VOL. 13 NO. 6,
AUGUST, 2026
E-ISSN 3027-1401
P-ISSN 3026-9148

African Scholar Publications & Research International
www.africanscholarpub.com

Journal of Arts and Sociological Research (JASR)

Assessing the Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices of Fact-Checking Among Journalists in The Gambia

Onifade, Oluwafemi Sunday; & Samura Majula
School of Journalism and Digital Media, University of The Gambia
DOI: https://doi.org/10.70382/ajasr.v13i6.0143

Abstract
Despite numerous fact-checking trainings and its growing adoption, a significant percentage of Gambian journalists lack awareness of fact-checking procedures. This study examines the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of Gambian journalists regarding fact-checking, focusing on its impact on the spread of misinformation and the adoption of innovation in journalism. Guided by the Diffusion of Innovation Theory and the Knowledge Gap Theory, this research employed the survey methodology. From a population of 600 practicing journalists, a sample of 234 journalists provided the data for the study. The collected data were statistically analysed using the SPSS software. The findings reveal that while most Gambian journalists are knowledgeable about fact-checking, a "laggard" segment plays a significant role in the widespread dissemination of misleading information. Social media platforms like Facebook, TikTok, and WhatsApp are identified as primary channels for false information. However, it is evident that many laggards cannot identify advanced forms of misinformation, such as viral audio messages in WhatsApp groups, AI-generated content, and scams. This is largely due to a lack of technical know-how for verification. The study recommends integrating fact-checking into the curricula of journalism schools and providing targeted training for practicing journalists who have not undergone formal fact-checking education. This approach would help eliminate untrained fact-checkers within the profession in The Gambia.

Keywords: Fact-checking, Gambian Journalists, Information Disorder, Digital Technology, and Diffusion of Innovation.

Introduction
Information verification is crucial for a journalist because it enhances credibility in the stories they publish. Fake news, misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation are major concerns in the Gambian media landscape. There is often an agenda behind misleading information or insufficient verification before publication. In journalism, ethical reporting is a fundamental rule that requires journalists to ensure the accuracy of the information they share. However, the rule requires journalists to be ethical in reporting by ensuring balance and conducting thorough

investigations into all sides of a story. Journalists contribute significantly to information disorder, as they are responsible for creating awareness, educating the masses, and keeping the public informed through mass media. A professional journalist must possess all the necessary knowledge to perform the job effectively and uphold the principles of ethical standards.

The public trusts journalists to provide reliable information because they are seen as key informants who create awareness and keep society updated. This is why it is dangerous for journalists to publish false news, whether intentionally or unintentionally, as it can negatively impact individuals or groups.

It is important to note that "digital technologies have …changed the narratives in newsgathering, processing, dissemination, and fact-checking, in addition to the access and use of media content." (Nnaane, 2022). In the era of digital technology and the advancement of conventional media, there are new ways to verify information and tools to support the generation of accurate information. These new verification methods require proper training for journalists during information gathering. It is pertinent to understand that "every new debate and campaign ad yields a blizzard of fact-checking from the new full-time fact-checkers, from traditional news outlets in print and broadcast, and from partisan political organizations of various stripes" (Graves & Glaisyer, 2012).

Some Gambian journalists are not well exposed to these new verification methods due to limited knowledge and familiarity with modern tools. Interestingly, "despite the prevalence of misinformation, the marketing and consumer behavior literature has long overlooked the study of this phenomenon, leaving the knowledge on the topic scattered across different disciplines and perspectives." (Domenico, 2022).

Fact-checking plays a major role in journalism in this digital era because it helps journalists ensure credibility, verify sources, and assess the authenticity of content. However, journalists must receive adequate training to use verification tools effectively. In The Gambia, organizations that conduct fact-checking training continue to train journalists on verification tools to ensure factual information reaches the public. Some of these organizations are responsible for assessing claims to determine whether they are accurate or misleading. Organizations and journalism institutions should work tirelessly to integrate fact-checking into school curricula, promoting excellence in journalism. Accurate information fosters peace, stability, and awareness while encouraging diversity and inclusion among citizens.

Problem Statement

Fake news spreads faster in the digital era and destroys the integrity of individuals whose arguments are built on false information. The rise of digital technology has increased cybercrime, with cyber terrorists creating fake accounts to spread misleading information. These cyber terrorists often impersonate high-profile media organizations or institutions with detailed fake profiles to deceive audiences.

Some Gambian journalists have been trained in fact-checking, but the impact of the training on their practice is unknown. Also, there is no empirical study on the direct influence of these trainings on the journalists or the indirect influence of the trainings on other journalists without direct fact-checking experience in The Gambia. This study is directed at addressing this gap.

Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to assess the knowledge, attitude, and practice of fact-checking among Gambian journalists. Specifically, it seeks to:

i. Find out Gambian journalists' understanding of fact-checking.
ii. Assess the exposure of Gambian journalists to fact-checking training.

iii. Evaluate Gambian journalists' beliefs and attitudes towards fact-finding in news articles.
iv. Analyze Gambian journalists' contribution to the spread of fake news.
v. Assess the fact-checking practices of Gambian journalists during news production.

Review of Related Empirical Works

Digital technology has revolutionized the practice of journalism globally. This revolution has created a continuous evolution in the media landscape and, therefore, calls for professional reinvention by all operatives in the information ecosystem. Journalists "must be trained in multi-tasking as a result of the challenge thrown up by convergence, and technology platforms must be willing to support professional journalism" (Nnaane, 2022).

Although the internet increases the speed and quality of editorial activities, it also creates a tension between speed and accuracy, posing significant challenges for journalism professionals. The dual nature of the internet is both a catalyst for progress and a potential disruptor within the industry." (Izuogu, Okpara, & Omeonu, 2025).

In rural Gambia, there is a feeling of exclusion from the digital ecosystem. This aggravates digital illiteracy. (Fofana, 2022). The expansion of digital communications infrastructure, as well as media literacy and fact-checking training, would benefit the nation. Gambian youths "appeared more prepared and active in online fact-checking, and some participants gave examples of their greater mediation efforts within their communities" (McGowan, Gaston, Day, & Kern, 2024).

The application of Artificial Intelligence for both military and civilian purposes has potential implications for global peace and security. Generative AI tools, which are "now widely available globally, have begun to be linked to increases in disinformation campaigns, cybersecurity threats, hate speech towards women and minorities, and other conflicts (Albrecht, Fournier-Tombs, & Brubaker, 2024). Digital technology has contributed to the spread of disinformation across the world. Digital disinformation "can have serious consequences for democracy and human rights, as recent elections. It is politically polarizing, hinders people from meaningfully exercising their human rights, and destroys their trust in Governments and institutions" (Khan, 2021). Digital disinformation is causing "an increasing role in distorting elections, inflaming conflict, and disrupting crucial policy debates across the continent on issues including vaccinations, immigration, gender and reproductive rights" (Roberts & Karekwaivanane, 2024).

Media literacy could improve analytical skills in combating misinformation among students in sub-Saharan Africa. This also implies that "the teaching of media literacy, critical thinking principles, and personality traits related to their level of understanding of the principles and strategies for detecting misinformation are more crucial than demographic factors" (Mustapha, Lasisi, & Barabash, 2024).

Controlling the spread of misinformation and disinformation is a major issue in the field of information regulation. Fact-checking organizations are emerging; much more work will be needed to stop the trend. There are very few attempts to regulate internet content without infringing on the rights to free expression and information" (Chiumbu, 2024). The advancement of technology is a menace to democracy in Africa. It has had a lot of impact during elections in Africa, which manipulates a lot of electorates. AI-generated content "on elections in Africa shows serious indications of what will likely come for subsequent elections within the continent as this technology evolves over the next few years" (Okolo, 2024).

Terrorists also benefit from the advancement of technology, and social media platforms are tools for their major operations. Technology has made it easy for cyber terrorists to hack personal accounts, steal sensitive information, and create fake websites for manipulation. Cyber terrorist "propaganda may have disintegrated, pushed into the margins of online discourse, disinformation and toxic arguments in the

mainstream could prove just as effective for violent extremist recruitment and radicalization" (Newton, Moner, Nyi, & Prasad, 2021).

Social media propaganda is one of the most powerful ways to influence people's views. It has been a tool used to manipulate the masses during wars. Wars transcend bombs and guns. They are fought "with words and media. American newspapers and television channels also played a major role in the Syrian war and its management by spreading many lies and rumors that serve specific interests and a precise agenda" (Amraoui, 2024). Social media has built connections around the world since it emerged. It has also created negative effects on cyberbullying, social media addiction, and misinformation. Misinformation is one of the major concerns of these negative effects, and it "has recently been given a lot of attention and the societal impact has become visible" (Simon, 2022). The advancement of digital technology cannot be overemphasized in terms of the impact it has on individuals and the world at large. Digital platforms contribute to the spread of misinformation and are a "significant challenge for migrants, potentially influencing their decision-making processes and exposing them to various risks during their journeys" (Bandiera & Rojas, 2024). Many Gambians are attracted to irregular migration to Europe and America because of the positive social media projections provided by those who have successfully migrated irregularly. It is believed that the tendency of people to trust the news depends on the source of the information. These measures include "watermarking and provenance-tracing might only partially address the tendency to believe "fake news". Further measures such as labelling, fact-checking, AI literacy, and awareness raising, and stronger investment in local journalism might be necessary complementary measures" (Teo, 2025). Journalism is a catalyst for change around the world. In recent years, politics has shown that without "a vibrant media sector that can serve as a watchdog, hold government and industry to account, and provide information that matters to ordinary people as well as government, there is not much hope for a functioning society" (Schiffrin, Clifford, Adjin-Tettey, Lee, & Reysio-Cruz, 2022).

Artificial Intelligence (AI) enhances verification speed and scale, it often lacks cultural and contextual intelligence due to its non-human nature. AI fact checking does post a risk when used without human oversight; thus, it is recommended that human oversight is essential in AI fact-checking. The research identifies ethical, technical, and financial barriers to adoption, especially in African contexts where AI literacy remains low due to technical, ethical, and financial barriers (Taiwo, 2025).

Methodology

The study applies a quantitative survey. This method is used because it will give comprehensive data for assessing the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of fact-checking among journalists in the Gambia. The population of this study consists of practicing journalists in The Gambia from various media organizations. According to the Gambia Press Union (GPU), the current total population of practicing journalists in The Gambia is 600. Therefore, the population to be studied is 600. This study includes all journalists who registered under the GPU, ranging from mainstream media, online media, print media, and also freelance journalists. 234 practicing journalists were sampled using the sampling table of Krejcie and Morgan (1970). Data was collected from the sample through a self-developed questionnaire which had been validated through a pilot study.

Do you generate stories from social media platforms?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	187	79.9	80.3	80.3
	No	46	19.7	19.7	100.0
	Total	233	99.6	100.0	

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Missing	System	1	.4		
Total		234	100.0		

Which of these media outlets do you rely on for breaking news?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	GRTS	30	12.8	12.9	12.9
	QTV	28	12.0	12.1	25.0
	What's-On-Gambia	109	46.6	47.0	72.0
	Kerr Fatou	9	3.8	3.9	75.9
	Fatu Network	10	4.3	4.3	80.2
	Newspapers	21	9.0	9.1	89.2
	Others	25	10.7	10.8	100.0
	Total	232	99.1	100.0	
Missing	System	2	.9		
Total		234	100.0		

Which social media app is prone to sharing misleading information?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Facebook	74	31.6	32.0	32.0
	Twitter/X	5	2.1	2.2	34.2
	WhatsApp	57	24.4	24.7	58.9
	Instagram	6	2.6	2.6	61.5
	LinkedIn	3	1.3	1.3	62.8
	Tik-tok	80	34.2	34.6	97.4
	Snapchat	3	1.3	1.3	98.7
	Telegram	3	1.3	1.3	100.0
	Total	231	98.7	100.0	
Missing	System	3	1.3		
Total		234	100.0		

Do you come across social media content where you are asked to enter your personal details before you get access to the content?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Frequently	60	25.6	25.8	25.8
	Occasionally	85	36.3	36.5	62.2
	Rarely	53	22.6	22.7	85.0
	Never	35	15.0	15.0	100.0
	Total	233	99.6	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.4		
Total		234	100.0		

Do you share some of those content if it is asked as part of the procedures?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	74	31.6	32.0	32.0
	No	157	67.1	68.0	100.0
	Total	231	98.7	100.0	
Missing	System	3	1.3		
Total		234	100.0		

Have you undergone any fact-checking training?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	141	60.3	60.5	60.5
	No	92	39.3	39.5	100.0
	Total	233	99.6	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.4		
Total		234	100.0		

How many fact-checking trainings have you attended?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	One	88	37.6	52.7	52.7
	Two	41	17.5	24.6	77.2
	Three	7	3.0	4.2	81.4
	More than three	31	13.2	18.6	100.0
	Total	167	71.4	100.0	
Missing	System	67	28.6		
Total		234	100.0		

What is the nationality of the trainers?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Gambian	126	53.8	76.4	76.4
	Non-Gambia	39	16.7	23.6	100.0
	Total	165	70.5	100.0	
Missing	System	69	29.5		
Total		234	100.0		

Are there tools for fact-checking?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	174	74.4	91.6	91.6
	No	16	6.8	8.4	100.0
	Total	190	81.2	100.0	
Missing	System	44	18.8		
Total		234	100.0		

Do you fact-check your story before publishing?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	198	84.6	91.2	91.2
	No	19	8.1	8.8	100.0
	Total	217	92.7	100.0	
Missing	System	17	7.3		
Total		234	100.0		

How do you fact-check your stories?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Through Google Scholar	30	12.8	13.7	13.7
	Collect data from data sources	84	35.9	38.4	52.1
	Visit the website for the source	72	30.8	32.9	84.9
	None of the above	33	14.1	15.1	100.0
	Total	219	93.6	100.0	
Missing	System	15	6.4		
Total		234	100.0		

Which organizations are responsible for verifying claims in The Gambia?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Fact-check Gambia	158	67.5	70.9	70.9
	Gambia Press Union (GPU)	40	17.1	17.9	88.8
	Malagen	25	10.7	11.2	100.0
	Total	223	95.3	100.0	
Missing	System	11	4.7		
Total		234	100.0		

Do you receive forwarded messages (audio or text) from individuals or group chats in WhatsApp asking you to share the message among your contact members?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	205	87.6	89.1	89.1
	No	25	10.7	10.9	100.0
	Total	230	98.3	100.0	
Missing	System	4	1.7		
Total		234	100.0		

Do you verify the forwarded message before sharing?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No, I forward it because it is trustworthy	35	15.0	15.6	15.6
	No, I don't know who to verify from	34	14.5	15.1	30.7
	No, I forward it immediately to save lives	13	5.6	5.8	36.4
	No, I ignore the message	143	61.1	63.6	100.0

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Total	225	96.2	100.0	
Missing	System	9	3.8		
Total		234	100.0		

Do you post flash news on your personal page whenever an incident happens?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	68	29.1	30.8	30.8
	No	153	65.4	69.2	100.0
	Total	221	94.4	100.0	
Missing	System	13	5.6		
Total		234	100.0		

Fact-checking is necessary in journalism practice.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	205	87.6	87.6	87.6
	Agree	22	9.4	9.4	97.0
	Undecided	5	2.1	2.1	99.1
	Strongly Disagree	2	.9	.9	100.0
	Total	234	100.0	100.0	

Answering Research Questions

RQ 1: What is the level of understanding of fact-checking among Gambian journalists?

A valid percentage of 91.6% of the respondents say there are tools for fact-checking, which shows that the majority of the respondents have an understanding of the modern form of verifying information. Before the advancements of technology, journalists verified information by being objective in their stories and accurate with the information gathered. It was more like a manual form of fact-checking, but now that there are digital tools, fact-checking has also emerged to find solutions to the problem in journalism, which introduced tools for verification.

Respondents were asked to identify those organizations responsible for verifying claims in The Gambia, to measure their level of understanding of fact-checking in general. A cumulative percentage of 82.1% for Fact-check Gambia and Malagen could identify organizations that do fact-checking regularly. These two organizations actively debunk claims that could affect the citizen directly or indirectly. 17.9% of the respondents claimed that the Gambia Press Union (GPU) is responsible for verifying claims in the Gambia. That percentage highlights that 17.9% of the respondents do not know organizations that verify claims when there is information disorder.

RQ 2: How many Gambian journalists have undergone fact-checking training?

60.5% of journalists in The Gambia are trained in fact-checking. This suggests that more journalists should be trained in fact-checking because the primary gatherers are more than the total number of Gambian journalists that undergone fact-checking. If reporters and freelancers fact-check stories before submitting them to the editors, then it will be easier to tackle misinformation in journalism practice since editors and social media managers are less common among Gambian journalists, and 60.5% that undergone fact-checking are not primary news gatherers.

RQ 3: What are the beliefs of Gambian journalists about fact-finding?

Cumulatively, 97.0% of journalists in The Gambia strongly agreed with this statement. The most important thing in ethical journalism is to report on facts, and in order to do so, journalists must fact-check stories before disseminating them. Organizations like the Gambia Press Union (GPU), Fact-check Gambia, Gambia Participates, and the like should continue conducting more fact-checking training to give a chance to those who have never undergone the training.

RQ 4: How do Gambian journalists contribute to the spread of fake news?

A valid percentage of 32.0% of Gambian journalists confirmed that they share content to gain accessibility. This shows that Gambian journalists do contribute to the spread of fake news because scam content requests users to share that content with their personal data to get their targeted audience. If personal details are requested to access content, it is the responsibility of a journalist to verify if it is authentic information before sharing because of the credibility that is built into the noble profession. Most people believe that any information that is shared by journalists is credible information, and this is why it is vital to fight against information disorder; journalists should be the last people to share fake news.

21.4% of the respondents share received messages without verifying those messages, which signifies their contribution to spreading misleading information. WhatsApp is the fastest channel to disseminate information to a wide audience in the Gambia. 60.3% of the respondents use it most frequently among the respondents and 24.7% of the respondents identified WhatsApp as the social media app prone to sharing misleading information. This shows that forwarded messages on WhatsApp should be verified before sharing them with the public because the information spreads faster than on any other social media among Gambian journalists.

30.8% of the respondents said they do post flash news on their personal page. Flash news is usually shared by eyewitnesses at an incident with a different scenario than what happened. At times, this information is misleading, and it is the journalist's responsibility to verify and then report on it through the media house that he/she works for to properly scrutinize the information. Journalists sharing flash news on their personal pages is not an ethical standard for their profession, and that act plays a role in their contribution to spreading fake news.

RQ 5: What fact-checking practices are carried out by Gambian journalists?

13:7% of the respondents verify through Google Scholar, 38.4% fact-check their stories by collecting data from data sources, and 32.9% of the respondents said they fact-check by visiting a website for a source. These are the basic fact-checking practices carried out by Gambian journalists without using fact-checking tools. Cumulatively, 67.7% of the Gambian journalists do primary fact-checking before they develop stories.

Regarding how they are able to detect fake accounts. 36.7% of the respondents trust the story because a well-known media house posted it, 27.9% admit the story is newsworthy, which persuades them to develop the story, while 3.1% admit it has many reactions, which is why they believe it. This highlights that 67.7% of Gambian journalists could be misled by cyberterrorists because fake accounts are created by cyberterrorists that look exactly like the real one, including the logo, followers, descriptive background, and reactions to the post. As a professional journalist, your findings should go beyond looking at a page to confirm its credibility. This is why fact-checking tools are introduced to help in verifying facts.

Discussion of Findings

The level of understanding of fact-checking among Gambian journalists

The research shows that fact-checking is widely understood among journalists in The Gambia. This awareness could be raised as a result of fact-checking training conducted by various organizations to tackle information disorder. These organizations conduct training on media literacy to educate practicing journalists on pressing issues in the media landscape. It is understood that both journalists and these organizations have a role to play in combating information disorder within their scopes. These organizations should give priority to those 39.5% of Gambian journalists who have never attended any fact-checking training, because some respondents have attended several trainings.

However, practicing journalists who do not have the opportunity to attend fact-checking training could gain awareness through colleagues and access to social media platforms. These social media platforms create space for users to be aware of current trends and also adopt those innovations by learning through YouTube or research to safeguard their profession. That could also be one of the reasons for their understanding of fact-checking, because the percentage of Gambian journalists that undergone fact-checking is 60.5%, compared to those who are aware of the fact-checking tools, which is 91.6%; the organizations that are responsible for verifying claims, which is 82.1%; and 84.9% of the respondents knew basic fact-checking methods. This highlights the understanding of Gambian journalists about fact-checking regardless of the number of respondents that undergone training.

Gambian journalists who have undergone fact-checking training

The research revealed that 60.5% of Gambian journalists have undergone fact-checking, and 76.4% of the trainers are Gambians. This data shows that the number of journalists in The Gambia who undergo fact-checking training reflects their involvement in adapting to innovation in the technology world. These early adopters among Gambian journalists tend to learn about anything that is a problem in the media landscape, and information disorder is a pressing issue that needs to be tackled in this digital era. Moreover, the data include different questions in relation to fact-checking practices to evaluate the respondents that truly undergone fact-checking. Their level of understanding about fact-checking reveals that the percentage of Gambian journalists that undergone fact-checking is less than those who understand what fact-checking is all about. Therefore, 60.5% of Gambian journalists have undergone fact-checking, and the remaining percentage that added to their understanding is basically as a result of individual research, engagement with colleagues, and learning through social media apps like YouTube.

The beliefs of Gambian journalists about fact-checking

The research findings show that Gambian journalists have different beliefs with regard to fact-checking. The data collected reveals that not all Gambian journalists believe that fact-checking is necessary in journalism practice. The 3% of respondents who do not believe this statement raises a question about their knowledge of journalism because fact-checking is a core value in journalism practice. However, the majority of Gambian journalists have the belief that it is necessary to fact-check stories and also believe it is not a waste of time, which is a very positive result, and it highlights the contribution of Gambian journalists against the spread of fake news. The remaining percentage that does not undergo fact-checking would certainly want to gain the knowledge to be able to fact-check before dissemination, since they believe it is necessary, and it is not a waste of time in journalism practice.

The belief that fact-checking is not a fancy word for gatekeeping in journalism could be perceived as accuracy. Some information in gatekeeping is based on facts, but it could create a negative impact on the individual or the country at large, so the right thing to do is to avoid sharing it with the public. For

instance, if an individual makes a dangerous speech about a particular ethnic group that he/she does not belong to, it could create ethnic war or division among ethnic groups. These types of remarks would create a negative impact on the citizens. Though the speech is accurate, it is controlled by gatekeepers in journalism to stabilize peace. This is what most people focus on when it comes to gatekeeping in journalism, but gatekeepers filter misinformation, malinformation, disinformation, and fake news, similarly to fact-checkers. The advancement of technology, with the widespread dissemination of misleading information, led to the establishment of fact-checkers who monitor information disorder to create awareness among the public. The difference that created a dilemma among undecided respondents could be that gatekeepers were only in the newsroom, but fact-checkers are both in the newsroom and beyond. As the saying goes, all journalists are fact-checkers, but not all fact-checkers are journalists.

Furthermore, the belief that fact-checking is not a fancy word for gatekeeping should have influenced the belief of Gambian journalists that it is the responsibility of the production team to fact-check stories before publishing. These gatekeepers are among the production team, and they are the fact-checkers in newsrooms who verify information and images by using fact-checking tools. It has never been the sole responsibility of the production team to verify information because reporters verify and gather their facts while gathering news stories, not only the mainstream media. This is done to avoid sharing misinformation because many people verify its accuracy to the finish line, which is the medium. This is why all journalists are fact-checkers, which includes primary news gatherers and the production team.

Gambian journalists' contribution to the spread of fake news

The research reveals that Gambian journalists partake in the spread of fake news, which highlights their lack of awareness of fact-checking to be able to identify misleading content. The majority of Gambian journalists do not share information with the public to get access to content without verifying the authenticity of the information, but the remaining 32.0% of respondents play an immense role in spreading misleading content. This led to the growth of misinformation, and more fact-checking training needs to be done to acquaint practicing journalists with all kinds of disinformation they might encounter. WhatsApp, as the most used social app among Gambian journalists, is identified as the third social media app prone to sharing misleading information. This finding shows that 21.4% of respondents share forwarded messages from WhatsApp groups without verifying. WhatsApp features are easily understood and flexible to use among Gambians, especially English illiterates, because it eases communication with friends and family abroad with a smaller amount of internet bundle.

Another crucial issue has been addressed in the data collected about journalists sharing flash news on their personal pages. Lots of people do this for engagement on their personal page, but it questions your integrity as a journalist. A professional journalist is not expected to get back to people by rectifying or updating their followers on the mistake made in a previous post. Such action makes a journalist lose their credibility in the professional arena because of their contribution to misinformation.

Fact-checking practices carried out by Gambian journalists

The research findings reveal that Gambian journalists fact-check their stories through Google Scholar, data collection from data sources, and visiting websites for sources. These are fact-checking practices that 67.7% of Gambian journalists do. These are basic methods of verifying information that were mentioned because every fact-checker should be able to apply these techniques during their findings.

The study highlights how Gambian journalists assess the accuracy of a story that is believed to be from an international media outlet. Respondents develop stories from international media outlets because of

the engagement that particular media outlet has without doing further research on its followers, page's feed, and reactions. A fake account will have fake followers, who are usually empty, with no posts on their feed, a fake profile, and a funny name sometimes. If one checks the page background, one might not see posts related to news or its consistency in publication, but the reactions (likes and comments) are done with other fake accounts created purposely for misleading.

Conclusion

Fact-checking is a significant part and one of the core values of ethical reporting in journalism practice. The responsibility of journalists in educating and creating awareness among the masses should be in line with disseminating reliable and accurate information for the public to make the right decisions. A single piece of information can create a huge impact on someone's life, and the effects of sharing false information about a person could damage their entire life and career path. Information cannot be retrieved after it has been disseminated, as it spreads fast to a wide audience, making it difficult to reach those audiences when verification is done. Fact-checking needs to be done before sharing a message to avoid these complications and contribute to the fight against misinformation.

Journalists in The Gambia have a clear understanding of fact-checking and the application of ethical standards in Gambian media. Despite the advancement of technology, which has significantly contributed to a positive change in journalism practice, it has brought challenges as well. Production has become much easier with the availability of editing software such as Adobe Pro, photo apps, and portable cameras, compared to traditional mainstream media. Production can now be carried out with smartphones or tablets that contain all the tools for production, with clear and sharp cameras. The audience has the same privilege of accessing news content through social media platforms in the form of news videos, newspapers, or TV shows. They can engage with this news content at any time they intend to watch, depending on their schedule.

However, with all these privileges and knowledge about the use of digital tools and fact-checking, journalists have encountered challenges in controlling information flow, which has produced new information sharers. These new information sharers do not process and analyze the information to be shared, unlike journalism practice, which is basically fact-checking in general. Audiences face the same challenges as victims of cybercrime because they are mainly targets, as most of them have little knowledge about online scamming. Regardless of these complications, professional journalists in The Gambia practice the new method of fact-checking because they believe it is necessary. This shows that professional journalism is highly practiced in The Gambia, and journalists are cautious in sharing flash news on their personal pages since all that is are major contribution to the spread of false news.

Fact-checking tools are introduced to solve these problems hindering the progress of journalism practice. There will be a great change if all Gambian journalists are well-trained in fact-checking and also fact-check their stories before dissemination.

Recommendations

Based on the findings above, the following recommendations become expedient:

- In The Gambia, the University of The Gambia' and the Media Academy for Journalism and Communication are the leading tertiary institutions for journalism schooling. These two institutions can create impact in the fight against information disorder by revitalizing the school curriculum to introduce fact-checking and innovations related to media, such as the use of artificial intelligence in journalism practice. This will enhance the effectiveness of standard journalism within the Gambia and beyond.

- Organizations that coordinate fact-checking training should give priority to those who have not undergone the training by collecting data to assess their knowledge and provide their details for the opportunity.
- Gambia Press Union (GPU), as an organization that provides press cards for Gambian journalists and also organizes fact-checking training, could facilitate fact-checking training for applicants before issuing press cards. This is because most of the veteran journalists have access to these kinds of opportunities, as do newbies. This will help them to target practicing journalists who are getting into the profession in order to navigate the challenges faced in the Gambian media.
- Trained fact-checkers who had the opportunity could train colleagues who are not acquainted with fact-checking at their workplace or school. If ten trained fact-checkers train two to three individuals within their media houses, that would be equivalent to 20 to 30 practicing journalists. This strategy would be more efficient, and the remaining Gambian journalists who did not undergo fact-checking could be trained within a short period of time. Colleagues play a crucial role in educating their peers on something they are knowledgeable about, and they catch up easily since it is a one-on-one session.
- Additionally, more fact-checking training needs to be conducted as we approach the upcoming presidential election to tackle the widespread dissemination of misleading information. This will create an impact on the decisions that electorates will make at the ballot box based on the information they have been receiving. Sources from different political parties are affiliated with the party they support; it is necessary for journalists to verify information from these sources before broadcasting it to the general public. This is why it is important for journalists to feed the public with accurate and reliable information on a daily basis.

References

Albrecht, E., Fournier-Tombs, E., & Brubaker, R. (2024). Disinformation and Peacebuilding in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Disinformation and Peacebuilding in Sub-Saharan Africa*, 5-35.

Amraoui, I. (2024). Investigating War Propaganda in the Syrian Crisis 2011. 1-71.

Bandiera, A., & Rojas, D. (2024). Misinformation among Migrants: Evidence from Mexico and Colombia. *Centro Latam Digital.*, 1-26.

Chiumbu, S. (2024). Assessment of the state of African media coalitions, networks, and programmes in East, West, and Southern Africa in support of media's role in democracy. *Assessment of Media Coalitions in East, West and Southern Africa*, 2-71.

Domenico, G. D. (2022). Social media misinformation and fake news: a consumer behaviour perspective. *Academic Journal Guide*, 7-208.

Fofana, F. (2022). RAMIFICATIONS OF THE ONLINE MEDIA INDUSTRY ON GAMBIA'S RURAL AUDIENCE: DIGITAL DIVIDE IN CONTEXT. 1-112.

Graves, L., & Glaisyer, T. (2012). *The Fact-Checking Universe in Spring 2012.* Columbia: New America Foundation.

Izuogu, K. C., Okpara, O., & Omeonu, D. U. (2025). THE PARADOX OF THE INTERNET IN JOURNALISM IN NIGERIA: BETWEEN FLEXIBILITY AND ACCURACY CHALLENGES. *Baileo: Jurnal Sosial Humaniora*, 256-267.

Khan, I. (2021). *Disinformation and freedom of opinion and expression.* United Nations.

McGowan, L., Gaston, E., Day, A., & Kern, L. (2024). Hate Speech Case Study. *Thematic Review: Synergies between Human Rights and Peacebuilding in PBF-supported Programming*, 2-17.

Mustapha, M. J., Lasisi, M. I., & Barabash, V. V. (2024). Are they tools? Anglophone West African countries' students' misconception of media literacy and critical thinking for combating misinformation. *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, 95-103.

Newton, J., Moner, Y., Nyi, K. N., & Prasad, H. (2021). *Polarising Narratives and Deepening Fault Lines: Social Media, Intolerance and Extremism in Four Asian Nations.* London : GNET.

Nnaane, B. (2022). Influence of Digital Technologies on Journalism Practice in The Gambia. *STYLES OF COMMUNICATION, 10*(1), 9-26. doi:10.31178/SC.14.1.01

Okolo, C. T. (2024). African Democracy in the Era of Generative Disinformation: Challenges and Countermeasures against AI-Generated Propaganda. *Research ICT Africa*, 1-17.

Roberts, T., & Karekwaivanane, G. H. (2024). *Digital Disinformation in Africa.* London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc.

Schiffrin, A., Clifford, H., Adjin-Tettey, T. D., Lee, R., & Reysio-Cruz, M. (2022). *SAVING JOURNALISM 2: GLOBAL STRATEGIES AND A LOOK AT INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM.* Washington: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung USA.

Simon, M.-S. (2022). Judging a Tweet's credibility. *s1023848*, 1-82.

Taiwo, A. (2025). AI-Driven Fact-Checking in Journalism: Enhancing Information Veracity and Combating Misinformation: A Systematic Review. 1-53.

Teo, S. A. (2025). *Artificial Intelligence and Transitional Justice: Framing the Connections.* Lund: Version of record.