



## Fake News and Its Implications for the Realisation of Sustainable Development Goals 3, 4, and 16 in Delta State, Nigeria

<sup>1</sup>Hannah Emuobosa IVWIGHREN\*, & <sup>2</sup>Valeria Oghenetejiri MUKORO

<sup>1&2</sup>Department of Mass Communication, Federal Polytechnic, Orogun, Delta State, Nigeria

<sup>1</sup><https://orcid.org/0009-0003-8016-6974>

<sup>2</sup><https://orcid.org/0009-0004-8687-8494>

\*Corresponding Author: [ivwighren.hannah@fepo.edu.ng](mailto:ivwighren.hannah@fepo.edu.ng)

### ABSTRACT

**Background:** In recent years, the rapid expansion of digital media and social networking platforms has significantly transformed information dissemination in Nigeria. While these platforms enhance access to information, they have also facilitated the widespread circulation of fake news, which poses serious threats to development efforts. In Delta State, the proliferation of misinformation has increasingly undermined public trust, distorted health communication, weakened educational initiatives, and hindered peace-building processes. These challenges directly affect the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goals 3 (Good Health and Well-being), 4 (Quality Education), and 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions).

**Objective:** This study examines the implications of fake news on the realization of SDGs in Delta State, with specific focus on Goals 3, 4, and 16, and how they are interpreted and applied in the development process.

**Method:** The study adopted a mixed methods design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. A survey of 400 respondents was conducted to generate quantitative data, while 18 key informant interviews provided qualitative insights. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression techniques, alongside thematic analysis for the interview data.

**Result:** The findings reveal a significant negative relationship between exposure to fake news and public engagement with SDG-related initiatives. Thematic analysis further indicates that social media platforms, particularly Facebook and WhatsApp, serve as major channels for the dissemination of fake news, contributing to declining public trust in institutions and development programmes.

**Conclusion:** Fake news constitutes a major barrier to sustainable development in Delta State. High exposure to misinformation—largely driven by social media—undermines citizens' willingness to participate in development initiatives, despite a relatively higher level of trust in traditional media sources.

**Unique Contribution:** The study demonstrates that although there is a moderate level of awareness of SDG initiatives, fake news significantly reduces public trust in government-led programmes and weakens motivation for active participation in development efforts.

**Key Recommendation:** The study recommends the intensification of media literacy programmes and the promotion of transparent, open communication strategies to mitigate the effects of misinformation and enhance the achievement of SDGs.

**Keywords:** Delta State, Development Communication, Fake News, Media Literacy, Misinformation, Sustainable Development Goals.



## **INTRODUCTION**

Fake news, as it is commonly called, is a contemporary 21st-century problem with significant implications for public policy, governance, and sustainable development. People are using internet media as a source of news in this digital age. Despite democratizing information access, the shift has made societies more vulnerable to deliberate dissemination of misleading information (Vosoughi, et al., 2018). The accomplishment of such goals is threatened by fake news as it erodes public trust, alters the course of civic engagement, and spreads false information (Udeze, 2021).

Fake news is an increasing major challenge to growth in development in Nigeria, especially in Delta State, where the development activities are especially skeptical. Government efforts have been sabotaged by misinformation, notably in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has led to vaccine resistance and the development of distrust among people about infrastructure projects. This fake news jeopardizes several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), such as good health (SDG 3), quality education (SDG 4), climate action (SDG 13), peace and justice (SDG 16), and development partnerships (SDG 17). Although the issue of the effect of fake news on sustainable development at the grassroots level is urgent, there is no systematic research on the same in Delta State. This research seeks to address this gap by analyzing the trends of misinformation, assessing the reaction of the stakeholders, as well as combining media research with development research to provide information that can be used to improve the way people communicate and participate in the development project.

SDG-compatible policies and programs in Delta State. This study seeks to investigate the prevalence and sources of fake news in Delta State, its influence on public perception and participation, and the efficacy of institutional efforts to curb the problem. Finally, this study is expected to add to the expanding literature on media, governance, and development in Nigeria and suggest the optimal process of enhancing communication structures towards sustainable development.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The general objectives of this study are to:

1. Identify the common sources and channels through which fake news spreads in Delta State.
2. Examine the implications of fake news on key SDGs such as health (Goal 3), education (Goal 4), and peace and justice (Goal 16).
3. Recommend strategic communication and policy measures to curb the spread of fake news for enhanced SDG implementation.

## **HYPOTHESIS**

Hypothesis  $O_1$ : There is no significant relationship between exposure to fake news and awareness of SDG-related initiatives in Delta State.

Hypothesis  $O_2$ : Fake news exposure does not significantly predict citizens' engagement in SDG-related programmes.



## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Understanding Fake News

Fake news is the strategic release of untrue or misleading information in the guise of legitimate news (Allcott and Gentzkow, 2017). It is defined by sensationalism, emotionalism, and verifiability. The digital era has facilitated the diffusion of fake news on social media, blogs, and even mainstream media at a very fast pace. Researchers suggest that fake news prospers in settings with low media literacy, low institutional trust, and partisan politics (Vosoughi, et al., 2018). Presenting a favorable environment in terms of fake news spread, Nigeria has a complex socio-political environment, as well as a media ecosystem. Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) state that virality prevails in social media due to a lack of a strict gatekeeping mechanism, which makes this platform a fertile misinformation breeding ground. Facebook, Twitter, and most significantly, WhatsApp, are some of the platforms that have become key sources through which misleading information can be spread. This is especially difficult to monitor or control because WhatsApp is encrypted, and forwarding messages is easy (Apuke & Omar, 2020). Citizen journalism and community blogs have become more popular in the Delta setting, and they frequently lack journalistic integrity and factchecking (Guanah, 2024). In the case of COVID-19, fake information about the risks of vaccination became viral on WhatsApp and Facebook, and it turned people off to health programs (Adeleke, 2021). In the same way, false news of some imaginary government empowerment program or embezzlement of funds will spread so fast in politically sensitive regions. According to Umar and Musa, 2020, oral culture of most societies implies that the fake stories transmitted between the local markets and the town halls can be accepted with false assumptions before being verified and set straight, thus making the general population overly influence their thinking.

### Implications of Fake News on Key SDGs (3, 4, and 16)

#### *SDG 3 - Good Health and Well-being*

False news poses a great people's health danger especially in low- and middle-income countries such as Nigeria. In any given health crisis, like the Ebola outbreak and the COVID-19 pandemic, panic, vaccine hesitancy, and non-observance of preventative measures were the results of misinformation (Adeleke, 2021). In Delta State, rumors about the presence of tracking devices in vaccines or infertility were spread, preventing the population from using them and undermining state health programs. Long-term health planning is also influenced by the propagation of misinformation. An example is that communities have been pulling out of medical outreaches due to rumors of neglect by the government or conspiracy with foreign health aid, even when this is not the case. According to Liadi, et al., (2023), fake news undermines the trust in institutions, which is essential to successful health governance and the willingness of the population to comply. Here, SDG 3 will be undermined because with misinformation, there will be obstacles to access, participation, and policy achievement.



### ***SDG 4 - Quality Education***

Another sector that has been affected by misinformation is the education sector, as it has influenced the way the populace is informed about the reforms, school policies, and the funding of educational activities. As an illustration, in the times of COVID-19 lockdowns, fake news about school opening dates and online test fraud were shared among the parents and students, causing confusion and anxiety (Udeze, 2021). False allegations that Western education is dangerous or anti-cultural have also caused discouragement of school enrollment, particularly amongst girls in certain rural areas of Delta State. In addition, fake news erodes media and information literacy, which is one of the major aspects of SDG 4. Lack of formal media literacy education at the school level also subjects youth to false information that negatively influences their academic growth as well as their social perspectives (UNESCO, 2020). Peace and Justice (SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions)

### ***SDG 16 - Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions***

The ability of fake news to result in violence, encourage hate speech, and undermine confidence in public institutions is one of the most harmful consequences that interfere with the achievement of SDG 16. Politically or ethnically based fake news has been identified as the root cause of community conflicts in Delta State (Omoera & Uwalaka 2023). Unregulated in the presence of these divisive narratives encourages civil unrest and creates an atmosphere of distrust and enmity. Also, recurrent exposure to fake news discredits organizations like the police, courts, and election commissions. In cases where the citizens think, say that elections are fraudulent, using unverified facts, they will turn to protests or violence rather than legal remedies (Apuke et al., 2023; Nwafor, 2012). Therefore, the literature is firmly in agreement that fake news can lead to instability and institutional deterioration if it is not properly dealt with, which prevents the development of peaceful and inclusive societies as proposed in SDG 16.

### **Strategic Communication and Policy Recommendations**

Due to the prevalence of fake news, researchers and experts have developed several policy-based and communication-driven measures to curb the menace. UNESCO (2020); Okoro and Nwafor (2015). focuses on the incorporation of Media and Information Literacy into school and community training programs. Such programs can empower the citizens of Delta State, particularly youth and women, to be able to critically analyze content before accepting or sharing it. Guanah (2024); Odoemelam et al., (2013) advises local NGOs and CSOs to be assisted in undertaking grassroots campaigns on media literacy in the local language and locally representative materials. The use of such platforms as Dubawa, Africa Check, and AFP Fact Check has played key roles in dispelling fake news in Nigeria. They, however, have limited reach in subnational regions such as Delta State. Maku and Alegu (2024) hold the view that state governments ought to collaborate with local media houses to set up fact-checking desks and keep a check on the circulating stories, especially during election seasons or in the event of a significant health emergency. Messaging must be adjusted to local values and dialects so that it resonates and has an effect. Including SDG-compliant materials in the newspapers of the



country, various shows, and social media campaigns can inundate the population and combat misinformation. According to Meuleman (2021), routine updates on government activities tied to SDGs delivered in transparent and engaging formats can promote trust and accountability.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Framing Theory**

The Framing theory began with Erving Goffman, who had to do with primary frameworks that people use to interpret events (Erving 1974). The importance of this theory was enhanced by Todd Gitlin and Robert Entman, who identified framing as the choice of certain elements of reality to advance some interpretations. The impact of media on how the audience interprets information, the use of cognitive shortcuts by participants, and the ability of emotional frames to persuade the audience are the major assumptions of Framing Theory as proposed by Robert Entman (1993) (Vosoughi, Roy, and Aral 2018). According to the theory, media framing serves four functions: defining problems, diagnosing causes, making moral judgments, and proposing remedies, and fake news takes advantage of these functions to influence the way people react (Tandoc, Lim, and Ling 2018). The applicable types of frames are conflict frames, which intensify tensions (SDG 16), human-interest frames, which control emotions (SDG 3), economic frames, which point at monetary problems (SDG 4 and 16), and morality frames, which demonstrate interventions as immoral.

The Framing Theory is relevant to the current research since fake news is one of the key factors that influence how people see SDG programs and institutions, affect trust, and influence civic engagement, and empirical evidence shows that exposure to fake news is a predictor of lower participation in the SDG projects. Also, qualitative knowledge shows that political power brokers and actors exploit the masses by using framing to strategically influence people (Nelson & Oxley, 1999). Although the Framing Theory is useful in the examination of communication, it has drawbacks in terms of difficulties in measurement, variance in cultural interpretation, and overlap with agenda-setting. Nevertheless, it is an effective instrument for comprehending the effects of fake news on social attitudes and development outcomes, which presents a strong conceptual framework of the current study (Chong & Druckman 2007). The research provides a conceptual basis for exploring fake news and its effects on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Delta State, Nigeria, based on Framing Theory. This communication theory elucidates how media shape perceptions and behaviors via misleading frames that influence the interpretation of government programs and development initiatives.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Both quantitative and qualitative data are aligned to unravel the implications of fake news on the attainment of SDGs in Delta State. For quantitative data, a survey was applied using a structured questionnaire given to 400 residents in four Local Government Areas of Delta State. The sampling was done through stratified random samplings to represent the demographics. Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with 18 stakeholders: government representatives, media workers,



civil society participants, educators, and community leaders. The interview explored perceived sources of fake news and its effects and assessed institutional responses. and a mean outcome

Quantitative and qualitative results of the study are presented and interpreted. SPSS was used to analyse quantitative data from 400 questionnaires that had been administered to establish the correlation between fake news and SDG success in Delta State. Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) of stakeholders identified by the researcher enhance the quantitative findings by giving more insights into the implications of fake news and institutional reactions.

**Questionnaire Distribution and Return Rate**

Four hundred structured questionnaires were also handed out in the four chosen Local Government Areas of Delta State: Warri South, Ughelli North, Ndokwa East, and Isoko South. Among these, 385 were duly filled and sent back, and 15 were not sent back or could not be analyzed. This is equivalent to a 96.25 percent return rate, which is deemed to be sufficient in the quantitative analysis and generalization of findings.

**Table 1: Distribution and Retrieval**

LGA	Distributed	Returned	Lost or Invalid	% Returned
Warri South	100	97	3	97.0
Ughelli North	100	96	4	96.0
Ndokwa East	100	95	5	95.0
Isoko South	100	97	3	97.0
Total	400	385	15	96.25

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The overall response rate of 96.25% indicates excellent participation and reflects the respondents’ strong interest in the study topic. According to research standards, a response rate above 70% is considered reliable for survey-based studies (Creswell, 2018). The high return rate ensures that the data accurately represents the population of the four selected LGAs in Delta State.

**Response Demographic Data**

**Table 2: Demographic Distribution of Respondents (N = 385)**

VARIABLE	GENDER	AGE	EDUCATION	LGA
CATEGORY	Male 210 (54.5)	18-30 (35.1)	135 95 (24.7)	Warri South 100 (26.0)
	Female 175 (45.5)	31-45 (41.6)	160 250 (64.9)	Ugheli North 95 (24.7)
		46-Above (23.3)	90 40 (10.4)	Ndokwa East 95 (24.7)
				Isoko South 95 (24.7)

Source: Field Survey, 2025



The demographic table shows the distribution of respondents in terms of their gender, age, educational qualification, as well as Local Government Area (LGA) in Delta State, which emphasizes the diversity of the sample. The most important findings are: 54.5% of respondents are males, and 45.5% of the respondents are females; the highest percentage of the sample was aged 31-45 years, comprising 41.6% of the total population, 35.1% aged 18-30, and 23.3% aged 46 and above. Education-wise, sixty-four-point nine percent of them are tertiary educated, twenty-four-point seven percent are secondary, and ten percent are postgraduate. The survey includes four LGAs, with balanced representation from Warri South (26.0%) and other LGAs (24.7% each). These characteristics support the study's validity and aid in interpreting findings related to fake news and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

**Thematic Data**

**Objective 1: Exposure to Fake News**

**Table 3: Respondents' Exposure to Fake News**

Statement	Mean	Decision
I frequently encounter fake news on social media platforms	3.84	Agreed
Fake news is common during political campaigns in Delta State	3.76	Agreed
I find it difficult to differentiate between authentic and fake news online	3.62	Agreed
Average Mean	3.74	High Exposure

Source: Field Survey, 2025

From the above table, it can be deduced that Delta state residents are highly exposed to fake news, especially through social media, where the mean is found to be high at 3.7, showing that the residents agree with this experience evidence from the results Mean = 3.84, Mean = 3.76, Mean = 3.62. These results highlight the need to improve media literacy levels, implement verification mechanisms, and initiate popular awareness programs to fight fake news.

**Objective 2: Trust in Media Sources**

**Table 4: Trust Levels in Various Media Channels**

Media Type	Mean	Decision
Social Media Platforms	2.48	Disagreed
Traditional Media (Radio, TV, Newspaper)	3.65	Agreed
Government/Official Channels	3.21	Agreed
Online Blogs/Influencers	2.21	Disagreed

Source: Field Survey, 2025



On the second objective, respondents have different degrees of trust towards different media channels, with the traditional media (mean = 3.65) having the highest level of trust. The lowest trust rating (mean = 2.21) was given to blogs and influencers, which were related to sensationalism and unsubstantiated claims. The results show that there exists a definite order of trust whereby any attempt to combat fake news in Delta state should be directed to the traditional media and government sources, which are perceived to be more reliable.

**Objective 3: Awareness and Attitudes toward SDG Initiatives**

**Table 5: Awareness and Perception of SDG-related Activities**

Statement	Mean	Decision
I am aware of government programs promoting SDGs in Delta State	3.35	Agreed
Fake news discourages me from participating in SDG-related activities	3.49	Agreed
Fake news affects people’s trust in government-led development projects	3.65	Agreed
Average Mean	3.28	Moderate Awareness

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The above table shows that the knowledge of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Delta State is average, as the respondents were aware of the government programs such as health programs, educational programs, and environmental programs (Mean = 3.35) and trust in government-led resources (Mean = 3.65), presenting them as corrupt or inactive. In general, although the awareness is rather high, the impact of misinformation on the general perception is so significant that it should be replenished with more correct and consistent information and promote the SDG initiatives and overcome such negative predispositions against governmental activities.

**Hypothesis Testing**

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between exposure to fake news and awareness of SDG-related initiatives in Delta State.

**Table 6: Correlation between Fake News Exposure and SDG Awareness**

Variables	N	r- val ue	Sig. (p )	Decision
<i>Fake News Exposure vs SDG Awareness</i>	385	-0.62	0.000	Significant

Table 6 shows a correlation analysis that has a strong negative relationship ( $r = -0.62$ ) between exposure to fake news and awareness of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) initiatives among the respondents in Delta State, with a sample size of 385. The statistical significance is confirmed by the p-value of 0.000, which means that the higher the exposure to fake news is, the less aware and knowledgeable the audience is about SDG programmes the audience is. The null



hypothesis has been rejected, and it shows that fake news works as a significant and negative influence on sustainable development and decreases the trust and engagement in SDG initiatives. This observation is in line with the Framing Theory, which emphasizes the influence of information presentation on the population.

Hypothesis 2: Fake news exposure does not significantly predict citizens’ engagement in SDG-related programmes.

**Table 7: Regression Analysis on the Impact of Fake News Exposure on SDG Engagement**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient ( $\beta$ )	Std. Error	t	Sig.
(Constant)	4.521	0.181	24.98	0.000
Fake News Exposure	-0.42	0.07	-5.98	0.000
$R^2 = 0.46$	F(1,384) = 35.76	p < 0.05		

Table 7 shows regression model indicates that exposure to fake news is a major predictor of low participation in SDG-related programs. The model accounts for 46 percent of the variance, which proves that misinformation has a negative effect on participation in the development-oriented initiatives. Regression analysis also revealed that exposure to fake news is a predictor of low SDG program engagement (b = -0.42, p = - 0.05), and it has a 46% variance in SDG programs.

**Qualitative Findings (Key Informant Interviews)**

Eighteen (18) stakeholders were interviewed for 7minutes each via phone calls, and their views were analyzed using thematic analysis. Four dominant themes emerged:

**Table 8: Key Information Interview**

Theme	Key Insights
Theme 1: Sources and Spread of Fake News	Most participants identified social media and political actors as major sources of misinformation. Poor media literacy and a lack of regulation worsen the situation.
Theme 2: Impacts on SDG Achievement	Fake news undermines health campaigns (SDG 3), education initiatives (SDG 4), and environmental sustainability efforts (SDG 13).
Theme 3: Institutional and Community Responses	Fact-checking collaborations exist but are limited. Civil society efforts on digital literacy are still emerging.
Theme 4: Building Trust and Transparency	Stakeholders emphasize open communication, transparent governance, and digital education as ways to rebuild trust and counter misinformation.



## **DISCUSSION**

The findings showed that the respondents who indicated frequent exposures to misinformation, especially on social media had high exposure to fake news. This coincides with Allcott and Gentzkow (2017), who indicate that social media is the platform that allows societal un-fact-checked information to go viral due to a low number of gatekeeping mechanisms. Similarly, Vosoughi, Roy, and Aral (2018) have also found that fake news is more popular than information, particularly on such tools as Twitter. The qualitative feedback of the key informants that supported these findings included information that, in Delta State, the most common avenues of fake news were WhatsApp, Facebook, and local online blogs. This corroborates Apuke and Omar (2020), who identified encrypted messaging apps as major conduits for misinformation in Nigeria because forwarded messages are difficult to trace or regulate. In the same way, Guanah (2024) also agrees that media stakeholders in Delta State considered social media to be quite unregulated and easy to be manipulated by political players and anonymous producers of material. This means that interventions against fake news must strengthen the relationships with reliable channels of communication.

The study demonstrated a moderate level of awareness regarding SDG initiatives, yet fake news has a strong negative influence on the desire to engage in SDG-related activities and the development of trust towards government-led programs. Udeze (2021) supported this by stating that misinformation undermines national cohesion and misinterpretation of development policies by the citizens. This was supported by qualitative interviews, which found that falsehoods had created resistance in health campaigns (SDG 3), misunderstanding of education policies (SDG 4), and strained peace-building processes (SDG 16). Stakeholders cited that in the time of major health emergencies, including COVID-19, polio campaigns, malaria interventions, fake news causes fear, generates vaccine hesitancy, and diminishes the levels of cooperation with the people. This echoes Omoera and Uwalaka (2023), who described fake news as a disruptive force capable of provoking hostility, violence, and institutional distrust. Together, these findings confirm that fake news threatens the foundation of sustainable development by disrupting informed participation, policy effectiveness, and community cohesion.

Although some efforts, such as partnerships with national fact-checking bodies, qualitative data revealed that such initiatives are poorly coordinated and insufficient at the state level. The stakeholders acknowledged that factchecking does not usually go to rural areas where false information is spread orally. This confirms Maku and Alegu (2024), who noted that the regulation process of fake news in Nigeria is not systematic but reactive and usually politicized and poorly implemented. According to Guanah (2024), the activities of civil societies are still few because of the lack of funds and manpower. The study established that there was a wide consensus between the respondents and stakeholders that better media literacy, open communication, and community-based sensitization are important in dealing with misinformation. This is consistent with UNESCO (2020), which advocates integrating Media and Information Literacy (MIL) into formal and informal education systems. The qualitative findings particularly emphasized the role of local influencers. Teachers, religious leaders, youth leaders, and women's groups as trusted gatekeepers who can counteract misinformation in culturally resonant ways.



## **CONCLUSION**

Using a mixed-methods approach that included quantitative data from 385 respondents and qualitative insights from 18 key informants, this study examines the impact of fake news on the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Delta State, Nigeria. The results show that fake news poses a significant risk, particularly to health (SDG 3), quality education (SDG 4), and peace, justice, and strong institutions (SDG 16). High exposure to fake news, primarily through social media platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp, indicating that these channels are effective for disseminating false information, despite respondents' greater trust in traditional media.

According to the study, the way fake news is framed to affects how the public views and reacts to SDG activities, which is consistent with framing theory. Fake news exposure and SDG program awareness were shown to be negatively correlated in a statistically meaningful way. Furthermore, regression analysis showed that variance in public participation may be explained by misinformation, which predicts lower involvement in SDG-related actions. These conclusions were supported by qualitative data, which showed that political players and interest groups frequently spread false information, particularly in rural regions where media illiteracy makes the problem worse. Furthermore, the fact-checking organizations that are now in place are working poorly, staying centralized, and becoming cut off from local communities. The study concludes that false news undermines community involvement in important development and public trust in institutions, making it a major obstacle to Delta State's attainment of the SDGs.

To address this challenge, a multi-faceted strategy is recommended, focusing on enhancing technological controls, improving media literacy, fostering trust through transparency, and encouraging community-based interventions to effectively counter misinformation. Without these proactive measures, the progress towards SDGs in Delta State may be significantly hindered by misinformation.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. The Delta State Government, in collaboration with educational institutions and civil society organisations, should introduce continuous media literacy campaigns. These programmes should teach citizens, especially youth, rural communities, and women, how to identify fake news, verify information, and understand media framing techniques. Integrating MIL into school curricula and community outreach will reduce vulnerability to misinformation.
2. To counter misinformation quickly and effectively, local radio stations, community newspapers, and LGAs should host fact-checking units that work with national organisations such as Dubawa and Africa Check. These units should operate in local languages and disseminate verified information through radio jingles, town-hall meetings, and community influencers to ensure grassroots reach.
3. Government agencies implementing SDG programmes should adopt open, timely, and consistent communication practices. This includes publishing regular updates on development projects, engaging community leaders in feedback processes, and using clear, accessible messaging. Transparent communication builds trust and counters the negative frames promoted by fake news.



### **Ethical clearance**

Ethical consent was sought and obtained from the participants used in this study. They were made to understand that the exercise was purely for academic purposes, and their participation was voluntary.

### **Acknowledgements**

We acknowledge the TETFUND- Institutional Based Research (IBR) for sponsoring this research and the Management of Federal Polytechnic Orogun, Delta State, Nigeria for providing the platform and enabling environment.

### **Sources of funding**

The study was funded by TETFUND- Institutional Based Research (IBR).

### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

### **Authors' Contributions.**

Hannah Emuobosa IVWIGHREN the study, including the design and data collection. Valeria Oghenetajiri MUKORO handled the analysis and interpretation. All authors have critically reviewed and approved the final draft, and are responsible for the content and similarity index of the manuscript.

### **Data availability statement.**

The datasets on which conclusions were made for this study are available on reasonable request.

### **Citation**

Ivwithren, H. E. & Mukoro, V. O. (2026). Fake News and Its Implications for Sustainable Development Goals in Delta State. *International Journal of Sub-Saharan African Research*, 4(1), 908-921. doi:10.5281/zenodo.19416808



## REFERENCES

- Adeleke, S. O. (2021). Fake news and public health crises in Nigeria. *African Journal of Communication*, 12(2), 55–68.
- Allcott, H., & Gentzkow, M. (2017). Social media and fake news in the 2016 election. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 31(2), 211–236.
- Apuke, O. D., Omar, B., & Tunca, E. A. (2023). Effect of fake news awareness as a strategy in Nigeria. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*.
- Dan, V., Ihlen, Ø., & Raknes, K. (2019). Political public relations and strategic framing. *Political Public Relations*.
- Fadili, O., Khodja, M., & Azarpira, M. (2024). Carpal tunnel release using the KnifeLight technique: An alternative to endoscopic approach? *International Journal of Surgery Case Reports*, 125.
- Folayan, B. J., Banjo, A. O., & Odenike, T. O. (2024). Assessing and mitigating fake news in Nigeria. *Journal of Social Science Research*, 20.
- Gitlin, T. (1980). *The whole world is watching*. University of California Press.
- Guanah, J. S. (2024). Media stakeholders' perspectives on fake news in Delta State. *Nigerian Journal of Communication*, 20(1).
- Liadi, O. F., Lawal, M. O., & Akinrinde, O. O. F. (2023). Fake news and hate speech in Nigeria's development. *Jurnal Pertahanan*, 9(1), 28–44.
- Maku, B. S., Alegu, J. C., et al. (2024). Regulations against fake news in Nigerian media. *Journal of Communication and Media Technology*, 6(1).
- Meuleman, L. (2021). Public administration and governance for the SDGs: Navigating between change and stability. *Sustainability*, 13, 5914.
- Nwafor, K. A., (2012). Quackery and Professionalism in Modern Journalism: The Nigerian Situation, In Aliede, J. E. (Ed.), *Today's Readings in Mass Communication: Issues, Insights and Perspectives*. Pp. 248-256.
- Odoemelum, C. C., Agu, S. U., Ebeze, V., Ibrahim, K. & Nwafor, K. A., (2013). Community Conflicts and Sustainable National Development: The Role of Advocacy Journalism. *Journal of Linguistics & Communication Studies*, 2(1), 73-84.



- Okoro, M. N. & Nwafor, K. A. (2015). *The Role of Research in Development Communication: The Grassroots Orientation*, In Ndolo, I. S & Onwuemehili, C. (Ed.), *Nigeria: Development Communication & Interrogating the field*. Pp. 159-177.
- Omoera, O. S., & Uwalaka, T. (2023). Fake news as disruptive media. *Studies in Media and Communication*, 11(6).
- Pangestu, P. (2021). Efektivitas dakwah hadis dalam media sosial: Analisis atas teori framing Robert N. Entman. *Jurnal Dakwah dan Komunikasi*.
- Scheufele, D. A. (1999). Framing as a theory of media effects. *Journal of Communication*, 49(1), 103–122.
- Tandoc, E., Lim, Z., & Ling, R. (2018). Defining “fake news.” *Digital Journalism*, 6(2).
- Udenze, S. (2021). Fake news and its impact on national cohesion. *International Journal of Humanities and Innovation*, 4(2).
- Umar, M., & Musa, A. (2020). Fake news and the challenges of media regulation in Nigeria. *International Journal of Communication and Media Studies*, 6(1), 33–45.
- UN Nigeria Youth SDGs Network. (n.d.). *Nigeria Youth SDGs Network*.
- UNESCO. (2020). *Media and information literacy: Policy and strategy guidelines*. UNESCO.
- Vosoughi, S., Roy, D., & Aral, S. (2018). The spread of true and false news online. *Science*, 359(6380), 1146–1151.