

FAKE NEWS IN THE AGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Viola Gjylbegaj

Assist. Prof. Dr. Viola Gjylbegaj, Abu Dhabi University, United Arab Emirates,
viola.gjylbegaj@adu.ac.ae

Abstract

Fake news, or in other words hoax news, states propaganda or false information distributed under the appearance of being reliable news. The objectives of this study are to identify how fake news affected our lives and what initiatives were taken to minimize the negative impacts of fake news. Moreover, we aim to inform the readers of the penalties set by the UAE government to prevent the spread of fake news on social media. For the issue of fake news in the age of social media, the theory that is used to address it, is Shannon Weaver Model. The methodology chosen is a combined methods (both quantitative and qualitative) approach. The website used to get the responses is: "Survey Monkey" where people were asked questions about their understanding on the topic. Around 200 participants participated in our research. At the end of our research we could assess how people perceive fake news in the age of social media.

Keywords: Fake News, Social Media, News.

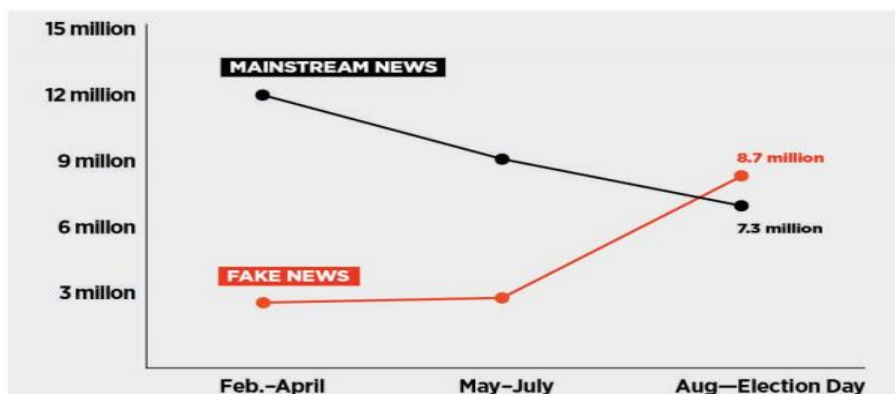
1. INTRODUCTION

Fake news states propaganda or false information distributed under the appearance of being reliable news. Channels and websites push their fake news content in a way to spread fabrication by means of verbal (word of mouth) and social networks and deceive customers of the content. One of the more bright meanings of fake news originates from **PolitiFact**: "Fake news is made-up stuff, magnificently controlled to look like reliable journalistic reports that are effortlessly spread online to extensive groups of onlookers willing to spread the news and trust the fictions.", as mentioned by Stroud, (n.d.). Fake news in the age of social media is a problem that needs to be addressed because they are deceiving social media users. Moreover, fake news leads people to be misinformed and thus present false information about different aspects. An additional problem is that the distribution of fake news is increasing more and more every day and this issue needs to be solved. It is a serious issue nowadays, especially with the evolvement of social media and due to the increase of social media users. The objectives of this study are to identify how fake news affected our lives and what initiatives were taken to minimize the negative impacts to fake news. Moreover, we aim to inform the readers of the penalties set by the UAE government to prevent the spread of fake news on social media. At the end, we will provide recommendations to prevent the negative effects of fake news in the age of social media. There is an enormous commitment on media to ensure it is precise. This indicates that everybody in journalism must comprehend the essential value of honest, reality-based and reasonable detailing. However, with regards to an undeniably digitized news condition where news is further refreshed, conveying all around examined certainties that face examination is harder than any time in recent memory. While numerous global news outlets offer free news applications every day, there is an expansion in the number of readers who will pay for premium services to get quality analysis and a remark by profoundly regarded journalists. In an atmosphere of doubt, there seems by all accounts, to be an expanding craving for all around examined, elegantly composed news. Media associations need to set themselves exclusive expectations – and after that convey by sustaining the abilities inside their positions and in addition supporting future generations. Some communities; for example, Twofour54, Abu Dhabi's creative hub, give a

domain, where journalists, creative experts, and social media experts can cooperate, with an emphasis on quality-driven content, as mentioned by Mheiri, (2017). The questions that we address in our research are: 1. How fake news affects: a) Social status b) Entertainment news, c) Political News. 2. The reasons for posting fake news on social media 3. Recommending ways to limit the effects of fake news on social media.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Gallagher, J.D., & Magid, (2017) stated that fake news is any information that is purposely intended to be absolutely or mostly misleading or false. Drives for producing fake news can be financial advantage – by getting people to click on positions so they're exposed to ads – or to convince others to purchase a product, support or oppose a cause or political candidate, or take an action. Gallagher, J.D., & Magid, (2017) also stated that some people disseminate fake news just to deceive people or as a joke. Truthful mistakes occur, and they are not fake news. But those who distribute or say something that they later find out to be false are obligated to correct the document. 51% of a worldwide sample stated that social media is a source of news that they rely on weekly. Moreover, around 1 in 10 perceive social media as a core source of news, according to the Reuters Institute Digital News Report of 2016. Nelson, (2017) mentioned that with this evolving trend, accessibility to free online sources in addition to tools that makes it easy to create websites, all lead to spread unconfirmed stories. All of these reasons affect how news is revealed, used, and published. Nelson, (2017) also mentioned that as stated by the [Reuters Institute's 2017 trends and predictions report](#), by the end of the 2016 US Presidential election, people were more exposed to fake news on Facebook rather than to accurate news by reliable journalism, as shown below:



*Engagement refers to the total number of shares, reactions and comments for a piece of content on Facebook.
Source: Facebook data via BuzzSumo

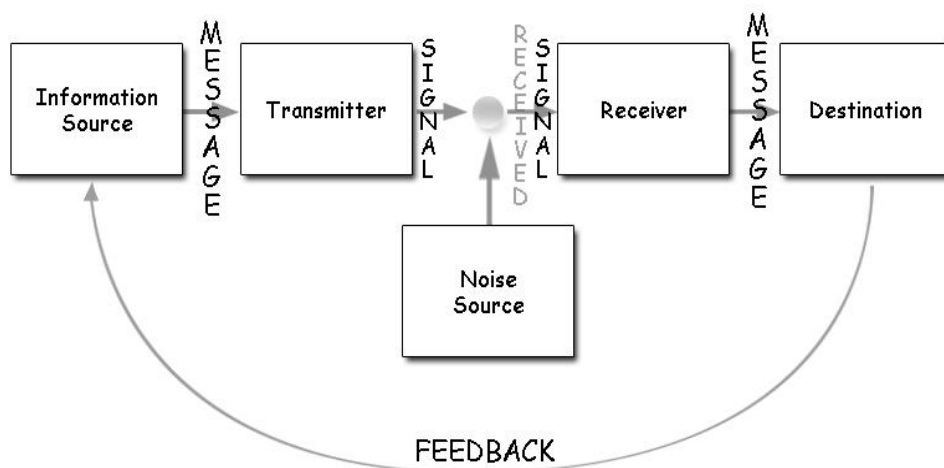
Since sharing on social networks is easy, exaggerated or false information can be distributed rapidly. In addition, as the known description of “fake news” is still unclear, these articles may be hard to recognize. As a result, it is now more vital for news editors to guarantee their trustworthiness with audiences to sustain a high level of honesty for their readers and to prevent being judged as false or fake (Nelson, 2017).

Nowadays, sharing status updates has been an evident to measure one's fame, through the number of the followers on Twitter that indicates one's influence, celebrity, and social status. For various Twitter users, it has become an entertainment source. They think that they are not passive consumers of others' artistic production (such as when they view television or read newspapers), instead, they are active users, fully engaged producers, and creators (Press, 2018). He was also mentioned that Twitter users grabbed the chance to create a name for themselves, not only by communicating their societies' updates, but by creating news as well, false or else, and serving publish others' news, the more captivating the better.

The scholars believed that wrong information (they did not prefer using the word “fake news” because it has become too debated) is disseminated quicker than accurate news as they were “different,” noticing that new information “reflects social status on one that is ‘as known’ or has accessibility to unique ‘inside’ information.” But they distinguished that “the emotions expressed in reply to falsehoods may illuminate additional factors, beyond novelty, that inspire people to share false news.” (Press, 2018).

Theoretical Framework

For the issue of fake news in the age of social media, the theory that we used is Shannon Weaver Model.



In terms of the issue being discussed (fake news in the age of social media), Shannon and Weaver model can be applied as the following:

Sender/Information Source: Social media pages accounts leaders

Message: Fake News

Encoder: News posted on Social media accounts and mobile phones

Channel: Social media

Noise: News being false

Decoder: Mostly Mobile Phones

Receiver: Social media users

Feedback: Comments from the users

Penalties set by UAE government for those who publish fake news

Since the UAE government care of reliability in its news dissemination, and due to the increase of social media platforms, the UAE Telecommunications Regulatory Authority restated a penalty for those who share fake news on their social media accounts. According to the UAE Telecommunications Regulatory Authority, sharing fake news is penalized by the law. The TRA emphasized a plan of the UAE's anti-cybercrime law that pursues to punish violators with a fine of up to AED 1 million or imprisonment. "Remember that not everything you read on social media is true, some are just rumours that can cause harm to others or to the state," the TRA said in a tweet posted on Twitter. "We ask you to always verify the source and to use the official accounts of the government to verify the news." (Maceda, 2018).

Recommending ways to limit the effects of fake news on social media

The UAE has a very strict law about spreading fake news on social media. The news agencies and the public should work in harmony and hardly to check news because social media helps in spreading fake news quicker than before, (Zakaria, 2017). Moreover, people should avoid hyperbole, not share stories depending on the headlines, compare various articles to find the truth, and know the sources before taking any news seriously, (Williams, 2017).

Facebook initiative to make people able to separate fake news from true news

Since fake news is spreading more on the social media accounts and pages, Facebook has some strategies to limit the spread of this fake news. For instance, Facebook eliminates fake accounts and asks for penalty fines for those who share fake information. Also, they use signals like "feedback from our community" in order to recognize the posts that may be fake. Moreover, Facebook decided to provide its users with tips to separate fake posts from real ones. They sent a notification to the Facebook users providing them tips to limit the spread of fake posts. The tips were:

a) Ensure that the source of information is reliable and trusted. To do that, users can view the profile of the page to know more about the organization.

- b) Search where the photos come because most fake news manipulate the photos.
- c) Check whether the story was covered by another reliable and trusted source or not because it is more likely to be true if multiple reliable accounts shared the same story.
- d) Be doubtful of the headlines; if they were catchy and sound unbelievable, they are more likely to lead to false information. Also, when the headline contains a lot of exclamation marks, it is only to catch users and mostly leads to fake news.
- e) Investigate the format and layout since many false news sites have awkward layouts or misspellings.
- f) Look for evidence or source of confirmation in the story. If the source or expert's name is not mentioned, it is usually unreliable and thus fake news.
- g) Look carefully at the URL a book-alike or phony URL may be a sign of fake news. To make sure that the news is not fake, compare the URL to reputable resources.
- h) Inspect the dates as many false news contains dates that are not rationale or even dates that have already passed.
- i) Check whether the source of information is known for humour or jokes and ensure that the story's tone and details are funny or suggest jokes.
- j) Advise people to share only information or news they are sure that they are reliable and true.

The above Facebook initiative was sent to different Facebook users.

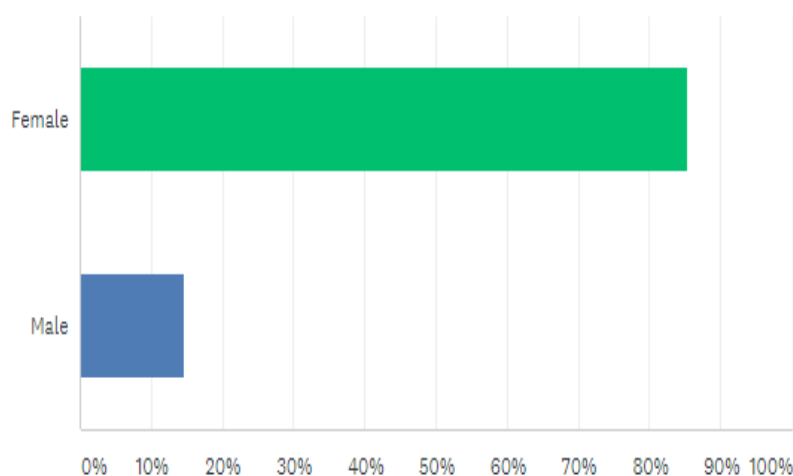
3. METHODOLOGY

In this research, a combined methods (both quantitative and qualitative) approach is chosen. We randomly selected people from different demographics in UAE to answer 10 survey questions. "Survey Monkey" website was used to get answers from people and know their opinions about the topic. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected. Likert Scale was used to get concise responses from the respondents. Also, Multiple Choice Questions were asked in the survey. One open-end question was used to understand respondents' opinions about how fake news can affect our lives with the evolvement of social media. A set of questions about fake news in the age of social media were written based on the objectives and research questions of the research. Then, we put them in the survey website and distributed them to different people. When we reached our target number of respondents, we analyzed the results and compared them to the other data. In all, we got 200 respondents.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

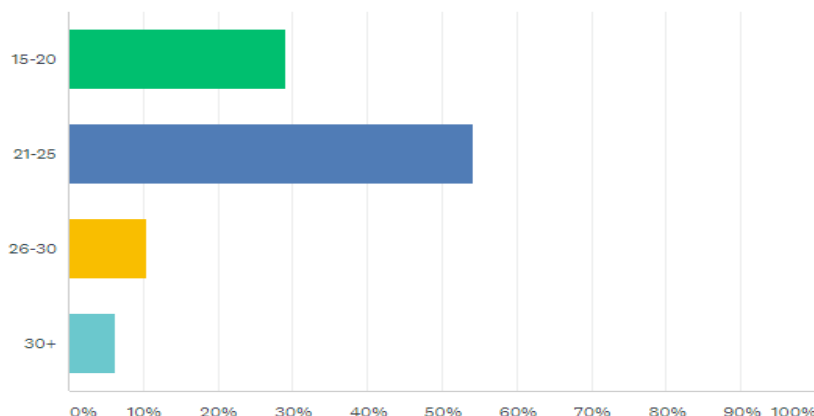
In this research paper, we conducted a survey on "survey monkey" to measure respondents' awareness of a fake news. Here are the survey questions below along with the respondents' answers:

1-What is your gender??



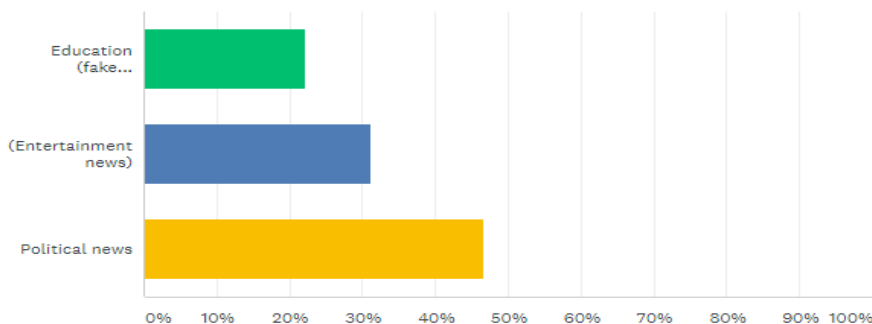
Around 85% of the respondents were females and 15% were males.

2-What is your age group?



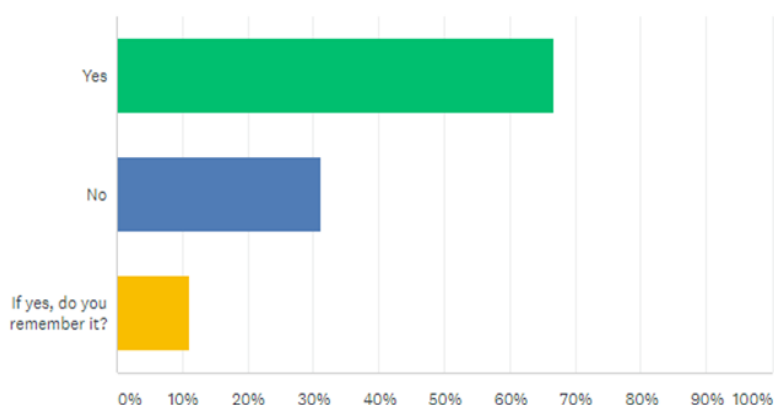
29.17% of the respondents were between 15-20 years old; 54.17% were between 21-25 years old, 10.42% were between 26-30 years old, and only 6.25% were more than 30 years old.

3- What do you think fake news mostly affected?



22.22% of the respondents think that fake news mostly affected fake educational resources, 31.11% think it mostly affected entertainment news, while 46.67% think that fake news mostly affected political news.

4- Have you ever read news and later discovered that it was false?



66.67% of the respondents faced the issue of reading news and later discovering that it was fake, while 31.11% stated that they did not face such problem. From those who stated that they were deceived by fake news, here are some examples of what they faced:

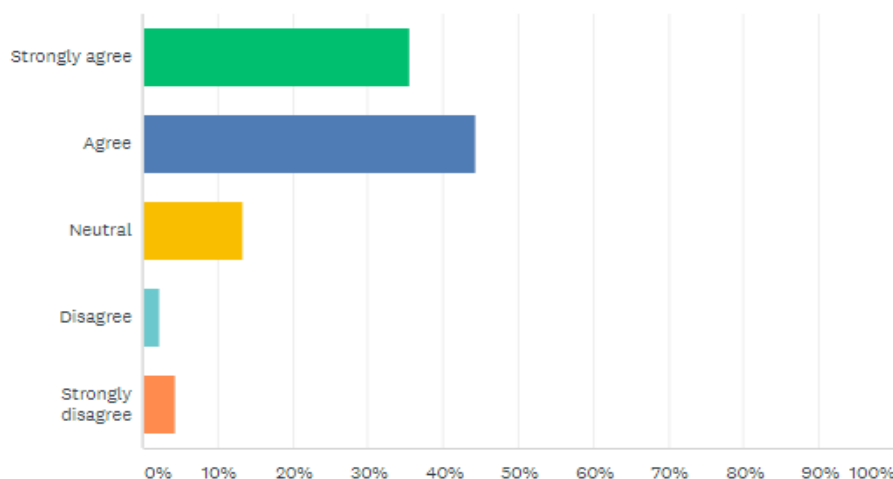
Political news during the Egyptian revolution

5/15/2018 11:56 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

It was that a celebrity got married and many social media pages posted that and later on he mentioned that he didn't marry and when he wants to, he will inform people and not hide it.

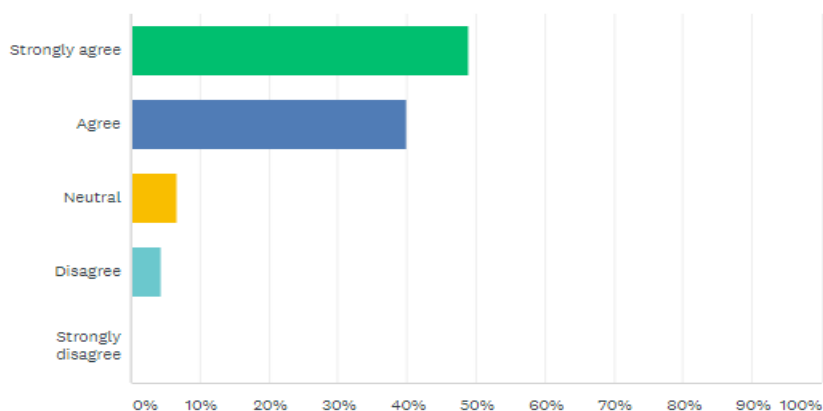
5/15/2018 10:28 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

5- Fake news makes it difficult for ordinary people to separate credible news from fake news.



35.56% of the respondents strongly agree that fake news makes it difficult for ordinary people to separate fake news from reliable news, 44.44% agree, 13.33% are neutral, 2.22% disagree, and 4.44% strongly disagree.

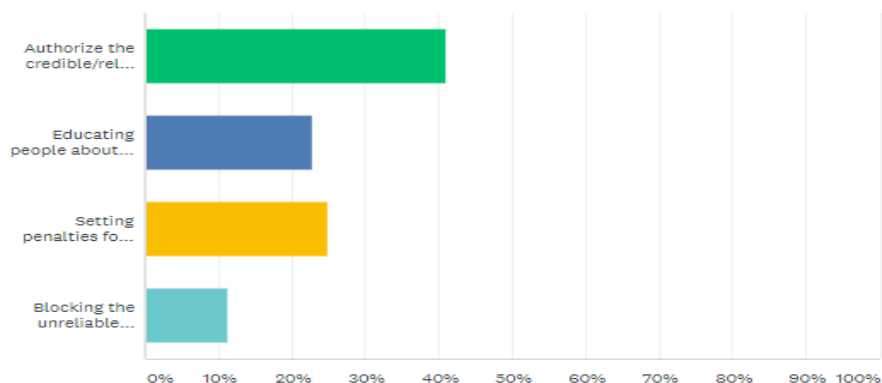
6- Fake news resources should be penalized



48.89% of the respondents strongly agree that fake news resources should be penalized, 40% agree, 6.67% were neutral, and 4.44% strongly disagree.

7- What do you think the best way to limit the effects of fake news?

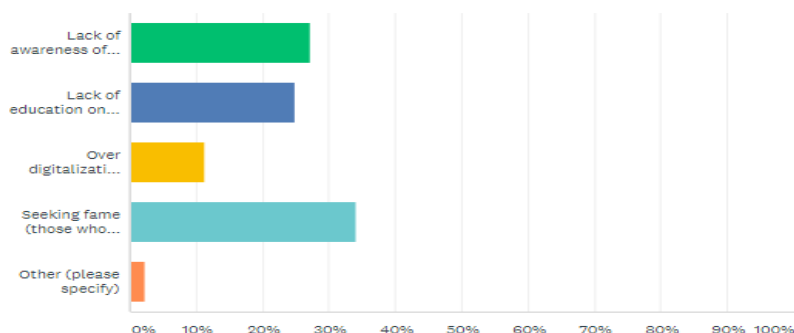
There were given several options to the respondents and this is how they answered:



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Authorize the credible/reliable pages/resources	40.91%
Educating people about how to separate fake news from reliable news	22.73%
Setting penalties for those who spread fake news	25.00%
Blocking the unreliable resources	11.36%

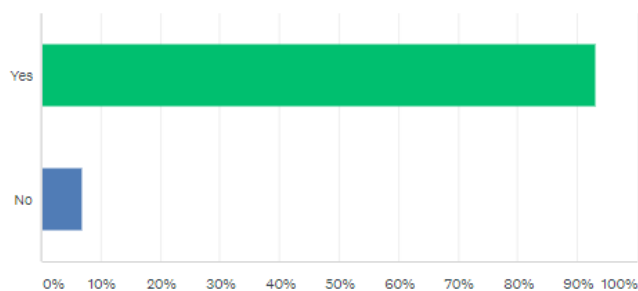
- Authorizing the credible/reliable pages/resources 40.9%
- Educating people about how to separate fake news from reliable news 22.73%
- Setting penalties for those who spread fake news 25%
- Blocking unreliable news 11.36%

8- What is the main reason of fake news, in your opinion?



27.27% of the respondents answered that the main reason of Fake News is lack of awareness of the reliable sources, 25% of the respondents answered the lack of education on how to separate fake news from reliable ones, 11.36% of the respondents answered the over digitalization occurring nowadays, 34.09% of the respondents answered that the main reason is that those who spread the fake news seek fame and money, and 2.27% answered: other reasons.

9- Do you think that training sessions should be offered to different people to inform them how to separate fake news form reliable news?



93.18% of the respondents think that training sessions should be offered to inform people how to separate fake news from reliable news while only 6.82% think that there is no need for such sessions.

10- The last question was an open-ended question. We asked people about how the fake news affect their lives with the evolvement of social media.

These were some of the responses:

More fraud news	5/18/2018 6:00 AM	View respondent's answers
False information	5/17/2018 12:18 PM	View respondent's answers
Spreading more false information.	5/17/2018 12:16 PM	View respondent's answers
More problems	5/17/2018 12:16 PM	View respondent's answers
Alot of problems	5/17/2018 11:57 AM	View respondent's answers
In all the aspects		
It can strongly affect my behaviour	5/17/2018 2:46 AM	View respondent's answers
Idk	5/16/2018 4:12 PM	View respondent's answers
In many ways, depends on the type of the news. For example when bloggers give good feedback regarding a beauty product that actually is bad and people are influenced.	5/16/2018 1:27 PM	View respondent's answers
.	5/16/2018 6:39 AM	View respondent's answers
Its increasing but on the other side it helps the real news spread there for telling people what's the fake and real news	5/16/2018 1:45 AM	View respondent's answers
It opens your point of view to think twice before you read or hear any news , not every news means true or fake , it opens a possibility to think out of the box so you can be aware next time.	5/16/2018 12:57 AM	View respondent's answers
it's making unnecessary wars between countries, nationalities, people...	5/16/2018 12:17 AM	View respondent's answers
Its affects it badly	5/16/2018 12:14 AM	View respondent's answers
Social media is the biggest resource of spreading news whether its fake or true. Anyone can spread fake news through social media and since social media is the new trend everyone will rely on it.	5/16/2018 12:11 AM	View respondent's answers

5. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, fake news are increasing in the evolvement of social media. The more social media platforms occur, the more fake news have a chance to get spread between people. People should be aware how to differentiate between the real news and fake news. Moreover, reliable sources should be well-known so that people will know the fake accounts or unreliable accounts. We recommend people to do the following in

order to lessen the effects of fake news on social media: 1) Reading more on the news. 2) Checking for proof and evidence in the news. 3) Making sure the source is trustworthy. 4) Spreading awareness about how fake news can badly affect social media.

6. RECCOMENDATIONS

In future research endeavors, it is recommended to take into consideration the present study. Also, further research may be enhanced through the inclusion of interventions aimed at eliminating fake news in social media. Some attempts have already been made, but they are only initial, and this issue needs to be investigated at a better level. Finally, future research should cover more detailed questions and engage more participants to provide better reliability of results.

REFERENCE LIST

- Gallagher, K., J.D., & Magid, L. (2017). *MEDIA LITERACY & FAKE NEWS*. Connect Safely and Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence.
- Gross, G. (2018). *Fake News Spreads Fast, But Don't Blame the Bots*. Retrieved from [www.internetsociety.org: https://www.internetsociety.org/blog/2018/03/fake-news-spread-fast-dont-blame-bots/?gclid=EAlaIqobChMI-NPGzbKR2wIVQUTTCh2P6AaLEAAYASAAEgJtJ_D_BwE](https://www.internetsociety.org/blog/2018/03/fake-news-spread-fast-dont-blame-bots/?gclid=EAlaIqobChMI-NPGzbKR2wIVQUTTCh2P6AaLEAAYASAAEgJtJ_D_BwE).
- How the Fake News Problem Affects Social Media Marketing*. (n.d.). Retrieved from www.devumi.com: <https://devumi.com/2017/01/fake-news-problem-affects-social-media-marketing/>.
- Maceda, C. (2018). *UAE residents warned: Up to Dh 1 million fine if you do this*. Retrieved from <https://m.gulfnews.com/>: <https://m.gulfnews.com/news/uae/crime/uae-residents-warned-up-to-dh1-million-fine-if-you-do-this-1.2214120>.
- Mheiri, M. A. (2017). *In a world of fake news, can newspapers and news organizations restore trust?*. Retrieved from the national: <https://www.thenational.ae/opinion/in-a-world-of-fake-news-can-newspapers-and-news-organisations-restore-trust-1.616672>.
- Nelson, J. (n.d.). *Overcoming Fake News and Echo Chambers in the Age of Social Media*. Retrieved from creatingthefutureofnews.com: <https://creatingthefutureofnews.com/overcoming-fake-news-echo-chambers-age-social-media/>.
- Press, G. (2018). *How Twitter Became A Beacon For Fake News As Mass Entertainment And Booster Of Social Status*. Retrieved from www.forbes.com: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/gilpress/2018/03/18/how-twitter-became-a-beacon-for-fake-news-as-mass-entertainment-and-social-status/#7153cc042bae>.
- Stroud, F. (n.d.). *Fake news*. Retrieved from [webopedia](http://webopedia.com): <https://www.webopedia.com/TERM/F/fake-news.html>.
- Williams, B. (2017). *How you can avoid spreading misinformation online during big news events*. Retrieved from www.mashable.com: https://mashable.com/2017/10/03/how-to-avoid-spreading-misinformation-online/#PWquW_E81mqS.
- Zakaria, S. (2017). *Publishers of fake news must be punished*. Retrieved from www.khaleejtimes.com: <https://www.khaleejtimes.com/nation/dubai/publishers-of-fake-news-must-be-legally-punished>.