation for credibility judgments.

The further application of Selective Exposure Theory demonstrates how people are inclined towards receiving information that does not differ from their beliefs, contributing to the formation of "echo chambers," which influence views towards credibility immensely. Together, these theories form an encompassing framework to analyze the way in which fake news, media practices, and media behaviors come in contact in order to form perceptions related to media issues (Nelson & Kim, 2020).

### Methodology

A survey method was applied by the researcher to collect quantitative data from a sizable, diverse, and representative population. Researchers gather direct information from university

students who consume news content in their daily life which affect their perception about credibility. A total of 250 respondents serve as the sample size for this study, and random sampling is employed. Owing to financial and temporal constraints, this study only included the students from GC University Faisalabad, Agriculture University and the Government College Samanabad Faisalabad. The respondents of the study are between the ages of 18 and 35. The questionnaire was used as a data collection tool, which comprised of 5 sections i.e. items about demographic information, news trust, source credibility and media credibility and news interest. SPSS was used to analyze the data. Both descriptive and referential statistics were used to analyze the trends and hypotheses. The entire data was collected between December 11, 2024 and January 10, 2025. The items were adapted from previous studies (Markham, 2016), (Kohring & Matthes, 2007).

## RESULTS

### Demographics

Table 1 demonstrates the respondents' demographic details. 56.8% of the respondents were between the ages of 18 and 21, and 39.6% were between the ages of 22 and 25. The majority of the respondents (54%) were female. In terms of news consumption, 76.4% of respondents said social media was their main source, followed by newspapers (5.6%) and television (12.8%). In contrast, 52.8% of respondents trusted social media, 20.8% trusted newspapers, and 18.4% trusted television when it came to accuracy. 49.6% of respondents said they occasionally verify news, 18.0% said they do it infrequently, and 5.2% said they never do so. These findings demonstrate how students' media consumption and trust habits are dominated by digital platforms.

**Table 1 Demographic information**

Variables	Categories	Frequencies	%age
Gender	Male	115	46
	Female	135	54
Age	18-21	142	56.8

	22-25	99	39.6
	26-39	8	3.2%
	30-33	1	0.4
Education	BS/BA	210	84
	MA/MSc	15	1.8
	MPhil/PHD	3	1.2
	Other	2	0.8
Monthly Income	<40,000	16	6.4
	41,000-60,000	24	9.6
	61,000-80,000	113	45.2
	81,000-100,000	54	21.6
	>100,000	43	17.2
		250	100

### Information source, News trust, News trust

Table 2 represents that 36% of respondents check the news daily, showing strong engagement. Another 18% follow weekly and 30% periodically, while 15.6% rarely engage. Overall, 84% check at least occasionally, with daily participation being the most common pattern. Social media dominates as the main news source (76.4%), followed by television at 12.8%. Newspapers (5.6%) and radio (2.0%) show declining use, while 2.4% chose other sources and 0.8% were uncertain. Overall, 91.2% prefer digital/electronic media, highlighting the growing role of online platforms. Over half of respondents (52.8%) view social media as the

most reliable news source, followed by newspapers (20.8%) and television (18.4%). Radio ranks lowest (2.0%), while 6.0% chose other sources. Overall, 94% trust mainstream media, with digital platforms leading but traditional journalism still valued. The frequency with which respondent's fact-check the news they read, hear, or watch is seen in the table. Nearly half (49.6%) occasionally fact-check news, while 27.2% actively verify it. Smaller groups always (14.4%) or frequently (12.8%) check accuracy. Yet 23.2% rarely or never fact-check, raising concerns about misinformation. Overall, 72.8% at least occasionally verify information.

**Table 2 Assessment of Information source, News trust, and News trust**

	Which type of news source do you prefer the most for news and information seeking?		Which type of a news source do you trust the most for accurate information?	
	Frequency	%age	Frequency	%age
TV	32	12.8	46	18.4
Radio	5	2	5	2
Social Media	190	76	132	52.8
Newspaper	14	5.6	52	20.8
Other	15	6	15	2.4
	How frequently do you check the news?		How often do you fact-check the news you read hear and watch?	
Always	90	36	67.5	27
Often	33	13.2	75	30
Sometimes	75	30	45	18
Rarely	39	15.6	30	12
Never	13	5.4	32.5	13
	250	100	250	100

Cross tabulation results show that students of both sexes exhibit comparable levels of interest in news, with the majority expressing a moderate level of interest (45.2% of males and 43% of females). Females are somewhat more likely than males to have high or very high interest (25.2%), whereas females are more likely to lack interest (13.3%) than males (10.4%). Students between the ages of 15 and 20 are more likely to fact-check occasionally or frequently (69%), whereas students between the ages of 21 and 25 are more

likely to fact-check infrequently or never (30.3%). Most students aged 26 and older rarely or never verify news, indicating a major decline in fact-checking. Most of the respondents seem to be moderately interested in news, however, the rest were rarely interested.

H1: News trust is positively related to Credibility of the Media

H0: News trust is not positively related to Credibility of the Media

**Table 3. Regression: Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.629 <sup>a</sup>	.396	.393	3.198

Predictors: (Constant), Media Credibility. The table presents the regression model of News trust and Media Credibility

Model Summary: Sample size=250. Adjusted R2=.393. Durbin Watson=1.775, Correlation is significant at \* p < .001; \*\*p < .01; \*\*\*p < .05.

The statistical inferences provide evidence that does not support the null hypothesis. Hence, H1 is supported by statistical analysis. As predicted in hypothesis H1, media trust has a significant and positive association ( $\beta = .629$ ,  $p < .001$ ) with news trust. It indicates that if media trust among public is increased by one standard deviation, news trust among public is increased by 0.629

standard deviations. Regression analysis also supported this model as 39.3% of variance (Adjusted R2) in news trust was explained by variables included in the analysis. For adequate testing of these hypotheses, .05/ .01 level of confidence is used which is considered as standard in social science.

**Table 4. Regression analysis**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	7.947	.695		11.437	.000	6.579	9.316		
Media credibility	.566	.045	.629	12.719	.000	.478	.654	1.000	1.000

Dependent Variable: News trust, Correlation is significant at \* p < .001; \*\*p < .01; \*\*\*p < .05.

Table 5. ANOVA<sup>a</sup>

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1654.197	1	1654.197	161.775	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	2525.642	247	10.225		
	Total	4179.839	248			

Dependent Variable: News trust

Predictors: (Constant), Media Credibility

This ANOVA table represents the regression analysis results of the effect of Media Credibility which appears to be independent variable, on News trust which is the dependent variable. The sum of Squares (1654.1971) demonstrates the variance explained by the Media Credibility. The model is statistically significant at ( $p = 0.000$ ), meaning that Media Credibility significantly and

positively influences News trust among university students. The independent variable explains a sizeable variance in the dependent variable.

H2: News trust is positively related to Credibility of the News Reporter

H<sub>0</sub>: New trust is not positively related to Credibility of the News Reporter

**Table 6. Regression: Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.394 <sup>a</sup>	.155	.152	3.781

Predictors: (Constant), Reporter Credibility

The table presents the regression model of News trust and Reporter Credibility, Model Summary: Sample size=250. Adjusted R2=.152. Durbin Watson=1.775, Correlation is significant at \*  $p < .001$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .05$ .

While testing hypothesis 2, the statistical inferences provide evidence that does not support the null hypothesis. Hence, H2 is supported by statistical analysis. As predicted in hypothesis H2, reporter credibility has a significant and positive association ( $\beta = .394$ ,  $p < .001$ ) with news trust. It indicates that if reporter credibility among the public is increased by one

standard deviation, news trust among public is increased by 0.394 standard deviations. Regression analysis also supported this model as 15.5% of variance (Adjusted R2) in news trust was explained by variables included in the analysis. For adequate testing of these hypotheses, .05/ .01 level of confidence is used which is considered as standard in social science.

**Table 7. Regression table: Prediction of News trust**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	9.668	1.028		9.405	.000	7.643	11.692		
Reporter Credibility	.499	.074	.394	6.736	.000	.353	.645	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: News trust Correlation is significant at \*  $p < .001$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .05$

**Table 8. ANOVA**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	648.741	1	648.741	45.379	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	3531.098	247	14.296		
	Total	4179.839	248			

Dependent Variable: News trust

b. Predictors: (Constant), Reporter Credibility

This ANOVA table represents the regression analysis results of the effect of Reporter Credibility which appears to be independent

variable, on News trust which is the dependent variable. The sum of Squares (648.741) demonstrates the variance explained by the

Reporter Credibility. The model is statistically significant at ( $p = 0.000$ ), meaning that Reporter Credibility significantly and positively influences News trust among university students. The independent variable explains a sizeable variance in the dependent variable. Multi-collinearity, which happens when predictor variables in a regression model have a high degree of correlation and may skew the results, is evaluated in the above table. The findings show that model doesn't have any serious multi-collinearity issues. The impact of Reporter Credibility on News trust is dependable since it is an independent predictor without redundancy.

### Discussion

This study investigated the major factors influencing the credibility of news media through hypotheses concerning journalist credibility, source credibility, the influence of fake news, and how to enhance public trust. The findings confirm that news trust is a multidimensional construct shaped by journalistic integrity, institutional reputation, audience perception, and the growing challenge of misinformation in the digital environment. This paper clearly illustrates the extent to which fake news affects public trust in news media institutions. The response from the interview participants showed the extent to which the rise of misinformation contributes to a generalized lack of trust in news media institutions, including reputable news sources. The lack of trust is not within the realm of broadcasting information that is considered to be false but is compounded by the perception that news media institutions lack the ability to distinguish between credible sources and sources that are considered to be unreliable.

One of the main concerns raised by the participants is that they find it hard to differentiate between actual and manipulated information. The fact that actual and manipulated information is found in the same online environment has made it difficult for people to distinguish between actual and actual-looking but fake pieces of information. As a result of that uncertainty and confusion, they tend to doubt all sources of information

irrespective of whether they adhere to high journalism standards or not. Therefore, this has significantly affected the credibility of traditional media sources.

One of the most significant threats that have been identified through this research is that misinformation is not limited to niche sites anymore but is often found side by side with authentic news sites on mainstream social sites like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. This makes it difficult for people to assess the credibility of news being presented to them. Media credibility is no longer an absolute concept but is a relative one where reputable news sites are also called into question due to their presence in a larger media environment that allows for the spread of counterfeit news.

In addition to being vulnerable to deceptive information, the role of misinformation in influencing media credibility cannot be overlooked in terms of psychological effects associated with misinformation (Kioussis, 2011). Repetitive exposure to deceptive or conflicting information leads to cognitive dissonance, making an individual more skeptical about any information they come across, irrespective of the source of the information. This leads to an environment of distrust against the media institutions as a whole. The lack of trust is a key factor in undermining the credibility of any media institution.

The study also shows that trust erosion can be made worse when people pick up a bias impression concerning the media reporting. Fake news exploits some political, social, and ideological divisions based on the reporting of news that appeals to particular ideologies toward the world (Pennycook & Rand, 2019). Media houses are likely to be associated with these ideologies and can suffer even further erosion of trust based on the perceived bias even when the news presented is factual and documented.

Information selective exposure is also an important aspect in this consideration. Many respondents confess that they have a tendency of engaging with media and news sources that are in line with their pre-existing attitudes and feelings. When misinformation is in line with one's

worldview, there is a higher tendency of adopting and disseminating such misinformation without much consideration or critical evaluation. Such a cycle has a tendency of making misinformation stronger while at the same time making alternative views appear less. Such a scenario has a negative effect on media credibility since audiences today regard any media that presents alternative viewpoints in a negative light.

Another important observation made in the research is the fact that social media is increasingly becoming the social context within which the credibility of traditional media is measured. News shared on social media sites gets more attention than news or content directly accessed from the traditional media. Therefore, although social media sites share both genuine as well as false pieces of news, it has had a negative effect on the reputation of the media as a whole. Going by previous literature on this topic, it is important to note that the absence of media literacy has been identified as one of the fundamental elements pushing the spread of misinformation. Based on this study's results, it is clear that the absence of critical thinking skills on the part of the audience, in conjunction with the large amount of information available online, makes them susceptible to falling victim to "fake news" on social media. This further diminishes the credibility of the media, as people begin to question the ability of the news organizations to convey accurate information to the public. "Fake news" also erodes the power of journalism because it has undermined the importance of truth and its verification in the media. The subjects indicated that being constantly exposed to misleading or sensationalist information made them suspicious of the intentions of journalists and media outlets as a whole. Thus, even credible information after thorough research and fact-checking is rendered suspect because of its apparent bias or dishonesty.

In fact, the problem with misinformation in relation to news is not only specific to a particular story but to the entire media system as well because it can affect its credibility and reliability (Brüggemann et al., 2014). The loss of credibility also affects the role of media in public discourse.

A lack of trust in media institutions may lead viewers to perceive media as tools of political or ideological deception rather than as providers of objective information. This mindset will lead viewers to disengage from traditional media sources and seek information from alternative media sources (Major & Atwood, 2015).

The above study also indicates that the work of individual journalists is often projected as the work of the entire organizational setup. Where the wrong information is ascribed to the particular journalists, the impact may be the tarnishing of the whole profession of journalism. Such is the reason why trust is hard to regain when the media houses follow superior standards. Correction of misinformation had shown itself to be an important factor in establishing the level of media credibility. Participants had stated their perception of transparency, accountability, and timeliness in correcting the error as important attributes of credible news sources, failure to correct an inaccuracy lead to deterioration of credibility.

Social media's function with regard to the distribution of news will also have its very significant influence on public perception. A lot of participants reported the use of social media as their primary source for fake news, and they did not always distinguish between social media and other sources such as media institutions. Such an amalgamation results in the erosion of trust since everyone cannot always distinguish between the two sources.

The study further indicates that young people are particularly susceptible to being affected by fake news. Young people are more skeptical about mainstream news, as they consume news from social media platforms largely. The viral aspect of fake news makes them even more skeptical as inaccurate information tends to vie with genuine news for attention.

The importance of transparency, fact-checking, and editorial practices was recognized as a means of regaining credibility. It was recognized that there was a need to show greater openness in editorial practices and greater commitment to ethical journalism on the part of the media. Fact-checking initiatives and making corrections easily

accessible were recognized as strategies that could address issues of misinformation.

In light of the above discussion, it is clear that the effects of fake news and misinformation on media credibility are far-reaching and complex. It is imperative for all stakeholders to address this problem together. Media houses need to emphasize Media credibility is more than necessary to restore trust and more importantly to preserve the role of media as a key pillar of an enlightened democratic society

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