Examining the Impact of Fake News on Mental Health of Residents in Jos Metropolis

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Abstract : The advent of social media has no doubt provided platforms that facilitate the spread of fake news. The devastating impact of this does not only end with the prevalence of rumours and propaganda but also poses potential impact on individuals' mental well-being. Therefore, this study on examining the impact of fake news on the mental health of residents in Jos metropolis among others interrogates the impact of exposure to fake news on residents' mental health. Anchored on the Cultivation Theory, the study adopted quantitative method and surveyed two the opinions of hundred (200) social media users in Jos metropolis using purposive sampling technique. The findings reveal that a significant majority of respondents perceive fake news as highly prevalent on social media, with associated feelings of anxiety and stress. The majority of the respondents express confidence in identifying fake news, though a notable proportion lacks such confidence. Strategies for managing the mental impact of encountering fake news include ignoring it, fact checking, discussing with others, reporting to platforms, and seeking professional support. Based on these insights, recommendations were proposed to address the challenges posed by fake news. These include promoting media literacy, integrating fact-checking tools, adjusting algorithms and fostering digital well-being features among others.

Keywords : fake news, mental health, social media, impact

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