

UNIVERSITE DE YAOUNDE I

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CENTRE DE RECHERCHE ET DE  
FORMATION DOCTORALE EN  
SCIENCES HUMAINES, SOCIALES  
ET EDUCATIVES

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UNITE DE RECHERCHE ET DE  
FORMATION DOCTORALE EN  
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DEPARTEMENT DE PHILOSOPHIE

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THE UNIVERSITY OF YAOUNDEI

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POST GRADUATE SCHOOL FOR  
SOCIAL AND EDUCATIVE  
SCIENCES

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DOCTORAL RESEARCH UNIT FOR  
SOCIAL SCIENCES

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**THE RISE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE PROBLEM OF FAKE  
NEWS:**

**A READING OF LEE MCINTYRE'S "POST-TRUTH"**

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To my lovely parents, Mrs. JANE-FRANCIS Bonglisi and Mr. EMMANUAL Ngawir (of blessed memory). My Grandmother EMMA Tomla Nsabinla and All Lovers of Truth.

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## ABSTRACT

The human being's intellect is restless until it finds tranquility in the truth. This is because man by nature desires to know and to know is always to know the truth. Thus, his very nature abhors that which is untrue, although he may himself attempt deceiving others. That is why man right from antiquity has always been asking questions, aimed at getting answers, that are true. And down the centuries any attempt to falsify knowledge has been met with criticism and contempt, especially when one did that with the intention to deceive, making it fake news. This falsification of truth as expressed itself in different forms and in this modern and digital age with the advancement of technology, it expresses itself through social media platforms or online or internet services. This brings us to the issue of the day "The Rise of Social Media and the Problem of Fake News: A Reading of Lee McIntyre's *Post-Truth*." which aims at deepening our understanding on the thought of Lee McIntyre, of how social media rose to the lamplight with the advent of advance technologies and human creativity, to help globalize the world, that is: in real-life communication without geographical barriers, social connectivity, networking, entertainment, online education and many others for the benefit of man and the society at large. Despite these advantages, opportunist have taken advantage of this global reaching nature social media to spread falsehood (fake news), which McIntyre defines as, not news that is false but news that is intentionally false, that is it must be done on purpose. Not just that, the social media platforms usage of algorithms, design the user to see feeds related to previous searches, also contributes in aiding fake news. Why produce fake news? Why are people inclined to fake news? Is the of concept truth based on the knowledge of truth or is it independent of the knowledge truth? Are the things we see and know to be real on social media, in light of advanced deepfake real? And with the decline in vetting and editing, how are we supposed to know anymore which stories are reliable? With the presentation of traditionally vetted, fact-checked stories right alongside lies and propaganda, how can on tell what is true anymore? The main problem of this study is, how can we use social media rightly so as to put an end to the problem of fake news on social media in the contemporary post-truth society? Thus we aimed at understand social media and must importantly to create an awareness on people of the reality of falsehood (fake news) in the society, by means of social media platforms, and the various ways and channels used to spread them, the purpose for fake news and why and how we can know them, so as not to be deceived, in so doing we search for the truth, thus destroying fake news and putting truth in its original position. The analytic and deductive methods, alongside the inductive method and lastly the epistemological, phenomenological, hermeneutical methods were used to achieve this research work. The significance of this work is that it creates an awareness fake news and its negative consequences and helps to guide one navigate the digital world so as not to be its victim. It serves as a guide for social media users, social media platform organizations and policy makers to bring out the right laws that respect and promote progress. Thus, McIntyre's idea of the reasonable use of social media for the common good and to uphold truth is indispensable this post-truth era.

**Keywords:** Truth, Post-Truth, Social Media, Fake News, Post-Truth Era.

## RÉSUMÉ

L'intellect de l'être humain est inquiet jusqu'à ce qu'il trouve la tranquillité dans la vérité. C'est parce que l'homme désire par nature savoir et connaître c'est toujours connaître la vérité. Ainsi, sa nature même abhorre ce qui est faux, bien qu'il puisse lui-même essayer de tromper les autres. C'est pourquoi l'homme depuis l'antiquité a toujours posé des questions, visant à obtenir des réponses, qui sont vraies. Et au cours des siècles, toute tentative de falsification de connaissances a été accueillie par des critiques et du mépris, surtout lorsque l'on le faisait avec l'intention de tromper, d'en faire de fausses nouvelles. Cette falsification de la vérité s'exprime sous différentes formes et dans cette ère moderne et numérique avec les progrès de la technologie, elle s'exprime à travers les plateformes de médias sociaux ou les services en ligne ou Internet. Cela nous amène à la question du jour « L'essor des médias sociaux et le problème des fausses nouvelles : une lecture de la *post-vérité* de Lee McIntyre ». qui vise à approfondir notre compréhension de la pensée de Lee McIntyre, de la façon dont les médias sociaux ont été mis à la lumière des lampes avec l'avènement des technologies de pointe et de la créativité humaine, pour aider à globaliser le monde, c'est-à-dire : dans la communication réelle sans barrières géographiques, la connectivité sociale, le réseautage, le divertissement, l'éducation en ligne et bien d'autres au profit de l'homme et de la société en général. Malgré ces avantages, les opportunistes ont profité de cette portée mondiale des médias sociaux pour répandre des mensonges (fake news), que McIntyre définit comme, non pas des nouvelles fausses mais des nouvelles intentionnellement fausses, c'est-à-dire que cela doit être fait exprès. De plus, l'utilisation d'algorithmes par les plateformes de médias sociaux, qui permet à l'utilisateur de voir les flux liés aux recherches précédentes, contribue également à aider les fausses nouvelles. Pourquoi produire des fake news? Pourquoi les gens sont-ils enclins aux fausses nouvelles ? Le concept de vérité est-il basé sur la connaissance de la vérité ou est-il indépendant de la vérité de la connaissance ? Les choses que nous voyons et savons être réelles sur les médias sociaux, à la lumière du deepfake avancé, sont-elles réelles ? Et avec le déclin de la vérification et de l'édition, comment sommes-nous censés savoir quelles histoires sont fiables ? Avec la présentation d'histoires traditionnellement vérifiées et vérifiées, ainsi que des mensonges et de la propagande, comment peut-on encore dire ce qui est vrai ? Le principal problème de cette étude est de savoir comment utiliser correctement les médias sociaux afin de mettre fin au problème des fausses nouvelles sur les médias sociaux dans la société contemporaine de post-vérité. Ainsi, nous avons cherché à comprendre les médias sociaux et devons surtout sensibiliser les gens à la réalité du mensonge (fake news) dans la société, au moyen des plateformes de médias sociaux, et des différents moyens et canaux utilisés pour les diffuser, le but des fake news et pourquoi et comment nous pouvons les connaître, afin de ne pas être trompés. Ce faisant, nous recherchons la vérité, détruisant ainsi les fausses nouvelles et remettant la vérité à sa place d'origine. Les méthodes analytiques et déductives, ainsi que la méthode inductive et enfin les méthodes épistémologiques, phénoménologiques, herméneutiques ont été utilisées pour réaliser ce travail de recherche. L'importance de ce travail est qu'il crée une prise de conscience des fausses nouvelles et de leurs conséquences négatives et aide à guider dans le monde numérique pour ne pas en être victime. Il sert de guide aux utilisateurs des médias sociaux, aux organisations des plateformes de médias sociaux et aux décideurs politiques pour faire ressortir les bonnes lois qui respectent et favorisent le progrès. Ainsi, l'idée de McIntyre de l'utilisation raisonnable des médias sociaux pour le bien commun et pour défendre la vérité est indispensable en cette ère de post-vérité.

**Mots-clés :** Vérité, Post-vérité, Médias sociaux, Fake News, Ère Post-vérité.

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## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The notion of truth and falsehood (fake news or misinformation) has kept philosophers in great turmoil for decades and came to be thought central to Philosophy, and the nature of verification itself highlighted. Beginning from ancient times till this post-truth era with the rise of social media, we have had some philosophers like Socrates and Plato who criticized the Sophists for leading people away from the truth by calling up memorized passages and having the memory activated instead of reason. Also, Aristotle, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, Wittgenstein, Bertrand Russell, Nietzsche, Edmund Husserl, Hannah Arendt, Foucault, Ken Wilber, Immanuel Kant, Lee McIntyre and many others discussed on the notion of truth and falsehood.

The immense preoccupation with Epistemology took hold with Plato and has never diminished since then. In Logic, Epistemology, Theology, Metaphysics, and Ethics, the topic truth ‘has continued to absorb almost limitless energies.’<sup>1</sup> No other concept seems to puzzle and yet draw thinkers so powerfully. From the genesis of human speculation about the world and through the Anthropomorphic era to our golden age, the question about truth has loomed large. Every known philosopher had to grapple with it. The discussion about truth becomes a caricature if not complemented by the corresponding principle of conscience. This conscience needs to be a correct and certain one. Such a conscience is a guarantor and an expression of human freedom, and contributes to a sound morality formed by reality itself, by community, by God, and his revelation, by one’s own subjective perceptions and decisions,<sup>2</sup> known as conscience training.

Generally, the human being’s intellect is restless until it finds tranquility in the truth. This is because man by nature desires to know and to know is always to know the truth. Thus, his very nature abhors that which is untrue, although he may himself attempt deceiving others. St. Augustine in this regard says: ‘I have met many who wanted to deceive but none who wanted to be deceived.’<sup>3</sup> This is merely because man knows that he has a right to that which is true, and until his intellect recognizes the tranquilizing drug, truth, he remains in the sweltering pot of unrest, suspicion, or milling about in the cobweb of doubt, confusion, and worst of all ignorance. It is imperatively obligatory that no one’s intelligence be insulted by being fed with

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<sup>1</sup> S. BOK, *Lying, Moral Choice in Public and Private Life*, Quartet Books, New York 1980, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> J. RATZINGER, *On Conscience*, Ignatius Press, California 2007, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> AUGUSTINE, *The Confessions*, X, 23, p. 33.

falsehood instead of truth, under the assurance of truth.<sup>4</sup> This is nothing less than that which the liar does. By the subjection of another's intelligence to lies, for his own advantage, the liar orchestrates the degradation of the personality of his victim and in the event is himself degraded.<sup>5</sup> No morally upright person would advocate lying as a *modus vivendi* for in so doing the fundamentals of social life and humanity itself are eroded. Immanuel Kant is very clear on this when he states: "lying is the throwing away and, as it were, the obliteration of one's dignity as a human being ... in lying, he renounces his personality and as a liar, he manifests himself as a mere deceptive appearance of a man, not as a true man."<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, Thomas Aquinas seems to be conformed to the dictum of Aristotle that "every kind of falsehood is evil and must be avoided"<sup>7</sup> although he qualifies it by an addition of circumstances as an indispensable factor which renders the act of truth telling either virtuous or vicious. Truth telling, while being a duty and a virtuous act must never be dissociated from the circumstances outlined by Thomas as aforesaid, else this act may be vicious. It must be admitted that the trivialization of the truth can have greater import on individuals than expected. Lies in times of crisis can expand into vast practices where the harm to be averted is less obvious and the crisis less immediate. Furthermore, white lies can shade into equally vast practices, with immense cumulative costs, and lies to protect individuals and to cover up their secrets can be told for increasingly dubious purposes to the detriment of all.<sup>8</sup> Thus the over use of both the jocose and officious lies enumerated by Thomas above could become detrimental to society.

From what we have said of truth and falsehood, we can say that, the concept of social media and fake news for a modern man, contained in knowledge, has kept academicians worried in this post-truth era. What is fake news for a modern man? Is it what he thinks or is it independent of his thought or thinking? Man has succeeded to be thinking that the nature of truth is because he thinks of truth. The history of ideas has recorded a series of arguments by different philosophers like Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Rene Descartes, Whitehead, Heidegger, John Locke, Immanuel Kant, Joseph Ratzinger, Wittgenstein and many others, concerning the nature of truth and falsehood. This is a philosophical issue that has troubled and continues to trouble philosophers and lovers of truth for centuries. However, one of the philosophers who

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<sup>4</sup> M. GONSALVES, *Fagothey's Right and Reason, Ethics in Theory and Practice*, Merrill Publishing Company, London 1985.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> J. ELLINGTON, *The Metaphysical Principles of Virtue*, Bobbs-Merill, Indianapolis 1964, p. 91.

<sup>7</sup> ARISTOTLE, *Ethics IV, 7*, 1127a5.

<sup>8</sup> Cfr., S. BOK, *Lying, Moral Choice in Public and Private Life*, Quartet Books, New York 1980, p. 166.

has advanced a more compelling solution in our understanding to this problem is Lee McIntyre.

Lee McIntyre is a distinguished philosopher and prolific author whose scholarly work spans the realms of philosophy of science, ethics, and social epistemology, also, is a research fellow at the Center for Philosophy and History of Science at Boston University and an Instructor in Ethics at Harvard Extension School. He holds a Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Michigan and has held teaching positions at several esteemed institutions including Harvard Extension School and Boston University. McIntyre's contributions to public understanding of science and skepticism are reflected in his numerous books, articles, YouTube Videos, where he critically examines the intersection of truth, social media, science, politics, and culture. His thought-provoking insights bridge academic scholarship with broad public concerns, making complex ideas accessible and relevant to contemporary societal issues. Notable works such as "*Dark Ages: The Case for a Science of Human Behavior*" and "Respecting Truth: Willful Ignorance in the Internet Age" highlight his commitment to defending rational discourse and combating misinformation in his book, "*On Disinformation: How to Fight for Truth and Protect Democracy*," themes that are also central to his book "Post-Truth."

In his chapter five of *Post-Truth*, "The Rise of Social Media and the Problem of Fake News" (pp. 89-122), Lee McIntyre clarifies the relation between fake news and post-truth, and how it leads to confusion and doubt. According to Lee McIntyre, Fake News is not merely news that is false, it is news that is intentionally false. In order to create fake news one has to do it on purpose with the goal of trying to get someone believe what is not true. He expands on the phenomenon of the decline of traditional media by describing new trends in the media landscape. The rise of social media like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter has overruled newspapers, causing the lines between news and opinions to be blurred. Social media algorithms allow people to see and click on "news" stories that they want to hear, regardless of their accuracy, as opposed to some of the factual content from mainstream media that may have been less palatable. Within this newly enforced framework of news-silos and information bubbles, the phenomenon of fake news could gain the strength it has today. Most importantly, McIntyre then traces the history of fake news all the way to the invention of the printing press, showing that the *ethos* of investigative fact-based journalism in the United States only came into its own by the early 20th century. Without editorial control, there is no way to identify reliable sources, therefore, society can be easily manipulated. This is

essentially propaganda, as fake news intends to build an allegiance. However, McIntyre states that there are two ways to fight back against fake news: recognize systematic problems and make a bid for more critical thinking.

Our research motivation came from the fact that; looking at how social media platforms have advanced and has become the source of news, information and communication in the World, Africa and Cameroon in particular gives us the incentive for an evaluation as to what it offers to individuals and the society at large. This is because it has affected the way we reason, gradually eroding the traditional physical communication and the so much fake news, makes many people to be stereotype and convinced in the wrong information gotten. Everyone wants to be the first to report breaking news, to the extent that instead of helping those who are in need, at the moment, especially in cases of accidents, we are focused on posting, sometimes even with wrong and misleading captions, and hypocritical emotions of concern, while not lifting a hand to help in anyway. This irresponsible use of social media makes the modern man an alien to man and thus not being helpful to the needs of the individual and the society in. Furthermore, as McIntyre says, “without knowing that they were doing so, people could feed their desire for confirmation bias directly, without bothering to patronize traditional sources,”<sup>9</sup> that is to say no one wants to spend money on buying newspapers that has editorial line, but wants to get it cheap from the social media, and mostly from the sites that align with their mentality. How can social media contribute to the development of the self and the society in which we find ourselves? What are the favorable conditions under which social media can help in the development of human potentialities? In what ways can we reshape the social media and solve the problem of fake news? McIntyre thus offers the way out to responsible social media usage and the ways to solve the problem of fake news.

The objective or aim of this study is to take back truth from the post-truth thinkers in reiterating the true nature of truth. It is a write up meant to counter the attack on the backbone of truth in news by social media thinkers in our contemporary society, especially in the internet as Thomas Jefferson once said “don’t believe everything you read on the internet.”<sup>10</sup> It is also aimed at stressing the foundational pillars of philosophy which is truth, a science of reality as such. The value of truth in news in a post-truth era. The study seeks to revive truth and facts from the gigantic social media and mainstream media of post-truth tradition of

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<sup>9</sup> L. McIntyre, *Post- Truth*, The MIT Press Essential Knowledge Series, London, 2018, p. 93.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, p. 81.

philosophy. To remind philosophers and thinkers, that truth is very important and essential in our world and lives today and any attempt to devalue truth will in return devalue or destroy philosophy. And lastly, this study seeks to present a blend between the classical culture of Philosophy of truth in news and the present modern culture of Philosophy of truth, to help us to distinguish between taking fake news for real or truth and taking real truth for fake news, as well as to explore the role of social media platform providers in reducing the spread of fake news in the society. The nature of paradigm shifts in philosophical thinking across history from ancient times till date. A link between the classical thought pattern and the contemporary thought pattern which is previewed to help us understand our present status quo and provide solutions to the issues of our times. We will as such advocate for a good way of using social media for individual and societal advancement and the possibility of stopping fake news at all cost and to appeal on all to seek the truth.

The significance of this research is first and foremost based on the awareness it creates about the dangers of fake news, and spurring everyone to attempt to verify information gotten from social media by ourselves, by being skeptical. This will help man navigate in the digital world with a critical mindset, holding objective truth and not limiting them to sites that they may agree with. Our study will help in the implementation a good manner of using social media that can be used by everyone for creative problem solving and critical thinking, when getting and sharing information on social media. This fosters the growth of autonomous, competent and responsible citizens. Also, this research work is of great importance because it outlines importance of social media, as well as the reasons for fake news purpose and how it can be noticed and fought, so as to build a good online community and truth-seeking generation for the good of the individual and the society.

The reflection of our work is tied to the field of epistemology and logic, notwithstanding we have traces of ethical and political philosophy. More precisely we focus on what constitutes a good social media that supports the growth and development of individual capabilities and potentials. As such, our scope is limited to the rise and necessity of social media in the digital world, that focuses more on global communication and information and how to stop falsehood on social media. Therefore, in order to accomplish our task, some domains of epistemology and logic will be left out, and different domains of philosophy in general will be used.

The birth of concepts such as post-truth, post-trust, epistemology, post-modernism, post-modern, transhumanism, alternative facts, social constructionism and many others have directly confronted the core of philosophy which is knowledge itself. These new concepts seek to prove that truth is built on conventions truths. They want to destroy truth, facts and thinking by proposing false, alternatives facts, representations, imaginary concepts of the very foundations on which truth is built. They propose new foundations or opinions for themselves and reject their original foundations or truths, they do this by sharing falsehood to the people. The conception of truth in social media in our present society has been subjectified, and as such McIntyre calls for verification by ourselves by using skepticism. Truth is viewed from various perspectives. Science has devalued the truth, and with the advent of deep fake apps which are used to create fake news with the intention to misinform man. Philosophy has experienced a paradigm shift by which truth is considered to be less important in philosophical thinking in social media, as it was in the time of the Sophists who spread false philosophies. In our contemporary society we continue to reflect and contemplate on this issue of the existence and reality of social media and the proliferation of fake news, and basically, on the concept of the rise of social media and the problem of fake news in the philosophy of Lee McIntyre in the post-truth society. The problems we shall tackle in this study are, is the concept truth based on the knowledge of truth or is it independent of the knowledge truth? Are there things we see and know to be real on social media, in light of advanced deepfake real? And with the decline in vetting and editing, how are we supposed to know anymore which stories are reliable? With the presentation of traditionally vetted, fact-checked stories right alongside lies and propaganda, how can on tell what is true anymore? With all these questions, how then can we use social media rightly so as to put an end to the problem of fake news on social media in the contemporary post-truth society?

In this research work, we will be definitively focused on responding to the aforementioned problems. We shall use the analytic and deductive methods; which will be helpful in the critical analysis of some areas of necessity in the work and the drawing of general conclusions from particular facts respectively. The inductive method shall be used in sections of the work that demands conclusions drawn from general facts. Also, we shall use the epistemological, phenomenological and hermeneutical methods, for the content reflection, while bracketing our preconceived ideas to examine the concepts the way they are and lastly follow a good means of interpretation.

This work will be divided into three parts of two chapters each. Part one shall consist of chapter one and two and shall focus on social media and the question of selecting information. In chapter one, our main focus shall be on the enhancement of information sources and the possibility of controlling them. In an attempt to do so, we are focused from a general way on identifying and expounding on the influence exerted by social media in different sectors of life, be it in the society, economy and in education, while looking at the possibility of controlling the use of social media. Chapter two shall focus on the enhancement of social media due to the growth of human intelligence. Our focus shall be on the ideologies that characterize the basis of McIntyre's idea of social media due to human intelligence. We shall as such be pre-occupied with answering the question; what lead to the rise of social media, how has it evolved and how it can promote democracy?

The second part of our work will cover chapter three and four and will focus on towards anarchism and fake on social media. Chapter three shall focus on difficulties in controlling the sources of information on social media. Chapter four shall focus on the question of casting on social media.

Part three of work shall consists of chapter five and six and shall be dedicated to show social media as an improvement of globalization of the world. In chapter five, we shall be looking at social media as the fastest means of acquiring knowledge or information. Chapter six on its part shall focus on the rise of cyber-control and the ways to tackle fake on social media. We shall then proceed with a general conclusion and end with select bibliography.



## PART ONE

### SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE QUESTION OF SELECTING INFORMATION

The advent of computerization and technology since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the world has seen a lot of advancement and improvement in the circulation of information around the globe. Today we have various social media platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Telegram, X, Instagram, and TikTok, that have solved the problem of the slow circulation of information as characterized the period before the industrial revolution. Many countries today round the globe have over 1.8 billion people who have access to these social media platforms, and as a result, information has become too easy to access through these social media platforms.

Most of the identifiable and positive impacts social media has had on humans include, easy access to information, easy search for a particular information, less stress in making notes or research by graduates, easy analysis of information, processing of information, storing of data, contributing more to the advancement of information, online classes and educational access, online meetings and conferences, sharing of information, just to name a few. The above point definitely reveals that the advantages brought to us by the advent of social media is a blessing. One cannot but say that social media has made life easy for humans in the accessibility of information.

However, despite these blessings one will equally notice that the blessings of social media came with problems that need to be addressed. One of the biggest challenges with social media is the problem of selecting information. With so much information available on social media, it can be challenging to determine what is accurate and what is not. This is especially true when it comes to academic research and citations.<sup>11</sup> Also, due to the vast body of data release through this social media platform, there has been a lot of repetition, fallacies committed, invalid and false information which has reduced the very quality of information and rendered it questionable and open to critical reflection. Information becomes more quantitative than qualitative, meaningless than meaningful and doubtful than trust-worthy. One would ask what is the cause of this problem and what measures can be put in place to remedy the situation? The chapter one of part one of this work will bring to the lamp light the enhancement of information and the possibility of controlling it and the chapter two will shed light on the enhancement of social media due to the growth of human intelligence.

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<sup>11</sup> J. SMITH, "Enhancing Information Sources and the Possibility of Controlling," in Dimoly Learning App. Retrieved from <https://www.dimoly.com/enhancing-information-sources-and-the-possibility-of-controlling/>

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **ENHANCEMENT OF INFORMATION SOURCES AND THE POSSIBILITY OF CONTROLLING**

In this chapter, our work is focused on identifying and expounding on the influence exerted by social media in different sectors of life, be it in the society, economy and in education, while looking at the possibility of controlling the use of social media. To achieve this, this chapter shall be subdivided into three main points, first the influence on social media on society, the justification of the problem of fake news and the accessibility of social media in relation to educational systems.

#### **1.1. THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE SOCIETY**

With the rise of information technology, whereby private or public information and knowledge has been digitalized on social media platforms for easy access. This information is gotten online or offline, which are opened for comments, that could lead to a dialogue or derogative words. That is to say that, they have a positive and a negative influence on the persons, who belong to a society on how to behave in the society.

##### **1.1.1. POSITIVE INFLUENCES OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

In what we refer to as the 'Information age' or 'Digital age' our technological advancements in the area of ICT have help overcome limitations of time and space in communication, information sharing and networking. This not only affects how we connect with other people and how we do business, but also how we interact in the political sphere. That is, it is meant to transform the human world, for easy communication and accessibility to information that promotes growth in the society at large. The influences of social media in the society are in different categorist.

###### ***1.1.1.1. Religious Influence***

The advent of social media has positively influenced the religious sector with many benefits as, documentaries and different religious myths and mysteries are explained, different religious bodies meet, religious leaders could hold conferences and online meetings with their members, the circulation of information from religious main stations to their substations becomes easy. Taking account of the Christian religion, most pastors, priests, prophets, apostles and evangelists through Facebook and YouTube can have online live services and

other conference meetings to circulate information and edify their members spiritually. Some other benefits include; communication with members in real time. In the past, churches had to wait until their next service or Bible study to share any announcements or updates. But, with social media, you can communicate with your members as soon as something happens. This is perfect for disseminating time-sensitive information or promoting last-minute church events and also use to converse with church members outside of church hours.

Also, social media is used to reach out to inactive members. It's not uncommon for church members to become inactive over time due to life circumstances such as work, school, or family commitments. But, with social media platforms, the church reaches out to these individuals and invite them back to church. By staying in touch with inactive members, you can help them feel like they're still a part of the church community and makes it easier for them to return when they have more time.

Furthermore, reaching out to potential old and new members. The more platforms the church has, the more likely they are to reach individuals who don't attend services. People consume content differently, for example, some might prefer reading blogs over watching YouTube videos. So, having a presence on different social media platforms, as many churches do has increased their chances of reaching potential new members who would otherwise not have heard of the church or mosque.

Moreover, it engages with members outside of service. Churches can use social media to start conversations, answer questions, spread timely news, and give advice – without members having to step foot into the church. While nothing can replace in-person connection, online interaction can build relationships and foster a sense of community among members who live far away or have trouble attending service regularly.

#### ***1.1.1.2. Social and Economic Influence***

For many years the media evolution – from print to radio, to TV and now social media, has continued to influence mass opinions and perceptions. However, the emergence of social media sites such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube has taken this very concept a step further, some argue that social media now shapes the opinions, perception and actions of the majority whose opinions were previously shaped by information from traditional and mainstream media houses in respect to commercials and businesses.

Today's web and the new media underpin the ability to create instant communication sensations. From Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and a collection of blogs, a news statement can advance from zero to 20 million viewers overnight. The viral nature of this highly social user-driven environment enables complete strangers to connect over common beliefs, desires or interests and together create winners and losers.

Nowadays, social media has become a must-have tool in the business world to spread information, place advertisements, and reach the largest audience. As an example, today, we can see that people rarely read newspapers to get information or barely look into newspapers for advertisements. Instead, all the ads today are posted online and can be seen through social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Tiktok, which are the most often seen ads by respondents. In addition, social media today can also influence consumers' purchase decisions through reviews and advertising.<sup>12</sup>

### ***1.1.1.3. Political Influence***

The rise of social media has positively influenced the political sector of our society and is considered as a tool for facilitating the social contract between citizens and the state. For example, government can potentially use social media platforms to solicit feedback on its policies and political actions, while citizens can use the same platforms to express vent their anger, show frustration or express acceptance of whatever actions government is undertaking. Online tools and social media can open new avenues for participation. Social media platforms can help citizens explore new ways of cooperation and collective action; they can provide opportunities for mobilizing people around a common cause, or for sensitizing the public on specific issues. Social media is open, giving every individual a means to directly reach out to the public and promote their political agendas.

Furthermore, a communication platform such as social media is persuasive, and often works to change or influence opinions when it comes to political views because of the abundance of ideas, thoughts, and opinions circulating through the social media platform. It is found that news use leads to political persuasion, therefore the more that people use social media platforms for news sources, the more their political opinions will be affected. Despite that, people are expressing less trust in their government and others due to media use- therefore social media directly affects trust in media use. It is proven that while reading

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<sup>12</sup> P. KANTOR, *The Influence of Social Media on Society*, <https://gli.id/article-detail/the-influence-of-social-media-on-society>, (Consulted on June 20, 2023).

newspapers there is an increase in social trust where on the contrary watching the news on television weakened trust in others and news sources. Social media, or more specifically news media- plays an important role in democratic societies because they allow for participation among citizens. Therefore, when it comes to healthy democratic networks, it is crucial that that news remains true so it doesn't affect citizens' levels of trust. A certain amount of trust is necessary for a healthy and well-functioning democratic system.

### **1.1.2. NEGATIVE INFLUENCES**

#### ***1.1.2.1. Social Disorder and Riots***

The rise of social media, has influenced the lives of societies, as it can be used to manipulate public opinion and trigger social unrest. In other words, the rapid spread of misinformation and fake news can incite panic and unrest, as it has caused the removal of persons from jobs, wars among nations, and internal conflicts, for example, for example, the 2021 Capitol riot in the United States, fueled by false narratives on social media platforms.<sup>13</sup>

#### ***1.1.2.2. Laziness***

Spending too much time on Social Media is causing people to become lazy, stressed, crazy and lack face to face communication. It has a lot of positive impact on society but negative as well. Its messing with people minds. People don 't know to act since social media has become popular. Social Media is their life.

Social media is making people lazy because people are so focused on their smartphones and other devices they don 't want to get up and do other things. People rather lay in bed all day on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and others. People could be sitting right next to each other and will prefer to text each other instead of talking. To this, Jacobsen says “I wonder how lazy it has made us in relationships and or in particular. our daily lives”<sup>14</sup> Before we got cell phones and these apps people used to meet up and go out, play outside, ride bikes. Kids are getting very lazy which is causing obesity and most adults barely go to work or do the things that are important. A lot of people aren't getting things done because they are interested in what 's happening on the media. It causes people not to think, they just get information and ideas of someone else.

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<sup>13</sup> S. FRENKEL, “the storming of Capitol Hill was organized on social media,” in *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/07/us/politics/capitol-mob-social-media.html>

<sup>14</sup> T. JACOBSEN, “*Is Social Networking Making Us All Lazy?*” Chicago Now, 12 Feb. 2012, 10:04, [www.chicagonow.com/when-you-put-it-that-way/2012/02/is-social-networking-making-us-all-lazy/](http://www.chicagonow.com/when-you-put-it-that-way/2012/02/is-social-networking-making-us-all-lazy/), (Consulted on June 20, 2023).

### ***1.1.2.3. Immorality***

The basic essentiality of a civilized society, is to be a cultured, peaceful and educated society that each and every member stays away from social evils which are contrary, to moral values, so that, moral values should get the highest priority in the society. History is witness to the fact that when the people of a society lack moral values, different social evils start strengthening their roots there, ultimately leading to that society's downfall.

When a society starts misusing the blessings of nature, its people indulge in various indecent activities, resulting in the destruction of that society. We are people of the modern era where science and technology have transformed and revolutionized every facet of our lives and made our existence comfortable. Nature has given us countless blessings through science and technology, which have eased our adversities and difficulties. There are both positive as well as negative aspects associated with the usage of these scientific blessings.

When we positively use these blessings, they make our life comfortable and cosy and open up new vistas of progress and prosperity for us. Still, when the same blessings are utilized wrongly, they turn into malediction and foster many social evils in society. Then these social evils ultimately lead a society towards destruction. The idea of morality and modesty slowly fades away from such societies, and its people, particularly youngsters, who get involved in various social evils. Ironically, people of such societies feel proud of their social evils as they become customs and rituals of societies with changed nomenclatures. The people involved in such evil activities are honoured, encouraged and awarded, as such they are presumed and envisaged as role models in society. But, alas! Such societies remain inebriated with their excessive inclination towards social evils, which keeps them nescient and incognizant of their immediate downfall. When a civilization responds to challenges, it grows. When it fails to respond to a challenge, it enters its period of decline. Toynbee argued that "Civilizations die from suicide, not by murder,"<sup>15</sup> that is to say that the society kills itself by not addressing the immorality brought by social media. It is pertinent to mention here that the progress and prosperity of a society depends on its youth, who are the precious assets of a society and can lead it to different heights of development. But when the youth of society get engulfed in wrong, immoral and immodest activities, then destruction and devastation are the ultimate fate of such societies. Nowadays, social media has gained much fame and has

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<sup>15</sup> A. TOYNBEE, *A Study of History*, Vol. 1-12, Oxford University Press, New York 1956, pp. 1934-1961.

become an inseparable part of our lives. Every individual in our society, irrespective of age, sex, gender or profession, is involved with social media.

People in many parts of the world remain updated about the current affairs of the world through social media. But when we look at our valley, we feel ashamed and disappointed. Instead of making social media a useful tool, our social media influencers are using it to disseminate immorality and immodesty, besides making fun of simple, innocent, mentally, and physically disabled people.

## **1.2. THE JUSTIFICATION OF PRODUCTION OF FAKE NEWS**

To take fake news for real or true news, is harmful for truth and evidence, and whoever is the creator of fake news stands against the transcendental principal which is Truth. This is no longer merely propaganda spread by inflammatory politicians; it is also made for financial benefit or personal enjoyment.<sup>16</sup> With the development of social media platforms people often create completely false information for reasons beyond satire. Further, there is a vicious cycle of this false information being abused by politicians and agitators. Fake news creators are indiscriminately producing fake news while considering the behavioral and psychological characteristics of today's news consumers.<sup>17</sup> For instance, the sleeper effect refers to a phenomenon in which the persuasion effect increases over time, even though the pedigree of information shows low reliability.<sup>18</sup> In other words, after a long period of time, memories of the pedigree become poor and only the content tends to be remembered regardless of the reliability of the pedigree.<sup>19</sup> Through this process, less reliable information becomes more persuasive over time. Fake news creators have effectively created and propagated fake news by targeting the public's preference for news consumption through peripheral processing routes.<sup>20</sup> To this effect, what is fake news?

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<sup>16</sup> T. D. KAHNEMAN, "Prospect theory: An analysis of decision under risk", in *Handbook of the fundamentals of financial decision making: Part I*. World Scientific, Canada 2013, pp. 99–127.

<sup>17</sup> T. HANITZSCH and K. WAHL-JORGENSEN, "Journalism studies: Developments, challenges, and future directions," in *The Handbook of Journalism Studies*, United Kingdom 2020, pp. 3–20.

<sup>18</sup> C. I. HOVLAND and W. WEISS, "The influence of source credibility on communication effectiveness.," in *Public Opinion Quarterly*, vol. 15, no. 4, 1951, pp. 635–650.

<sup>19</sup> B. HORNE and S. ADALI, "This just in: Fake news packs a lot in title, uses simpler, repetitive content in text body, more similar to satire than real news", in *Proc. of the 11th International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media*, USA 2017. pp. 759–766.

<sup>20</sup> B. OSATUYI and J. A. HUGHES, "A tale of two internet news platforms-real vs. fake: An elaboration likelihood model perspective," in *Proc. of the 51st Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences*, USA 2018. pp. 3986–3994.

Fake news according to McIntyre, is not merely news that is false, it is news that is intentionally and deliberately false, often with the purpose of misleading the public.<sup>21</sup> In other to create fake news one has to do it on purpose with the goal of trying to get someone believe what is not true. In this sense, it is important to understand that, one may present something that is not true, it does not mean that it is fake, this is because they occasionally make mistakes or publish information's that are false. This is not the same thing as creating or sharing fake news. So, in other for a news story to be fake the creator must have the intention to mislead, they will have to be bias or have an agender that the journalist equivalence of lying or make practice. This can also be known as falsehood, which is not a lie until we say it is untrue, since writing a news story is not force until the author does so to mislead. To this effect, fake news is defined as, deliberately spreading false or misleading information with the intent to deceive or manipulate people. It can have serious consequences, such as spreading misinformation, undermining trust in media, and causing social and political unrest.

There is no justification for the production of fake news, that means, no reason or purpose can justify its production. For fake news is misleading, is unethical and causes harm to individuals, organizations, and society as a whole. It is important to always fact-check information before sharing it and to rely on reputable sources for news and information. However, it is important to understand some reasons why fake news may be produced, even though they are not justifiable. To do this we will closely examine the internal and external factors affecting fake news creation, as well as the fact that there is no justification for fake news creation.

### **1.2.1. INTERNAL FACTORS: FAKE NEWS CREATION PURPOSES**

It is important for individuals to critically evaluate the information they come across, verify sources, and rely on reputable news outlets to combat the spread of fake news; whose purpose is to confuse the people. Here, we will closely examine the internal factors affecting fake news creation.

#### ***1.2.1.1. Influence and Manipulation***

Fake news has been created and propagated by some individuals or groups for personal gain, such as to increase website traffic, to promote a particular agenda or to create confusion and chaos. This fake news, relies on the trust we have for our models, news

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<sup>21</sup> L. MCINTYRE, *Post- Truth*, The MIT Press Essential Knowledge Series, London, 2018, p. 112.



agencies, platforms and even our friends and family to get us to set aside our doubts and avoid scrutinizing too closely.<sup>22</sup> For the most part, we are friends on social media with people we like and trust or follow as our role models. As such, we are more inclined to trust and believe any information shared on it. Simply put, fake news uses the trust that we have in our models, influencers, friends and family to encourage us to trust and believe it.

Also, fake news is produced by individuals or groups to influence public opinion for political purposes, manipulate elections that positively affect the parties or candidates they support or undermine those who are not on the same side, or advance their own agendas. This is unethical and can undermine the democratic process. Fake news with this political purpose has shown to negatively influence people and society. For instance, A study conducted by Jonathan Albright at Elon University, examining the 2016 US presidential election, showed strong evidence that partially automated accounts were flooding Twitter hashtags, such as Podesta emails.<sup>23</sup> Russia created a fake Facebook account that caused many political disputes and enhanced polarization, affecting the 2016 US Presidential Election.<sup>24</sup> As polarization has intensified, there has also been a trend in the US that “unfriending” people who have different political tendencies.<sup>25</sup> This has led the public to decide whether to trust the news or not regardless of its factuality and has resulted in worsening in-group biases. During the Brexit campaign in the UK,<sup>26</sup> many selective news articles were exposed on Facebook, and social bots and trolls were also confirmed as being involved in creating public opinions.

### ***1.2.1.2. Clickbait and Profit***

The desire for a better life and good living has always been man’s desire, to achieve these wants or needs, one can either do it the right way or the wrong way. One who does not want to follow the right process can embark on desperate measures to achieve acceptance, profit and financial benefit, for they are strong motivations for many fake news creators.<sup>27</sup> The fake news creators embark on creating clickbaits (the practice of writing sensationalized or

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<sup>22</sup> J. BAILEY, *4 Reasons why Fake News is so Compelling*, Turnitin, United Kingdom, Thursday 27 August 2020, <https://www.turnitin.com/blog/4-reasons-why-fake-news-is-so-compelling>.

<sup>23</sup> S. MORGAN, ‘Fake news, disinformation, manipulation and online tactics to undermine democracy’, in *Journal of Cyber Policy*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2018, pp. 39-43.

<sup>24</sup> H. BERGHEL, “Oh, what a tangled web: Russian hacking, fake news, and the 2016 US presidential election,” in *Computer*, vol. 50, 2017, pp. 87–91. 10.1109/MC.2017.3571054

<sup>25</sup> M. LINDER “Block. Mute. Unfriend. Tensions rise on Facebook after election results,” in *Chicago Tribune*. 2016, p. 9.

<sup>26</sup> D. VICARIO et al., “Mapping social dynamics on Facebook: The Brexit debate,” in *Social Networks*, UK 2017, p. 6-16.

<sup>27</sup> N. ROCHLIN, “Fake news: belief in post-truth,” in *Library Hi Tech*, vol. 35, no. 3, 2017, pp. 386–392.

misleading headlines in order to attract clicks on a piece of content) to attract likes that they could monetarize, that is why McIntyre said that “fake news evolved from profit-seeking clickbait to full-blown disinformation.”<sup>28</sup> Also, Wang Lucy *et al.*, demonstrated that most of the links shared or mentioned in social media have never even been clicked.<sup>29</sup> This implies that many people perceive and process information in only fragmentary way, such as via news headlines and the people sharing news, rather than considering the logical flow of news content.

Fake news can generate high traffic and add revenue for websites, since fake news websites usually reach the public through social media and make profits through posted advertisements. Some individuals or an individual may create sensational or false stories to attract clicks and generate income, without considering the negative impact it has on society. And this is because, the majority of fake websites are focused on earning advertising revenue by spreading fake news that would attract readers’ attention, rather than political goals or true information, that can benefit the society. For example, during the 2016 US Presidential Election in Macedonia, young people in their 10s and 20s used content from some extremely right-leaning blogs in the US to mass-produce fake news, earning huge advertising revenues.<sup>30</sup> This is also why fake news creators use provocative titles, such as clickbait headlines, to induce clicks and attempt to produce as many fake news articles as possible.

### ***1.2.1.3. Mischief and Pranks***

Living in the world where many are not well schooled on how to use social media for good or to pass accurate and true information has been the difficulty of our contemporary world. This is because many don’t take things to be serious, as a result they consider social media as a place where they can joke and prank people. Pranks are mischievous practical jokes played on unsuspecting victims. A classic phone prank involves a caller posing as someone else, usually in front of an audience of co-conspirators, to dupe their targets into doing or saying something silly, revealing or both. This is why some people create fake news as a form of entertainment or to play pranks on others. While this may not have malicious intent, it can still spread misinformation and cause confusion among families and the society at large, with devastating consequences.

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<sup>28</sup> L. MCINTYRE, *Post-Truth*, The MIT Press Essential Knowledge Series, London, 2018, p. 22.

<sup>29</sup> L. WANG *et al.*, “Measuring click and share dynamics on social media: a reproducible and validated approach,” in *Proc of the 10th International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media (ICWSM)*, 2016, p. 108–113.

<sup>30</sup> E. J. KIRBY, “The city getting rich from fake news,” in *BBC News*, 2016, p. 5.

#### ***1.2.1.4. Fear and Panic Reduction***

Man has often thought of fear as one of the greatest enemies to happiness. He is tempted to think that the world would be a far happier place if there were no such thing as fear. Fear is considered, therefore, as an enemy and never as a friend. According to Aquinas, “fear is a reaction to future evil.”<sup>31</sup> This is because it is an appetitive reaction which includes pursuit and avoidance.<sup>32</sup> As a result anxiety, we fear future misfortune,<sup>33</sup> and it is on this anxiety that fake news creators exploit, because when conflicts, wars and epidemics become more common around the world, rumors of absurd and false tips spread rapidly in social media, especially in the medical field. Since there is a lack of verified information, people feel great anxious and afraid and easily believe such tips, regardless of whether they are true. This is the case with the coming of COVID-19, where all types of false information’s were spreading on the social media concerning the virus, as to the origin, the patient one, the number of deaths and different types of cures and their producers. This spread of fake news was due to the absence of verified information, and this has become more common regarding health-related social issues. Causing people especially those with disorders affecting cognition to believe unverified news and as such live-in fear, panic or disbelief of the actual situation.

#### **1.2.2. EXTERNAL FACTORS: FAKE NEWS CREATION FACILITATORS**

We have looked at the purposes for the creation of fake news and all these purposes must have a means at which they create and spread the fake news agenda. At this juncture we will be looking at the external factors that facilitate the creation and propagation of fake news.

##### ***1.2.2.1. Unification of News***

For there to be news, something must have taken place, still in the process or will still take place. For news to be considered holistically, it must have a process, that is creation, with the means of distribution and for the purpose of consumption. This news, irrespective of the truth, can now be found on social media platforms, as the world has evolved from traditional news consumption. As such, the public’s perception of news and the major media of news consumption has gradually changed and they no longer passively consume news exclusively through traditional news organizations with specific formats of verified sources nor view this news simply as a medium for information acquisition. This began with the advent of citizen

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<sup>31</sup> T. AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 41, a. 2, ad. 3.

<sup>32</sup> ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VI, 2. II39a21.

<sup>33</sup> T. AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 41. a. 3.

journalism by implementing journalistic behavior based on citizen participation<sup>34</sup> and became commonplace with the emergence of social media with the advancement of technology, that is to say everyone through the use of social media, becomes a self-proclaimed journalist. As a result, the public prefers interactive media, in which new information could be acquired, their opinions can be offered, and they can discuss the news with other news consumers. This environment has motivated the public to make content about their beliefs and deliver the content to many people as news.<sup>35</sup> For example, a police crackdown video posted in social media quickly spread around the world that influenced protesters and civic movements, such as the ‘black lives matter’ agender, then, it was reported later by the mainstream medias.<sup>36</sup>

The boundaries between professional journalists and amateurs, as well as between news consumers and creators, are disappearing. This has led to a potential increase in deceptive communications, making news consumers suspicious and misinterpreted the reality. Online platforms such as TikTok, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Facebook that allow users to freely produce and distribute content have been growing significantly. As a result, fake news content can be used to attract secondary income, which contributes to accelerating fake news creation and propagation.<sup>37</sup> This is because, we live in an environment or a world where people can only consume news that suits their preferences and personal cognitive biases has made it much easier for fake news creators to achieve their specific purposes of producing and propagating their personal, group or political agender.

#### ***1.2.2.2. The Misuse of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Technology***

The world with the advent of technoscience is fact evolving in technological advancement. This is because technoscience has as its aim to help man improve its way of living through technology. It has evolved to what we call artificial intelligence, which is the simulation of human intelligence processes by machines, especially computer systems. The development of AI technology has made it easier to develop and utilize tools for creating fake news, since it is through the use of AI application systems used by social media platforms like Tiktok, Telegram, X, Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, Netflix that fake news is circulated.

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<sup>34</sup> S. BOWMAN and C. WILLIS, “How audiences are shaping the future of news and information,” in *We Media*. 2003, pp. 1–66.

<sup>35</sup> K. BOGOAN, et al., “A systematic review on fake news research through the lens of news creation and consumption: Research efforts, challenges, and future directions”, in *Plus One*, vol. 16, no. 12, 2021.

<sup>36</sup> N. BOGEL-BURROUGHS, 8 Minutes and 46 Seconds: How George Floyd Was Killed in Police Custody; 2020. Available from : <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/18/us/george-floyd-timing.html>.

<sup>37</sup> K. BOGOAN, et al., “A systematic review on fake news research through the lens of news creation and consumption: Research efforts, challenges, and future directions”, in *Plus One*, vol. 16, no. 12, 2021.

### ***1.2.2.3. Social Bots***

A bot is a shortened form of robot, it is an automated program that analyzes the environment and decides which actions to take depending on the situation. We have different types of bots: web crawler, chat bots, virtual computer platers and social bots. A social bot is an automatic program that simulates human behavior on social networks. Social bots have inhabited social media platforms,<sup>38</sup> taking part in discussions on Twitter or Facebook and act like human users. They spread content on a particular topic on social media, which could be false – mostly for the purpose of influencing people’s opinions. These bots are used secretly in social networks. They are both repetitive and reactive: They like, comment, retweet, and try to provoke or involve others in conversations and discussions. They fake a human identity so that users react naturally to them. To this, Shao et al.<sup>39</sup> analyzed the pattern of fake news spread and confirmed that social bots play a significant role in fake news propagation and social bot-based automated accounts were largely affected by the initial stage of spreading fake news. In general, it is uneasy for the public to determine whether such accounts are people or bots. In addition, social bots are not illegal tools and many companies legally purchase them as a part of marketing, thus it is not easy to curb the use of social bots systematically.

### ***1.2.2.4. Trolls***

Fake news publishes and shares news articles containing deliberate misinformation or propaganda often shaped to purvey certain political aims. Such fake news articles and images are then shared on social media by internet users called trolls whose goal is to manipulate public discourse and opinion.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, the term “trolls” refers to people who deliberately cause conflict or division by uploading inflammatory, provocative content or unrelated posts to online communities. They work with the aim of stimulating people’s feelings or beliefs and hindering mature discussions. The increasing use of fake news and trolls is the most troubling development for the authors of the 2017 report, which found them being used in 30 of the 65 countries studied.<sup>41</sup> For example, the Russian troll army has been

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<sup>38</sup> Y. BOSHMAF et al., “Design and analysis of a social botnet,” in *Computer Networks*, 2013, vol. 57, no. 2, pp. 556–578.

<sup>39</sup> C. SHAO et al., “The spread of low-credibility content by social bots,” in *Nature Communications*, 2018, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 1–9.

<sup>40</sup> O. TANGEN, *Fake news and trolls lead to fall in global internet freedom*, 11/14/2017, <https://www.dw.com/en/report-fake-news-and-trolls-lead-to-fall-in-global-internet-freedom/a-41373282>.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

active in social media to advance its political agenda and cause social turmoil in the US.<sup>42</sup> Zannettou et al.<sup>43</sup> confirmed how effectively the Russian troll army has been spreading fake news URLs on Twitter and its significant impact on making other Twitter users believe misleading information. Also, the Philipian President Rodrigo Duterte's use of a "keyboard army" to attack detractors prior to him being elected president in 2016. Members were paid up to ten dollars a day to troll social media sites and to promote Duterte's campaign. Similar tactics are also being used in Vietnam where they are called "public opinion shapers."<sup>44</sup>

#### *1.2.2.5. Deepfake*

As technology has evolved and continues to improve each day, it is now possible to manipulate or reproduce content in 2D or even 3D, by using Deepfake technology, through the AI technology called deep learning. Deepfake is a technology which makes images, videos or audios, basically to create fake events<sup>45</sup> or combining various images on an original video and generating a different video, has raised another major social concern that had not been imagined before. Deepfakes can be entertaining and helpful, be used to: provoke religious tension; harass, intimidate and demean people; change stock prices, influence voters. Due to the popularity of image or video sharing on social media, such media types have become the dominant form of news consumption, and the Deepfake technology itself is becoming more advanced and applied to images and videos in a variety of domains and as such it is creating a zero-trust society. They have been used to create all types of fakes, putting words in a politician's mouth, making someone dance like a pro. For example, Eliot Higgins, the founder of an open source investigation agency, who wanting to visualize Trump's indictment, paid AI deepfakers to visualize Trump's arrest, and these images were circulating among millions of viewers, but to Eliot, he called it just mocking about. Also, there was a video clip of former US President Barack Obama criticizing Donald Trump, which was manipulated by the US online media company BuzzFeed to highlight the influence and danger of Deepfake, causing substantial social confusion.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> O. CARROLL, *St Petersburg 'troll farm' had 90 dedicated staff working to influence US election campaign*, 2017.

<sup>43</sup> S. ZANNETTOU et al., "Who let the trolls out? towards understanding state-sponsored trolls," in *Proc. of the 10th ACM Conference on Web Science (WebSci)*; 2019. pp. 353–362.

<sup>44</sup> O. TANGEN, *Fake news and trolls lead to fall in global internet freedom*, 11/14/2017, <https://www.dw.com/en/report-fake-news-and-trolls-lead-to-fall-in-global-internet-freedom/a-41373282>.

<sup>45</sup> P. SHARMA, "Donald Trump "Arrested": Here Are Some Images," in #Vantage on Firstpost, March 23, 2023, [https://youtu.be/SQiJlmJca\\_E](https://youtu.be/SQiJlmJca_E)

<sup>46</sup> J. VINCENT, "Watch Jordan Peele use AI to make Barack Obama deliver a PSA about fake news" in *The Verge*. 2018, 17.

### 1.3. THE EDUCATION SYSTEM AND THE ACCESSIBILITY TO SOCIAL MEDIA

The word ‘education’ is very much in use, as it is considered as one of the most crucial aspects in our contemporary world. Despite this increasing desire for education, hardly anyone ponders as to what education really is, this is because the growth of most societies today is measured in relation to its level of educational advancements. As a result, scant thought is paid to the meaning of education; even less attention is paid to its aims and objectives. For most people, the main aim of education seems to be to qualify for certain types of jobs. Notwithstanding, education plays a dominant role as an effective instrument for large scale achievement and revolution in all spheres of the society. Again, with rise of social media, which in itself is a blessing, some people still do not engage in genuine studies or use it for educational purposes, while neglecting the so much that social media has to offer, when accessed properly. The education system and accessibility to social media are two distinct but interconnected topics. Let's discuss them individually:

#### 1.3.1. EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Etymologically, education comes from the Latin verb *educare* which means to rear or nourish and *educere* which means to bring out.<sup>47</sup> This shows that education here means to lead out internal hidden talent of a child or person. According the great ancient Greek philosopher Plato, education develops in the body and soul of the pupil and all the beauty and all the perfection he is capable of. Leke Tambo defines education as the sum total of a person’s learning experiences during her lifetime.<sup>48</sup> According to Maria Montessori, education is a natural process spontaneously carried out by the human individual, and is acquired not by listening to words but by experiences upon the environment”.<sup>49</sup> According to Newman, education is the acquisition of knowledge and the cultivation of virtue.<sup>50</sup> Newman recognizes that whenever and wherever people are gathered, they are sure to learn from one another even if there is no one to teach them; the conversation of all is a series of lectures to each other through which they gain new ideas.<sup>51</sup> This recognition the contemporary world finds grounds in university. Furthermore, Bernard Fonlon defines education as “the physical, the aesthetic,

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<sup>47</sup> J. REDDEN, *A Catholic Philosophy of Education*, Bruce Publication Ltd, Milwaukee 1949, p. 22.

<sup>48</sup> L. TAMBO, *Principles and Methods of Teaching: Application in Cameroon schools*, Anucam Publishers, Cameroon, 2003, p. 3.

<sup>49</sup> M. MONTESSORI, *Education for a new world*, Adyar, Madras, India, Kalakshetra publications, 1946, p. 3.

<sup>50</sup> J. H. NEWMAN, *The Idea of a University*, Image books, New York 1953, pp. 145-146.

<sup>51</sup> P. LEFEBVRE and C. MASON, *John Henry Newman in his Time*, Family Publications, Oxford 2007, p. 136.

the intellectual and the moral upbringing of man,”<sup>52</sup> and on further reflection, he says that education is based on and is justified by the fact that man has a body, senses internal and external, a mind and a will to drill and to train up from infant stage to maturity. And since a full human life is impossible, if any of these is missing, an ideal education therefore consists in the complete and balanced development of all of them together.<sup>53</sup>

Man is at the center of education, and in formal education we use books. Books, are as a record of truth, an authority of appeal and an instrument of teaching in the hands of the teacher.<sup>54</sup> Like any system of education, which sets objectives for itself and derives methods of attaining them. Since man is a subject of education and because the chief and most fundamental function of education, if diligently and thoroughly pursued, is an integral development of the individual,<sup>55</sup> it follows that a sound education must be based on the correct understanding of man, which cannot in this era of digital information separate itself from the use of social media, though the use of books and the library is still indisputable, this is because the education system or what is taught has been digitalized in one way or the other through social media.

Furthermore, emphasis was given to physical education, which had been neglected in the Middle Ages. According to the psychologist Hadfield, physical education has a therapeutic function in maintaining mental health. Far from this, much is said too about the effects of physical education with respect to knowing the child. There are even radical opinions which hold that the teacher knows the child only superficially in class.<sup>56</sup> There is a great deal which children unintentionally pick up from play or physical education; physical properties are being noticed, practical skills of balance and co-ordination are developed and social co-operations as well. This physical education, can be looked at in two ways: the personal interactions of teachers and students which is formal education and parents and students as informal education.

The formal and informal education can be looked at from the personal interactions between teachers and students and parents and students. Formal education, which mostly insist in the use of textbooks and library, which according to Newman may end at the level of

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<sup>52</sup> B. FONLON, *Education Through Literature*, A paper prepared by Dr. Bernard Fonlon, Professor of Literature in the University of Yaounde for the Ninth seminar on the teaching of English. Yaounde, 16-26 August 1977.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> J. H. NEWMAN, *University Sketches*, Browne and Nolan Ltd., Dublin 1856, p. 9.

<sup>55</sup> J. DEWEY, *Philosophy of Education*, Adam and Co., New York 1946, p. 1.

<sup>56</sup> R. DEARDEN, *The Philosophy of Primary Education*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1968, p. 103.



notional assent,<sup>57</sup> because with such a method, people are more concerned with the recitation of what they have studied in books rather than internalizing it. His stress is on the formation of hearts and minds rather than a mere advancement in knowledge. B. Fonlon agrees with this when he considers a genuine intellectual as one who after a diligent and assiduous search for the truth is able to internalize all he has learned, and use it to rise above his passions, search for the truth, be abreast with the events of his days yet able to see beyond them.<sup>58</sup> We can say that real formal education, requires a personal relationship, a relationship between the master and his disciple or teacher and his students that characterizes genuine formative activity. And the teacher must be the authority, since according to Hannah Arendt, the lack of authority has destroyed the fundamental relation between teacher and student, and the mutual trust necessary for safeguarding the social position of the teacher.<sup>59</sup>

Furthermore, we have informal education, which according to Aristotle is based on the role played by the parents for the education and upbringing of their children for by natural law, parents have the right to bring up and educate their children.<sup>60</sup> This, of course, has to do much with informal education carried out by parents in their various families especially during the early periods of a child's growth for "the family is the first school of those social virtues which every society needs."<sup>61</sup> Taking a fleeting look at our contemporary society, one will come to perceive that the whole aspect about informal education is gradually losing its place. This accounts for the massive ills in our society such as prostitution, drug abuse, abortion and others, this all happens because many young people are not well educated and formed with good moral values during their early stages of growth. Also, children must be allowed to play with other children and to be well disciplined when they do what is wrong and must be well educated and guided in what they see and hear for these go a long way to imprint in them a deep impression that may affect their morality as they grow up.<sup>62</sup> Parents have the right to protect their children from exposure to daily brutality, violence and pornography on the television.<sup>63</sup> In our society today, most men abandon this responsibility only to the women but the duty of rearing and bringing up a child belongs to both parents.<sup>64</sup> Well educated

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<sup>57</sup> J. H. NEWMAN, *An Essay in the aid of a Grammar of Assent*, Longmans, Green, and Co. 39 Paternoster Row, London New York And Bombay, 1903, p. 25.

<sup>58</sup> B. FOLON, *The Genuine Intellectual*, p. 116.

<sup>59</sup> J. DAHLBECK and P. LILJA, "The concept of authority and the Swedish Educational Crisis", in *Philosophy of education yearbook*, Ed. Natasha Levinson, 2016, p. 1.

<sup>60</sup> A. FAGOTHEY, *Right and Reason*, C.V. Mosby Company, Saint Louis, London, 1976, p. 359.

<sup>61</sup> J. PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (22 November 1981), n. 36.

<sup>62</sup> PLATO, *The Republic*, D. LEE (tr.), p. 72.

<sup>63</sup> H. GINOTT, *Between Parents and Child*, Staples Press Ltd, Great Britain, 1969, pp. 89-90.

<sup>64</sup> A. FAGOTHEY, *Right and Reason*, C.V. Mosby Company, Saint Louis, London, 1976, p. 308.

parents, realize fully the role they have to play in the upbringing of their children for the good of the community.

### ***1.3.1.1. Aims of Education***

Knowledge is an essential component for man and it is passed through education, which has among its aims, character building. Mahatma Gandhi believes that character formation is one of the foremost aims of education. To the question what is your goal in education? He promptly replies:

Character building. I would try to develop courage, strength, virtue, the ability to forget oneself in working towards great aims. This is more important than literacy. Academic learning is only a means to this greater end.<sup>65</sup>

Character to Gandhi is more important than anything else and the development of the child's character should take precedence over his acquiring of knowledge and storing of facts.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, purity of personal life is an indispensable condition for building a sound education. Students have to search within themselves and look after their personal character; for what is education without character?<sup>67</sup> Therefore, Gandhi sees schools and colleges as factories for making of character. Parents send their boys and girls to them so that they may become good men and women.

Also, perfection of our nature, education should draw out and stimulate the spiritual, intellectual and physical faculties of children, this all-round development should be done through a craft, so as to educate the head, heart and hand. Education of the Heart consists in the refinement of our emotions and impulses, awakening of our deepest feelings of love, sympathy, fellowship, and aesthetic sense through drawing, music, and handy craft. Without this, human life degenerates to the level of animal existence. Education of the head consists of helping the child to know how to read and write and to know the why and whereof of every process of what it does. With regard to the education of the hand, he maintains that the hand of the child should be trained to draw geometrical figures before he learns how to write, in other words, good handwriting should be taught from the beginning of the child's education. In addition, the child should learn to produce at the start of its education what it learns.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> C. WASHBURNE, *Remakers of Mankind*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad 1932, pp. 104-105.

<sup>66</sup> M. GANDHI, *Autobiography*, p. 413.

<sup>67</sup> S. PATEL, *The Educational Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 34.

<sup>68</sup> M. GANDHI, *Satyagrahashramno*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad 1922, pp. 81-84.

Furthermore, education aims at social responsibility and liberation. For education to aid the future citizen play his role in society adequately, he should cultivate in school the character appropriate to a social being, trained for his life and have an opportunity to practice civic virtues at school. According to Ahidjo, the aim of education is not to instruct people for the pleasure of instructing them; it is to enable them participate with increased output capacity in the development of their country.<sup>69</sup> The school must be an organized society engaged in some fruitful creative activity.<sup>70</sup> This is aimed to liberate, since according to ancient aphorism, 'education is that which liberates,' is as old today as it was before. Education here does not mean mere spiritual knowledge nor does liberation signify after death. Knowledge includes all training that is useful for service of mankind and liberation means freedom from all manner of servitude even in the present life<sup>71</sup> Thus, the knowledge gained in educational institutes must, at least teach the way and lead to such freedom.<sup>72</sup>

Also, the freedom we receive from education should lead to the highest aim of education, which according to Gandhi is knowledge of God and self-realization.<sup>73</sup> All other aims are subordinate to this supreme aim of life and education. The ultimate and by far the most important aim of education is therefore the knowledge of God leading to self-realization, the merging of the finite being with the infinite. The education system plays a vital role in shaping individuals and preparing them for the future. However, it is not without its challenges. Here are some key aspects to consider:

#### ***1.3.1.2. Some Considerations***

It is important to ensure that education is of high quality and accessible to all. Disparities in access to quality education can perpetuate social inequalities. Efforts should be made to bridge these gaps and provide equal opportunities for learning.

The curriculum should be designed to foster critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving, and other essential skills, rather than solely focusing on rote memorization. Incorporating diverse perspectives and interdisciplinary approaches can enhance the educational experience. The immortalization of the reach cultures and traditions be it in agriculture, arts, and others of years past in the education system has an important role in the

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<sup>69</sup> A. AHIDJO, *Anthologie de Discours*, (1979-1979, vol 2, Les Nouvelle Editions Africaines 1980, p. 761.

<sup>70</sup> S. PATEL, *The Educational Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 45.

<sup>71</sup> M. GANDHI, *Harijan*, p. 46.

<sup>72</sup> M. GANDHI, *Young India*, p. 30.

<sup>73</sup> M. GANDHI, *Autobiography*, p. 413.

education state of school students at the state, district, or community levels. Modern research has demonstrated that indigenous education is neither inferior nor backward as they were derived from centuries of accurate observation and experiments.

Recognizing and accommodating the diverse learning needs of students is crucial. Tailoring teaching methods and providing support for students with different abilities and learning styles can contribute to a more inclusive education system.

Education should not be limited to formal schooling. Promoting lifelong learning encourages individuals to continue acquiring knowledge and skills throughout their lives, adapting to a rapidly changing world. Traditional African education, which is passed from one generation to another, is usually by word of mouth and cultural rituals, and has to some extent been the basis for sustainable development in agriculture, food preparation, health care, conservation and other sectors for many centuries. This mode of education has by and large been used as a way of acquiring lifelong learning.

### **1.3.2. ACCESSIBILITY TO SOCIAL MEDIA**

With the rise of social media and the digitalization of information and school disciplines on social media platforms we cannot separated the education system and its accessibility to social media. Social media has become an integral part of modern society, for designing and developing social media content and posts that provide a smooth, inclusive experience for everyone, providing platforms for communication, information sharing, community building. and keep in touch with friends. For people with disability, it's a great way to interact and communicate with people, and it provides a community of support through its 'groups'. Facebook, WhatsApp, TikTok, Instagram, Zoom have come a long way in being accessible social media platforms. However, accessibility to social media can have both positive and negative implications.

#### ***1.3.2.1. Positive Implication of the Accessibility of Social Media***

Access to information is very important in the world and what Newman says about the university as a place where people converge for the acquisition of knowledge,<sup>74</sup> can be said same for social media. Social media provides a wealth of information, enabling individuals to access news, educational resources, and diverse perspectives.<sup>75</sup> This is due to the advancement

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<sup>74</sup> J. H. Newman, *University Sketches*, p. 6.

<sup>75</sup> V. BHARWANI, *The Impact of Social Media on Students*, April 16th, 2023.

of online content and social media has greatly expanded the variety of sources of information. It can facilitate learning and awareness on various topics. This is because social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn have made it easier for students to access information on various topics and connect with other learners and educators from around the world. They can follow experts in their field of study, join groups and communities, and participate in discussions. The accessibility to social media information has had a significant impact on the education system.

Furthermore, social media has made it easier for students to collaborate with their peers on group projects and assignments and also allowed people from different parts of the world to connect, collaborate, and share ideas. It can foster meaningful dialogue, cultural exchange, and the formation of online communities. The primary responsibility of teachers is to create a unique school climate by setting a pace for the students in words and deeds and with the use of social media, the students connect and communicate with the teachers and their classmate even from home. This is because social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Khan Academy, Coursera and Zoom have made it possible for students to join online classes and communities where they can share ideas, ask questions, and get feedback in real-time from others and make it possible for students to learn online as these platforms offer free or low-cost courses on various topics, making education more accessible to people around the world.

#### ***1.3.2.2. Negative Implication of the Accessibility of Social Media***

The excessive use of social media can impact attention, mental health, and well-being. It is important to promote healthy digital habits, encourage digital literacy, and teach individuals to critically evaluate online content. Also, accessibility to social media varies across regions and socioeconomic backgrounds. Efforts should be made to bridge the digital divide, ensuring that everyone has equal access to the benefits of social media, with this bridge all students should get access to online courses and benefits.

Furthermore, social media can be a distraction for students, especially when they spend too much time on it and when they are supposed to be studying. It can be challenging to stay focused when notifications keep popping up on their phones or computers. This can lead to a decline in academic performance and a lack of focus on their studies. Additionally, social media can also be a source of misinformation, which can be harmful to students who rely on it for their studies. Also, social media can expose students to cyberbullying and online

harassment, which can have negative effects on their mental health and well-being. Students who are victims of cyberbullying may experience anxiety, depression, and social isolation, which can affect their academic performance.

In a nutshell, we have shown the influence of social media in the society, from the positive and negative sides and approving it as a blessing to the society if properly used. Also, we went on to give reasons and what is used to produce fake news but with an understanding that no reason or purpose can justify the production of fake news, for it is unethical and does not build the society. Lastly, in looking at education system and the accessibility to social media, we can say that the education system should strive for quality, equity, and inclusivity, while social media should be approached with mindfulness and awareness of its potential impact. By addressing these aspects, we can work towards a more accessible and beneficial education system, as well as a healthier relationship with social media. So therefore, social media should be encouraged and used to assist man and in cases of misuse it should be controlled by the individual, parents and the government to keep it on check.

## CHAPTER TWO

### ENHANCEMENT OF SOCIAL MEDIA DUE TO THE GROWTH OF HUMAN INTELLIGENCE

This chapter focuses on an attempt to understand how the growth of human intelligence has enhanced the growth of social media. We shall look at the ideologies that characterize the basis of McIntyre's idea of social media due to human intelligence. As humans have become more sophisticated in their understanding and manipulation of information, so too have the platforms that facilitate this exchange evolved. Initially, social media was primarily a means for basic social interaction, a simple exchange of photos and messages. However, as human intelligence is growing, particularly in fields like, data science, psychology, and network theory, so too the complexity of social media platforms due to the growth in technology. This evolution is partly due to the increased intellectual demands of its users who seek more meaningful and personalized interactions. As human intelligence grows, it pushes social media towards becoming not just tools of communication, but also sophisticated, interactive mirrors of human culture and cognition, redefining the interaction between technology and human intellect. To understand this, we will discuss birth of social media by McIntyre, as well as, social media as a college used to participate in public life. We will also discuss the idea of enhancing democracy through social Media.

#### 2.1. THE BIRTH OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE END OF HUMAN DISTANCING

Social media has transformed the landscape of human interaction in profound ways. Its origins and rapid evolution provide a fascinating study of technological influence on social structures and individual behaviors. One person who talks in this regard is Lee McIntyre, who in his book *Post-Truth*, argues that the rise of social media platforms has fundamentally changed the way people interact and communicate with each other. Social media has enabled individuals to connect with others from around the world, breaking down physical and geographical barriers. This has led to a sense of interconnectedness and a blurring of boundaries between individuals, creating a more globalized and interconnected society. McIntyre also acknowledges the potential downsides of social media, such as the spread of misinformation, the erosion of privacy, and the amplification of echo chambers. Despite these challenges, he believes that social media has the power to bring people together, facilitate communication and collaboration, and promote understanding and empathy among individuals. Therefore, McIntyre sees the birth of social media as a transformative force that

has brought people closer together, despite the challenges it presents. The end of distancing between people, facilitated by social media, has the potential to create a more connected and inclusive society. This we will better understand by exploring the genesis of social media and the evolution of the platforms and their role in bridging physical and psychological distances among people.

### **2.1.1. THE GENESIS OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

The concept of social media is rooted in the basic human need to connect and communicate. Its Genesis can be traced back to the early development of computer-mediated communication systems and the evolution of the internet. Social media as we know it today has its roots in various technologies and platforms that have enabled individuals to connect, share information, and collaborate online.

The early roots of social media can be traced back to the innovative technologies and communication systems that laid the foundation for the interconnected and interactive platforms we use today. Understanding the historical origins of social media helps to contextualize its development and evolution over time. One of the key milestones in the foundation of social media was the creation of bulletin board systems (BBS) in the 1970s, which allowed users to post messages, share files, and engage in discussions with others in a centralized online environment.<sup>76</sup> This laid the groundwork for the concept of interacting and communicating with others through computer networks. Also, the emergence of online communities and discussion forums in the 1980s and 1990s further contributed to the development of social media by providing platforms for individuals to connect and exchange ideas on specific topics of interest.<sup>77</sup> Platforms like Usenet and AOL's chat rooms facilitated real-time conversations and the formation of virtual communities, setting the stage for the interactive and participatory nature of social media. Further developed with the advent of blogging platforms in the early 2000s marked a significant shift in the foundation of social media, as individuals were empowered to create and share content online in a more personalized and accessible manner.<sup>78</sup> Platforms like Blogger and WordPress allowed users to publish their thoughts, opinions, and experiences, fostering a culture of self-expression and user-generated content. Also, the launch of social networking sites like SixDegrees,

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<sup>76</sup> E. BRADNER. "A brief history of social media," in *Computerworld*, vol. 45, no. 16, 2011, pp. 22-25.

<sup>77</sup> J. PREECE and D. J. MALONEY-KRICHMAR, "Online communities: focusing on sociability and usability," in *ACM Computing Surveys*, vol. 31, no. 3, 1999, pp. 182-186.

<sup>78</sup> R. BLOOD, "Weblogs: A history and perspective," in *Weblogs: A history and perspective*, 2000, pp. 1-15.



Friendster, and MySpace in the late 1990s and early 2000s revolutionized the way people connect and communicate online, paving the way for the widespread adoption of social media.<sup>79</sup> These platforms fostered the development of virtual social networks and facilitated communication and interaction among users, paving the way for the social media ecosystems we engage with today, by enabling users to build social networks and interact with others in a virtual space. To all these, the foundation of social media is rooted in the evolution of computer-mediated communication systems, online communities, blogging platforms, and social networking sites that have shaped the way individuals interact and share information in the digital age. And this found more expression in the development of other social media platforms.

Today, social media platforms like Facebook, X (Twitter), Telegram, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, and LinkedIn continue to shape the foundation of social media by providing users with a space to connect, share, and engage with others on a global scale. These platforms leverage advanced technologies, algorithms, and user interfaces to facilitate communication, collaboration, and community-building in ways that were previously unimaginable. As seen in the cases of: The launch of Facebook in 2004, which marked a significant turning point in the evolution of social media platforms, with its emphasis on real-name identities, privacy controls, and news feed features.<sup>80</sup> Facebook quickly became the dominant social networking site, attracting millions of users worldwide and redefining the way people connect and communicate online. Also, X formally known as Twitter, launched in 2006, introduced the concept of microblogging and real-time communication, allowing users to share short updates, links, and multimedia content with their followers.<sup>81</sup> X's minimalist design and simplicity of use contributed to its rapid growth and popularity as a platform for news, information, and public discourse. Furthermore, Instagram, launched in 2010, revolutionized social media platforms by focusing on visual content, photography, and storytelling through images and videos.<sup>82</sup> Instagram's user-friendly interface, filters, and engagement features made it a go-to platform for creative expression and visual communication, attracting a diverse user base of influencers, brands, and everyday users. All

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<sup>79</sup> D. M. BOYD and N. B. ELLISON, "Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship," in *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2007, pp. 210-230.

<sup>80</sup> A. HARMON, "Meet Mark Zuckerberg's mentor," in *The New York Times*, 2016, p. A1.

<sup>81</sup> I. A. GHANI et al. "Discovering important nodes through graph entropy: The case of Enron email database," in *The European Physical Journal B*, vol. 73, no. 4, 2010, pp. 605-611.

<sup>82</sup> D. SALESIN and V. BYCHKOVSKY. "Exposing digital forgeries in color filter array interpolated images," in *Proceedings of the 27th Annual Conference on Computer Graphics and Interactive Techniques*, 2000, pp. 211-220.

in all, the birth of social media platforms has reshaped the way people connect, communicate, and share content online, fostering a sense of community, creativity, and engagement in the digital realm. The evolution of social media platforms continues to influence the way we interact and engage with content, highlighting the power of technology in shaping human connections and experiences, and to an extent spreading misinformation, that traditional media handled.

The decline of traditional media and the rise of social media are interconnected phenomena that have reshaped the landscape of communication and information dissemination in the digital age. Before the advent of social media, traditional media, encompassing newspapers, television, radio, and magazines, have long served as the primary sources of news and entertainment for the public, as establishing and maintaining connections with others often required physical proximity or frequent communication through means such as letters, phone calls, or face-to-face interactions. However, with the advent of social media platforms, the dominance of traditional media has been challenged, leading to a shift in the way people consume and engage with content. As, with the rise of social media, distance is no longer a barrier to staying in touch with friends, family, or even strangers. Through a simple click, individuals can instantly connect with people from all over the world, share updates, photos, videos, and thoughts, and engage in conversations in real-time.

One of the key reasons for the decline of traditional media is the changing consumption habits of audiences, particularly among younger generations who are turning to digital platforms for news and entertainment.<sup>83</sup> With the rise of the internet and mobile technologies, individuals now have access to excess of online sources for information, enabling them to bypass traditional media outlets and consume content in a more personalized and interactive manner, and to McIntyre the proliferation of content on social media has blurred the lines between fact and fiction, challenging the credibility and authority of traditional media outlets.<sup>84</sup> Moreover, the traditional media industry has faced challenges in adapting to the digital age, including declining advertising revenues, competition from online platforms, and changing audience preferences.<sup>85</sup> The rise of social media has disrupted the traditional business models of media organizations, as advertising dollars increasingly shift towards digital platforms that offer targeted marketing, data analytics, and engagement

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<sup>83</sup> A. B. ALBARRAN, *The Social Media Industries*. Routledge, London 2013, pp. 45-68.

<sup>84</sup> L. MCINTYRE, *Post-Truth*, The MIT Press Essential Knowledge Series, London, 2018, pp. 63-87.

<sup>85</sup> R. G. PICARD, *Media Economics: Concepts and Issues*. Sage Publications, 2011, pp. 132-155.

metrics. Also, The rise of social media can be seen as a response to the limitations and biases of traditional media, offering a more decentralized, user-driven, and participatory model of communication.<sup>86</sup> Social media platforms empower individuals to create and share content, engage in conversations, and connect with others in ways that were not possible through traditional media channels. This shift towards user-generated content has democratized the production and dissemination of information, giving voice to marginalized communities and promoting diversity of perspectives. So, the decline of traditional media and the rise of social media are indication of broader shifts in technology, consumer behavior, and societal values. While traditional media continue to play a vital role in shaping public discourse and holding power to account, social media has emerged as a powerful tool for democratizing communication, fostering community engagement, and amplifying diverse voices in the digital age.

### **2.1.2. SOCIAL MEDIA'S IMPACT ON COMMUNICATION**

The concept of distance has been redefined in the virtual world of social media, as individuals can form relationships with people they have never met in person or interact with those who are geographically far away. This has led to the democratization of communication, enabling people to connect with a diverse range of individuals from different backgrounds, cultures, and beliefs. Social media has created a sense of closeness and interconnectedness among people, breaking down the barriers that once prevented meaningful interactions and relationships. According Lee McIntyre, social media in shaping public discourse, spreading misinformation, and influencing interpersonal connections. He argues that while social media has the potential to bring people together and facilitate communication, it also has the power to amplify divisions and erode trust in institutions.<sup>87</sup> Also, Social media has had a profound impact on communication by breaking down barriers in interpersonal interactions, enhancing connectivity between individuals in community engagement, and providing access to vast amounts of information in information dissemination.

One of the key ways in which social media has impacted communication is by breaking down geographical, temporal, and social barriers that once limited the ability of individuals to connect with one another.<sup>88</sup> Platforms like Facebook, X, TikTok, and Instagram

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<sup>86</sup> H. JENKINS, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. NYU Press, 2006, pp. 71-94.

<sup>87</sup> L. MCINTYRE, *Post- Truth*, The MIT Press Essential Knowledge Series, London, 2018, p. 94.

<sup>88</sup> D. M. BOYD and N. B. ELLISON, "Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship," in *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2007, pp. 210-230.

have created virtual spaces where people from different parts of the world can engage in conversations, share experiences, and build relationships without the constraints of physical proximity. To McIntyre social media platforms have enabled individuals to bridge gaps in distance and time, fostering connections and conversations that transcend traditional boundaries and reshaping interpersonal relationships and that social media can facilitate the dissemination of accurate information but also serves as a platform for spreading misinformation and fake news. Furthermore, by providing a space for diverse voices and perspectives to be heard, social media has opened up new avenues for dialogue and understanding among people from various backgrounds, thereby enhancing connectivity between individuals.

In addition to breaking down barriers, social media has enhanced connectivity between individuals by offering a platform for users to stay connected, share updates, and engage with one another in real-time.<sup>89</sup> The interactive nature of social media allows for instant communication, collaboration, and community-building, fostering a sense of belonging and interconnectedness among users. It has revolutionized the way individuals interact and communicate with one another, breaking down barriers that once existed. Social media platforms such as Facebook, X, and TikTok have made it easier for people to connect and communicate with others from around the world, regardless of geographical location, social status, or cultural background. Which according to McIntyre social media facilitated a sense of unity among people who may have otherwise been isolated or marginalized in society and allows individuals to share their thoughts, ideas, and opinions in real-time with a global audience, as individuals are able to engage in conversations and debates with others who they may have never had the opportunity to interact with in person. This form of communication has fostered a sense of interconnectedness and community amongst people, transcending traditional boundaries and divisions, paving the way for a more connected and inclusive society.

Furthermore, social media provides individuals with access to a wealth of information and resources that were previously unavailable or difficult to obtain.<sup>90</sup> As social media platforms have revolutionized the way people access information, with a vast amount of content available at the click of a button. This information can be gotten by social media's

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<sup>89</sup> A. M. KAPLAN and M. HAENLEIN. "Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media," in *Business Horizons*, vol. 53, no. 1, 2010, pp. 59-68.

<sup>90</sup> J. V. DIJCK and T. POELL, "Understanding social media logic," in *Media and Communication*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2013, pp. 2-14.

role in dissemination of news and updates through platforms like YouTube, Facebook, Phoenix, All-football and LinkedIn, users can stay informed about current events, industry trends, and professional opportunities, empowering them to expand their knowledge, network with others, and stay connected to the world around them. This widespread use of social media has made it a key tool for accessing information and staying connected with current events and breaking news. Also, social media algorithms can also personalize content based on user preferences and interests, making it easier for users to access information that is relevant to them.<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, social media allows users to access a wide range of educational and informative content, through platforms like YouTube, Zoom, Facebook and Instagram are popular for sharing tutorials, educational videos, and informative posts on a variety of topics.<sup>92</sup> This makes social media a valuable resource for learning and expanding one's knowledge on a wide range of subjects.

Overall, the impact of social media on communication extends beyond mere connectivity to include interpersonal interactions, share information, and build relationships. By breaking down barriers, enhancing connectivity, and providing access to information, social media has revolutionized the way individuals communicate and engage with the world around them, shaping the way we connect and collaborate in an increasingly interconnected and digital society.

### **2.1.3. CHANGING DYNAMICS OF RELATIONSHIP**

Social media has significantly altered the dynamics of relationships by providing new avenues for communication, connection, and intimacy. Platforms like Facebook, YouTube, X, TikTok, Likee, Instagram, and Snapchat have transformed the way individuals interact with one another, fostering both positive and negative impacts on relationships. According to the research conducted by Ellison, he highlights the role of social media in enhancing communication and maintaining relationships over time and distance,<sup>93</sup> as social media platforms allow individuals to stay connected with friends, family, and acquaintances, enabling them to share updates, photos, and messages in real-time. This continuous stream of communication can strengthen bonds and foster a sense of closeness among individuals. To

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<sup>91</sup> H. E. RAYAN et al., "Personalization without the cause: A study of information diversity in personalized systems", 2016, p. 17.

<sup>92</sup> L. LEI et al., "What Are We Doing on Social Media? A Social Media Uses and Gratifications Approach", 2018, p. 5.

<sup>93</sup> N. B. ELLISON, et al., "The benefits of Facebook "friends:" Social capital and college students' use of online social network sites" in *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 2007, pp. 1143-1168.

this, McIntyre emphasizes that digital communication tools shape the ways individuals interact and engage with one another, though creating new challenges for maintaining boundaries and intimacy in relationships. Also, the sharing of personal information and experiences online can impact individuals' sense of privacy and autonomy, affecting the dynamics of trust and connection in relationships. In other words, social media is changing the dynamics of relationships by reshaping communication patterns, influencing perceptions of self and others, and challenging traditional notions of intimacy and connection. While social media offers opportunities for maintaining relationships, building networks, and fostering community, it also presents risks and challenges that individuals must navigate to ensure healthy and fulfilling relationships in the digital age, since, social media influences personal connections, impacts the society and favours collaboration and networking.

Firstly, personal connections are greatly influenced by the changing dynamics of relationships caused by the rise of social media. The emergence of social media has significantly reduced the physical distance between people in their personal connections and plays a crucial role in maintaining and strengthening relationships, as well as in forming new connections, as platforms like LinkedIn and X provide opportunities for professional networking, while dating apps like Tinder, Cameroon Dating and Bumble enable users to connect with potential romantic partners.<sup>94</sup> These platforms help individuals expand their social circles and meet new people, thus influencing personal connections in a digital age. Also, it has provided a platform for individuals to connect with others from different parts of the world and share their thoughts, ideas, experiences, and emotions in real-time. Social media has made it easier for people to maintain long-distance relationships or even form new connections with others who share similar interests or backgrounds.

One of the most significant impacts of social media is its ability to connect individuals across physical distances. Platforms like Whatsapp, TikTok, Messenger, Facebook, Skype, Zoom, Likee and others, have become essential for professional and personal interactions, enabling real-time video communication across continents. This has been particularly crucial during events like the COVID-19 pandemic, with its lockdown and no travelling, where social distancing measures have necessitated the use of digital tools to maintain personal and professional relationships.<sup>95</sup> Furthermore, social media has played a role in reducing

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<sup>94</sup> C. L. TOMA, et al. "What makes you click? Mate preferences and matching outcomes in online dating," in *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 2018, pp. 429-437.

<sup>95</sup> B. K. WIEDERHOLD, Connecting Through Technology During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 Pandemic: Avoiding "Zoom Fatigue", in *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 2020, pp. 437-438.

psychological distancing, by sharing life moments. Platforms provide spaces for individuals to share their experiences, challenges, and triumphs. Support groups on Facebook (Beta Tinz) or hashtags on Twitter can unite strangers facing similar issues. This virtual support has been essential for mental health and fostering a sense of community among disparate groups.<sup>96</sup> Also, it reconnects an individual to old contacts and friends and there by facilitating individual communication.

Moreover, while social media can decrease feelings of isolation, it can also exacerbate them, creating a paradox where users feel connected online but isolated in real life.<sup>97</sup> It is in this regard the McIntyre argues in his book *"The End of Absence: Reclaiming What We've Lost in a World of Constant Connection,"* that while social media connects us with others on a superficial level, it often fails to provide meaningful connections that are essential for our well-being. Also, to McIntyre, constant connectivity through social media can lead to a sense of "continuous partial attention," where individuals are unable to focus on any one thing for an extended period due to constant distractions from their devices. This can result in shallow interactions and hinder deep conversations that foster genuine connections. And also, lead to mental health issues such as anxiety and depression as it creates unrealistic expectations about life through curated images and updates from others' lives. All in all, social media serves as a powerful influencer on personal connections, both in maintaining existing relationships and forming new ones. While it can enhance communication and foster connections, it is essential for users to be mindful of the potential negative effects and work towards striking a healthy balance in their online and offline interactions.

Secondly, social media has revolutionized the way people communicate and connect with one another, resulting in the erosion of physical distancing between individuals and the birth of a global interconnected community. One of the key aspects of social media's impact on community building is its ability to facilitate real-time communication and interaction between individuals regardless of geographical boundaries. As Lee McIntyre, highlights in his book "Post-Truth":

When it was created in 2004, Facebook was a social networking site that allowed users to connect with their existing friends and make new ones.

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<sup>96</sup> J. A. NASLUND, et al. "The future of mental health care: peer-to-peer support and social media" in *Epidemiology and psychiatric sciences*, 2016, pp. 113-122.

<sup>97</sup> J. M. TWENGE, and W. K. CAMPBELL, "Associations between screen time and lower psychological well-being among children and adolescents: Evidence from a population-based study," in *Preventive Medicine Reports*, 2018, pp. 271-283.

They could share their thoughts and participate in an online community on whatever topic they liked.<sup>98</sup>

Social media platform like Facebook which allow people to stay connected with existing friends, family, and even strangers from different parts of the world, creating virtual communities that transcend physical distances.

Furthermore, social media has played a significant role in fostering the creation of online communities centered around shared interests, beliefs, and identities. Platforms like Reddit and Instagram have enabled individuals to connect with like-minded individuals and form communities based on their hobbies, political views, or cultural backgrounds.<sup>99</sup> These online communities provide a sense of belonging and support for individuals who may feel isolated or marginalized in their offline lives, demonstrating the power of social media in building diverse and inclusive communities. However, it is important to acknowledge that social media's impact on community building is not without its challenges. The rise of echo chambers and filter bubbles on social media platforms has led to the polarization of communities and the spread of misinformation and divisive rhetoric.<sup>100</sup> All in all, social media has fundamentally changed the way people connect with one another and build communities, breaking down physical barriers and creating virtual spaces for interaction and collaboration. While social media has the potential to strengthen communities by fostering connections and facilitating communication, it also presents challenges that must be addressed to ensure the creation of inclusive and informed communities in the digital age.

Thirdly, social media has had a profound impact on collaboration and networking by providing individuals with powerful tools to connect, communicate, and collaborate with others in a digital space, especially in the domain of business and professions. Platforms like LinkedIn, WhatsApp, Upwork, Glassdoor, CareerBuilder, Monster, SimplyHired, Zoom, Facebook, X, and Slack have transformed the way people work together, share ideas, and build professional relationships. According to Kaplan and Haenlein, social media platforms have revolutionized collaboration by enabling individuals to connect and work together in real-time, regardless of physical location or organizational boundaries.<sup>101</sup> Platforms like Slack and Google Drive allow for seamless communication and file sharing, making it easier for

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<sup>98</sup> L. McIntyre, *Post- Truth*, The MIT Press Essential Knowledge Series, London, 2018, p.93.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.* p.104.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p.120.

<sup>101</sup> A. M. KAPLAN and M. HAENLEIN. "Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media." in *Business Horizons*, vol. 53, no. 1, 2010, p. 60.



teams to collaborate on projects and share information efficiently. In addition to enhancing collaboration, social media has also revolutionized networking by providing individuals with opportunities to connect with professionals, experts, and influencers in their field. Platforms like LinkedIn, Upwork, Glassdoor, CareerBuilder, Monster, SimplyHired have become powerful tools for personal branding, job searching, and industry networking, allowing individuals to showcase their skills, expertise, and experience to a global audience.<sup>102</sup> According to McIntyre social media has democratized networking, allowing individuals to build relationships, share resources, and collaborate on projects with a diverse range of individuals across the globe. Also, platforms like Twitter and Instagram have become valuable tools for connecting with influencers, thought leaders, and industry experts, facilitating meaningful interactions and knowledge-sharing among professionals. All in all, by leveraging social media platforms, individuals can build professional relationships, share ideas, and collaborate on projects in ways that were previously not possible, revolutionizing the dynamics of collaboration and networking in the digital age.

## **2.2. SOCIAL MEDIA AS A COLLEGE OF PARTICIPATING IN PUBLIC LIFE**

Social media has become an integral part of public life, as social media platforms have transformed the way individuals participate in public life, providing new avenues for engagement, activism, and expression. Platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram have empowered people to contribute to public discourse, share their perspectives, engage with others, share information, express their opinions and connect with a global audience in real-time. As noted by Boyd and Ellison, social media can be defined as "web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system."<sup>103</sup> This definition highlights the interconnected nature of social media, where users are able to create networks of relationships and engage in ongoing interactions with others to better participate in public life. In other words, social media plays a significant role in enabling individuals to participate in public life by providing platforms for social interaction, information sharing, and community engagement. Allowing individuals to voice their opinions, mobilize support, and participate in public debates on a wide range of issues, thereby shaping public opinion and discourse.

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<sup>102</sup> A. M. KAPLAN and M. HAENLEIN. "Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media." in *Business Horizons*, vol. 53, no. 1, 2010, p. 59.

<sup>103</sup> D. M. BOYD and N. B. ELLISON, "Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship," in *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2007, pp. 210-230.

One of the key aspects of social media is its role in shaping public discourse and facilitating communication among individuals from diverse backgrounds. Jenkins argue that social media platforms have the potential to "democratize media production and consumption, allow for diverse voices to be heard, and provide opportunities for public engagement and participation".<sup>104</sup> This democratization of media has enabled individuals to share their perspectives and opinions on various issues, contributing to a more inclusive and dynamic public sphere. Furthermore, social media has also been recognized as a valuable tool for mobilizing social movements and driving social change, as platforms like Instagram, X and Facebook have been instrumental in mobilizing support for political campaigns, organizing protests, and raising awareness about social justice issues.<sup>105</sup> To this, Castells describes how social media platforms have been used to organize protests, raise awareness about social issues, and coordinate collective action among individuals with shared interests and goals.<sup>106</sup>

Furthermore, by providing a platform for individuals to connect and collaborate, social media has empowered people to participate in public life in new and innovative ways. As it plays a crucial role in shaping public life by enabling individuals to engage with others, share information, and express their viewpoints. Social media has therefore, emerged as a powerful college (collective) of individuals participating in public life, providing a platform for individuals to engage in public discourse, advocate for causes, and mobilize support for social change. By democratizing participation, amplifying voices, and fostering activism, social media has revolutionized the way people engage with public issues and contribute to shaping the world around them.

### **2.2.1. UNDERSTANDING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Public participation can be defined as the involvement of individuals in the decision-making processes of government or other institutions that affect them.<sup>107</sup> It is an essential component of democracy, as it allows citizens to have a voice in the policies and decisions that impact their lives. Public participation can take many different ways, including attending public meetings, submitting comments on proposed regulations, serving on advisory committees, or engaging in grassroots advocacy campaigns. One of the key benefits of public

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<sup>104</sup> H. JENKINS, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. NYU Press, 2006, pp. 71-94.

<sup>105</sup> D. M. BOYD and N. B. ELLISON, "Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship," in *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2007, pp. 210-230.

<sup>106</sup> M. CASTELLS, *Networks of outrage and hope: Social movements in the Internet age*, Polity Press, United Kingdom, 2015.

<sup>107</sup> J. CREIGHTON, *Public Participation Handbook: Making Better Decisions Through Citizen Involvement*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, USA 2005, p. 45.

participation is that it can lead to more informed and transparent decision-making. By involving a diverse range of stakeholders in the process, government officials may gain new perspectives and insights that they would not have otherwise considered.<sup>108</sup> Additionally, public participation can help build trust between government and the community, as it demonstrates a willingness to listen and respond to the concerns of the public.<sup>109</sup> However, public participation is not without its challenges. One of the main barriers to effective public participation is the lack of meaningful engagement. In summation, public participation is an important aspect of democracy that allows citizens to have a voice in the decisions that impact their lives. While there are challenges to effective public participation, it is essential for creating transparent and inclusive decision-making processes.

Public participation can take various forms, each with its own level of engagement and impact on decision-making processes. Some common forms of public participation include: firstly, public meetings, which are a traditional method of public participation where individuals can attend and speak directly to decision-makers. These meetings provide an opportunity for citizens to voice their opinions, ask questions, and provide feedback on proposed policies or projects. Secondly, surveys and polls which are tools used to gather input from a large number of people quickly and efficiently. They can be conducted through various mediums, such as online surveys, telephone polls, or paper questionnaires. These surveys and polls can help gauge public opinion on specific issues and inform decision-making processes, thus giving visibility and voice to citizen.<sup>110</sup> Thirdly, advisory committees which are groups of individuals appointed to provide expert advice and recommendations to decision-makers. These committees often include representatives from various sectors of society, such as industry stakeholders, community organizations, and academic experts. Fourthly, online platforms which have become increasingly popular for public participation. These platforms, such as social media, online forums, and interactive websites, allow individuals to participate in discussions, share ideas, and provide feedback on government initiatives. Fifthly, focus groups which are small, facilitated discussions with a select group of individuals to gather in-depth feedback on specific topics or issues. Focus groups can provide valuable insights into public opinion, attitudes, and preferences that may not be captured through other forms of

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<sup>108</sup> S. ROWE and L. FREWER, "A Typology of Public Engagement Mechanisms," in *Science, Technology, and Human Values*, vol. 30, 2005, pp. 251-290.

<sup>109</sup> J. GASTIL and P. LEVINE (ed), "The Deliberative Democracy Handbook: Strategies for Effective Civic Engagement in the Twenty-First Century," in *Philosophy and Public Policy Quarterly*, vol. 27, 2005, p. 102.

<sup>110</sup> R. BARTOLETTI and F. FACCIOLI, "Public Engagement, Local Policies and Citizens' Participation: an Italian Case Study of Civic Collaboration," in *Media, Participation and Social Change*, vol. 2, 2016, p. 4.

public participation. Sixthly, community forums which are public events that bring together community members, government officials, and other stakeholders to discuss local issues, share information, and collaborate on solutions. Community forums can promote dialogue, build relationships, and strengthen community engagement. These forms of public participation can vary in their level of inclusivity, accessibility, and effectiveness. It is essential for decision-makers to consider the goals and objectives of public participation when selecting the most appropriate form for engaging citizens in the decision-making process, for public participation is important for both the individual and the society at large.

Public participation plays a crucial role in both individual empowerment and societal development, contributing to a more informed, inclusive, and democratic decision-making process. Firstly, from the perspective of the individual, public participation provides a platform for citizens to have a voice in shaping policies and decisions that affect their lives.<sup>111</sup> Engaging in public participation can empower individuals by allowing them to express their opinions, share their expertise, and advocate for their interests. By participating in decision-making processes, individuals can feel a sense of ownership and responsibility for the outcomes, leading to increased civic engagement and political awareness. Secondly, on a societal level, public participation is essential for promoting transparency, accountability, and legitimacy in governance. When citizens are actively involved in the decision-making process, government officials are more likely to consider a diverse range of perspectives and make decisions that reflect the needs and priorities of the community.<sup>112</sup> This can lead to more effective and sustainable policies that are responsive to the changing needs of society.

Moreover, public participation fosters social cohesion and trust between government and the community. By creating opportunities for dialogue, collaboration, and mutual understanding, public participation can help build bridges between different groups, promote social inclusion, and strengthen democratic values.<sup>113</sup> Inclusive decision-making processes can also reduce the potential for conflict and enhance the overall well-being of society. So therefore, public participation is vital for both the individual and society as a whole, providing a mechanism for citizens to engage in governance, influence policy decisions, and shape the future of their communities. By promoting active citizenship, democratic values, and social

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<sup>111</sup> J. ABELSON and F. P. GAUVIN, "Assessing the Impacts of Public Participation: Concepts, Evidence, and Policy Implications," in *Canadian Policy Research Network*, Ottawa 2006, p. 20.

<sup>112</sup> R. BARTOLETTI and F. FACCIOLO, "Public Engagement, Local Policies and Citizens' Participation: an Italian Case Study of Civic Collaboration," in *Media, Participation and Social Change*, vol. 2, 2016, p. 5.

<sup>113</sup> J. ABELSON and F. P. GAUVIN, "Assessing the Impacts of Public Participation: Concepts, Evidence, and Policy Implications," in *Canadian Policy Research Network*, Ottawa 2006, p. 21.

cohesion, public participation plays a critical role in advancing the collective interests and well-being of society.

### **2.2.2. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL MEDIA AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Social media has become a powerful tool for facilitating public participation and engaging citizens in decision-making processes. The relationship between social media and public participation is complex, as these platforms can both enhance and challenge traditional forms of citizen engagement. Also, the relationship between social media and public participation is dynamic and multifaceted. While social media has the potential to democratize decision-making processes and empower citizens, it also raises important questions about privacy, digital literacy, and the integrity of online discourse. As social media continues to evolve, it is essential for policymakers, practitioners, and citizens to critically evaluate its impact on public participation and work towards harnessing its potential for achieving more inclusive and effective governance and has its role in public participation.

The relationship between social media and public participation plays a significant role in connecting individuals and communities, fostering dialogue, collaboration, and shared experiences. Social media platforms serve as virtual spaces where people can engage with each other, exchange information, and build relationships, transcending geographic boundaries and traditional barriers to communication. One way in which social media facilitates connections between individuals and communities is through the sharing of information and resources. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn allow users to disseminate news, events, and initiatives to a wide audience, enabling individuals to stay informed and engaged with their communities. By sharing content, users can spark conversations, raise awareness about key issues, and mobilize support for collective action. Additionally, social media enables individuals to find and connect with like-minded individuals and groups that share common interests or goals.<sup>114</sup> Through hashtags, groups, and online communities, users can join conversations, participate in discussions, and collaborate on projects with people from diverse backgrounds and perspectives. This fosters a sense of belonging, solidarity, and collective identity among individuals who may not have had the opportunity to connect in traditional offline spaces.

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<sup>114</sup> R. SOUMYA et al., “The Central Role of Engagement in Online Communities,” in *Information Systems Research*, vol. 25, no. 3, 2014, pp. 528-546.

Moreover, social media serves as a platform for amplifying marginalized voices, elevating underrepresented perspectives, and promoting diversity and inclusion within communities.<sup>115</sup> By providing a space for individuals to share their stories, experiences, and viewpoints, social media can empower marginalized groups to advocate for social change, challenge systemic inequalities, and build networks of support and solidarity. Overall, the relationship between social media and public participation strengthening democracy and civic engagement, enhancing transparency and accountability, and fostering community building and collaboration among individuals and groups, who can work together to create positive change in their communities. By leveraging the power of technology for social connection, social media has the potential to strengthen interpersonal relationships, foster mutual understanding, and create a sense of belonging and shared purpose among diverse communities. These role of social media in public participation has its benefits in public life.

### **2.2.3. BENEFITS OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN PUBLIC LIFE**

Social media plays a crucial role in public life by providing a platform for individuals to connect, share information and engage in social and political discourse. It facilitates the spread of news and information quickly and globally, enabling greater awareness of social issues and supporting activism efforts. Social media also offers opportunities for networking and career advancement, as well as providing a space for marginalized voices to be heard. Additionally, it allows for increased transparency and accountability from public figures and institutions. Overall, social media has the power to strengthen democracy and civic engagement, enhance transparency and accountability and foster community building and collaboration.

Social media has emerged as a powerful tool for strengthening democracy and civic engagement in public life through various means such as providing platforms for political expression, mobilizing social movements, and enabling direct communication between citizens and government.<sup>116</sup> According to Shirky, social media facilitates citizen participation by lowering the barriers to entry and enabling a wider range of voices to be heard, thus enhancing democratic discourse and fostering civic engagement.<sup>117</sup> Furthermore, social media

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<sup>115</sup> R. BARTOLETTI and F. FACCIOLI, "Public Engagement, Local Policies and Citizens' Participation: an Italian Case Study of Civic Collaboration," in *Media, Participation and Social Change*, vol. 2, 2016, p. 4.

<sup>116</sup> P. N. HOWARD and M. R. PARKS, "Social media and political change: Capacity, constraint, and consequence," in *Journal of Communication*, vol. 62, no. 2, 2012, pp. 359-362.

<sup>117</sup> C. SHIRKY, "The Political Power of Social Media: Technology, the Public Sphere, and Political Change," in *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 90, no. 1, 2011, pp. 28-41.

platforms have played a significant role in mobilizing citizens for political activism and social movements. For instance, the Arab Spring uprisings in 2011 were largely organized and coordinated through social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook, enabling citizens to challenge authoritarian regimes and demand political change.<sup>118</sup> This demonstrates how social media can empower citizens to participate in public life and exercise their democratic rights. In summation, social media plays a crucial role in strengthening democracy and civic engagement by providing platforms for political expression, mobilizing social movements, and facilitating direct communication between citizens and government. By lowering barriers to entry, enabling citizen participation, and promoting transparency, social media contributes to a more vibrant and participatory public life.

Furthermore, Social media has emerged as a powerful tool for enhancing transparency and accountability in public life. Through the various platforms available, citizens can actively engage with their elected officials and hold them accountable for their actions and decisions. This increased transparency and accountability can have a significant impact on the functioning of democratic institutions and the relationship between the government and the people. Also, by enabling real-time communication, civic engagement, and the exposure of wrongdoing, these platforms have the potential to strengthen the relationship between citizens and their elected representatives, ultimately leading to a more responsive and accountable system of governance.

Moreover, social media has emerged as a powerful tool for fostering community building and collaboration in public life. By providing a digital platform for people to connect, share ideas, and work together, social media has revolutionized the way individuals and communities engage with each other and with their governments.<sup>119</sup> Also, by enabling individuals to connect, organize, and work together towards common goals, these platforms have the potential to enhance civic engagement, strengthen social cohesion, and empower communities to play a more active role in the governance of their societies.

### **2.3. SOCIAL MEDIA AND ENHANCEMENT OF DEMOCRACY**

Social media has emerged as a powerful tool for enhancing democracy by providing citizens with new avenues for political engagement, information sharing, and collective

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<sup>118</sup> S. ADAY, et al., "Blogs and bullets: New media in contentious politics," in *International Studies Review*, 2010, pp. 38-54.

<sup>119</sup> N. B. ELLISON, and D. M. BOYD, "Sociality through Social Sites, " In W. H. DUTTON (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Internet Studies*, Oxford University Press, New York 2013, p. 160.

action.<sup>120</sup> The interactive and participatory nature of social media platforms has the potential to foster a more informed and engaged citizenry, ultimately strengthening the foundations of democratic governance. Furthermore, social media enhances democracy by increasing access to information and facilitating the free flow of ideas, as access to information empowers citizens to make more informed decisions and hold their elected representatives accountable and this increased civic engagement can lead to more responsive and inclusive decision-making processes, as governments are compelled to address the concerns and demands of their constituents. Additionally, social media has the potential to enhance transparency and accountability in government and this increased transparency can contribute to a more informed and engaged electorate, which is essential for the functioning of a healthy democracy. Also, with the diverse perspectives and experiences on social media, it leads to a more inclusive and representative democracy

### **2.3.1. DEMOCRACY AND SOCIAL MEDIA**

Democracy literally means the rule of the people, that is, the government of the people.<sup>121</sup> And can also be defined as:

Democracy is that order of society in which natural capacity is given its rightful place, in which it is given free play, in which by nature he is fitted. Artificial restrictions, whether by birth or class, of wealth on the one hand or economic necessity on the other are eliminated or reduced to a minimum.<sup>122</sup>

This shows that democracy is a political system in which power is vested in the people, who rule either directly or through elected representatives. The role of democracy in society is multifaceted and essential for the well-being of citizens and the functioning of a just and equitable social order.

Furthermore, the importance of democracy in society lies in its ability to ensure the protection of individual rights and liberties, foster political participation, enable individuals to exercise their rights, protect their interest and promote the accountability of the government to the people.<sup>123</sup> In a democratic system, citizens have the right to voice their opinions, participate in the political process, and hold their elected officials responsible for their actions.

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<sup>120</sup> S. BOULIANNE, "Social media use and participation: A meta-analysis of current research," in *Information, Communication and Society*, vol. 18, 2015, p. 529.

<sup>121</sup> J. OMOREGBE, *Socio- Political Philosophy and International Relations*, vol. 1. Joja press limited, Lagos 2007, p. 30.

<sup>122</sup> D. BRYN- JONES, *Toward a Democratic New Order*, Minneapolis, The University of Minneapolis Press, Minnesota 1921, p. 20.

<sup>123</sup> R. A. DAHL, *On political equality*, Yale University Press, London 2006, p. 4.



This, in turn, helps to create a more responsive and inclusive political system that better reflects the needs and aspirations of the population.

Moreover, democracy plays a crucial role in promoting social and economic development. Democratic governments are more likely to invest in public goods and services, such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure, which can contribute to the overall well-being of the population.<sup>124</sup> Additionally, democratic institutions have been shown to be more effective in reducing poverty, inequality, and promoting sustainable development.

Furthermore, factors that promote democracy include an educated and engaged citizenry, a robust civil society, the rule of law, the protection of human rights, and the separation of powers between the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government.<sup>125</sup> These factors work together to create a system of checks and balances that ensures the government is responsive to the will of the people and that the rights of all citizens are protected. Also, the role of democratic institutions, such as free and fair elections, an independent media, and a vibrant and diverse political landscape, is crucial in promoting and sustaining democracy.<sup>126</sup> These institutions provide the necessary infrastructure for citizens to participate in the political process, hold their leaders accountable, and ensure the peaceful transfer of power. In summation, the role of democracy in society is essential for the protection of individual rights, the promotion of political participation, and the overall well-being of the population. By fostering an environment that values the rule of law, the separation of powers, and the protection of human rights, democracies can contribute to the creation of a more just, equitable, and prosperous society.

### **2.3.2. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ON DEMOCRACY AND COMMUNICATION**

The historical perspectives on democracy and communication reveal a complex and evolving relationship, with the pre-digital era characterized by traditional media and the contemporary era marked by the transformative impact of social media. As we navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by the digital age, it is crucial to strike a balance between the benefits of open and democratic communication and the need to preserve the integrity and stability of democratic institutions.

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<sup>124</sup> D. ACEMOGLU, et al. "Democracy does cause growth" in *Journal of Political Economy*, 2019, p. 52.

<sup>125</sup> P. ROBERT, *Democracy in the Third World*, Buckingham, Open University Press, 1993, p. 8.

<sup>126</sup> P. NORRIS, *Why Elections Fail*. Cambridge University Press, 2015, p. 24.

Firstly, in the pre-digital era, the traditional forms of communication, such as print media, radio, and television, played a crucial role in shaping the democratic discourse.<sup>127</sup> These media channels served as the primary sources of information for the public, and they were often controlled by the political and economic elites, which led to concerns about the concentration of power and the potential for biased or manipulated information.<sup>128</sup> However, these traditional media also provided a platform for public discourse, allowing citizens to engage in debates and express their views on important political issues.

Secondly, the advent of the digital age and the rise of social media platforms have fundamentally transformed the landscape of communication and democracy. Social media platforms, such as Telegram, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, X, and YouTube, have empowered individuals and groups to create, share, and consume information more freely and efficiently than ever before.<sup>129</sup> This democratization of communication has had significant implications for the political process, as it has provided new avenues for political participation, activism, and the dissemination of information.

Thirdly, the impact of social media on democratic discourse has been both positive and negative. On the positive side, social media has enabled citizens to engage more directly with their elected representatives, hold them accountable, and participate in the political process.<sup>130</sup> It has also facilitated the mobilization of social movements and the amplification of marginalized voices, which can contribute to a more inclusive and representative political system. However, the proliferation of misinformation, echo chambers, and the potential for manipulation of public opinion through social media have also raised concerns about the erosion of democratic norms and the integrity of the political process. Moreover, the power and influence of social media platforms themselves have become a topic of concern, as these private companies have gained significant control over the flow of information and the shaping of public discourse.<sup>131</sup> This has led to calls for greater regulation and oversight of these platforms, as well as a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between technology, communication, and democracy.

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<sup>127</sup> J. CURRAN, *Media and Power*, Routledge, London 2002, p. 22.

<sup>128</sup> R. W. MCCHESENEY, *Rich media, poor democracy: Communication politics in dubious times*. The New Press, 2015, p. 37.

<sup>129</sup> Y. BENKLER, *The wealth of networks: How social production transforms markets and freedom*. Yale University Press, London 2006, p. 212.

<sup>130</sup> H. MARGETTS, "Rethinking democracy with social media," in *The Political Quarterly*, 2019, p. 115.

<sup>131</sup> T. GILLESPIE, *Custodians of the Internet: Platforms, content moderation, and the hidden decisions that shape social media*. Yale University Press, London 2018, p. 24.

### 2.3.3. THE POSITIVE IMPACTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON DEMOCRACY

Social media has a positive impact on democracy by facilitating political participation, enhancing citizen engagement, fostering transparency and accountability, and strengthening social movements and grassroots activism. By providing a platform for individuals to, communicate, and organize, social media has empowered citizens to play a more active role in the political process and hold their elected officials accountable.

Social media platforms have significantly impacted the way citizens engage in democratic processes, thereby playing a crucial role in enhancing democracy.<sup>132</sup> Various studies have shown that social media facilitates political participation among citizens by providing platforms for them to express their opinions, share information, and engage in discussions on political issues.<sup>133</sup> This social media platforms such as X, WhatsApp, YouTube has helped to empower individuals who were previously marginalized or excluded from traditional political processes and has increased accessibility to political information and discussions has led to a more informed and engaged citizenry, ultimately strengthening democracy.

Furthermore, social media has been instrumental in enhancing citizen engagement with political institutions and representatives.<sup>134</sup> Platforms such as Twitter and Facebook allow citizens to directly communicate with their elected officials, providing a more accessible channel for expressing concerns and holding leaders accountable.<sup>135</sup> This direct engagement fosters a sense of accountability among elected and encourages transparency in decision-making processes, ultimately empowering citizens to have a greater impact on policy outcomes.

In addition, social media has played a significant role in fostering transparency and accountability in government.<sup>136</sup> Citizens can now access a vast amount of information about government activities and policies through social media platforms, enabling them to scrutinize and monitor the actions of their leaders. This has led to increased pressure on governments to

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<sup>132</sup> M. HUSSAIN and P. HOWARD, *Democracy's fourth wave? Digital media and the Arab Spring*, OUP USA, 2013.

<sup>133</sup> A. CHADWICK, *The hybrid media system: Politics and power*. OUP Oxford, New York, 2013.

<sup>134</sup> S. WRIGHT and J. STREET, "Democracy, deliberation and design: The case of online discussion forums," in *New Media and Society*, 2007, pp. 849-869.

<sup>135</sup> B. BIMBER et al., "Reconceptualizing collective action in the contemporary media environment," in *Communication Theory*, 2005, pp. 365-388.

<sup>136</sup> M. BOVENS, "Analysing and assessing accountability: A conceptual framework," in *European Law Journal*, 2007, pp. 447-468.

be more transparent in their decision-making processes and has helped to uncover instances of corruption and malpractice.

Moreover, social media has been essential in strengthening social movements and grassroots activism. Platforms such as Twitter and Instagram have been used to mobilize and organize protests, campaigns, and advocacy efforts, leading to significant social and political change.<sup>137</sup> Social media has enabled marginalized groups to amplify their voices and reach a broader audience, challenging existing power structures and promoting social justice.

In summation, social media has had a positive impact on democracy by facilitating political participation, enhancing citizen engagement, fostering transparency and accountability, and strengthening social movements and grassroots activism. However, it is important to recognize that social media also presents challenges and risks, such as the spread of misinformation and the manipulation of public opinion.<sup>138</sup> Therefore, it is essential for policymakers, tech companies, and civil society organizations to work together to harness the benefits of social media while mitigating its negative effects.

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<sup>137</sup> Z. TUFEKCI, *Twitter and tear gas: The power and fragility of networked protest*. Yale University Press, London 2017.

<sup>138</sup> S. J. BERMAN, "Digital transformation: Opportunities to create new business models," in *Strategy and Leadership*, vol. 40, no. 2, 2012, pp. 16-24.

## **PART TWO**

### **TOWARDS ANARCHISM AND FAKE ON SOCIAL MEDIA**

The rise of social media platforms as we saw in the other chapters, has revolutionized the way people communicate, share information, and engage with one another. However, alongside its numerous benefits, social media has also given rise to various challenges, particularly in terms of information dissemination and the spread of fake news. Anarchism is a political ideology that advocates for the abolition of hierarchical structures and the establishment of voluntary associations based on mutual cooperation and respect for individual freedom. In contrast, fake news refers to fabricated or misleading information deliberately spread to deceive or manipulate public opinion. The proliferation of social media platforms has created an environment where both anarchism and fake news thrive. This part seeks to address this objective: To explore how anarchistic principles have influenced the spread of fake news on social media. Because understanding the relationship between anarchism and fake news on social media is crucial for policymakers, researchers, journalists, and citizens alike as it sheds light on new challenges facing democratic societies in an era defined by rapid technological advancements. With that said, this part shall consist of two chapters. In chapter three, our main focus shall be on the difficulty in controlling the sources of information on social media. Chapter four shall focus on the question of casting on social media.

## CHAPTER THREE

### DIFFICULTIES IN CONTROLLING THE SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA

In the digital era, social media platforms have emerged as the new public squares where ideas are exchanged and opinions are formed. However, to Lee McIntyre a prominent voice in the discourse on truth and disinformation, the very nature of these platforms presents significant challenges in controlling the sources of information.<sup>139</sup> The topic of "Difficulties in Controlling the Sources of Information on Social Media" delves into the complexities of this modern challenge. According to McIntyre, the decentralized architecture of social media allows for an unprecedented volume of user-generated content, which often bypasses the traditional gatekeepers of information such as editors and fact-checkers. This democratization of content creation, while empowering on one hand, also leads to the proliferation of misinformation and the blurring of lines between credible and questionable sources.<sup>140</sup> The rapid dissemination of information on these platforms further complicates the ability to trace content back to its origins or hold disseminators accountable.<sup>141</sup> McIntyre emphasizes that the speed at which information spreads can overwhelm the efforts of those trying to verify its accuracy. As we explore this chapter, we will examine the inherent difficulties in controlling access to social media, the varying levels of intellectual comfort users have with these platforms, the absence of a centralized editorial line, and conclude with a synthesis of the chapter's key points. Through this lens, we aim to understand the polarization of information sources and their impact on individuals and society at large.

#### 3.1. THE INABILITY TO CONTROL DEMOCRATICAL (EVERYONE'S) ACCESS OF SOCIAL MEDIA.

The inability to control democratic access to social media refers to the challenge of regulating and managing the availability and usage of social media platforms by individuals in a democratic society or the society in general. Social media has become an integral part of human life especially with the modern means of communication, which allows people to connect, share information, and express their opinions on a global scale. However, this widespread accessibility also presents various challenges and concerns related to privacy,

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<sup>139</sup> L. MCINTYRE, *Post- Truth*, The MIT Press Essential Knowledge Series, London, 2018, p. 136.

<sup>140</sup> L. MCINTYRE, et al. "Disinformation threatens global elections – here's how to fight back," in *The Conversation*, 2024. <https://theconversation.com/disinformation-threatens-global-elections-heres-how-to-fight-back-223392>.

<sup>141</sup> L. MCINTYRE, *Post- Truth*, The MIT Press Essential Knowledge Series, London, 2018, p. 136.

security, misinformation, and the spread of harmful content, which according to McIntyre is due to encryption and anonymity in social media, which is difficult to identify and hold the responsible parties accountable.<sup>142</sup> As a response to these challenges, McIntyre calls for a multi-stakeholder approach to addressing the issues surrounding social media, involving collaboration between platform operators, policymakers, civil society organizations, and the public and that a combination of technological solutions, regulatory frameworks, and educational initiatives will be necessary to mitigate the negative impacts of social media while preserving its potential benefits.<sup>143</sup> With this understanding, knowing that everyone can get access to the social media, be it with verified or non-verified accounts or even fake accounts, it is difficult and in the worst case impossible to stop everyone's access of social media and these below are the reasons.

### **3.1.1. DECENTRALIZED NATURE OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS**

One of the reasons why controlling democratic access to social media is difficult is due to the decentralized nature of these social media platforms. Decentralized nature of social media platforms means content can be shared and disseminated, as there is no centralized body or a body where social media is concentrated, thereby making it challenging to monitor and regulate access effectively. Users can easily create new accounts or use virtual private networks (VPNs) to bypass restrictions, further complicating efforts to control access to social. This is best expressed by McIntyre, who acknowledges that the ubiquity and decentralized nature of social media make it challenging, if not impossible, to exert complete control over who has access to these platforms.<sup>144</sup> Also, he argues that the open and participatory nature of social media is a double-edged sword, as it allows for the free exchange of ideas and information, but also enables the rapid spread of misinformation, conspiracy theories, and other forms of harmful content.

Social media outlets are unlike traditional media<sup>145</sup> outlets that are typically regulated by governments or industry bodies, since social media platforms are often privately owned and operated. These social media platforms have their own terms of service and community guidelines, which may vary across different platforms. For example, with X formally known as Twitter, there is freedom to post what you wish and in other platforms like YouTube the

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<sup>142</sup> L. MCINTYRE, *Post- Truth*, The MIT Press Essential Knowledge Series, London, 2018, p. 132.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

post will be brought down. As a result, one can use a different platform to get access to social media, since there are many social media platforms. Additionally, social media companies have significant control over the systems that determine what content users see, making it challenging to regulate the flow of information. It is important to understand that the world is basically depended on social media, and they use it in every human discipline, be it education, entertainment and others. As long as one has connection or internet data, you can get access to any social media platform of your choice, to this effect, anyone can get access to social media platform for different purposes, like for political activism.

### 3.1.2. TOOLS FOR POLITICAL ACTIVISM

Social media platforms have become essential tools for political activism and organizing in democratic societies, and according to McIntyre, it plays an important role in promoting social and political change, for when done effectively, can help challenge misinformation and influence policymakers and this can be done by participating in protests, engaging in public discourse and constructive dialogue with those who hold different views.<sup>146</sup> Political activism refers to the efforts and actions taken by individuals or groups to promote, advocate for, or bring about social or political change. This can involve a wide range of activities, including protests, demonstrations, lobbying, advocacy campaigns, and community organizing.<sup>147</sup> Political activism is often driven by a desire to address injustices, inequalities, or other issues of concern within society.<sup>148</sup> These social media platforms, according to Bennett, play a significant role in political activism by providing a platform for individuals to connect, share information, coordinate actions, raise awareness, mobilize support, advocate for change on a global scale, and organize collective action in real-time,<sup>149</sup> through platforms such as Telegram, X (Twitter), TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. Furthermore, Tufekci explores the impact of social media on political activism, highlighting the power and fragility of networked protest in the digital age.<sup>150</sup> And any attempt to restrict or control their access to social media can be seen as infringing upon freedom of speech and expression rights. As such, governments and regulatory bodies face a

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<sup>146</sup> L. MCINTYRE, *How to Talk to a Science Denier: Conversations with Flat Earthers, Climate Deniers, and Others Who Defy Reason*. MIT Press, 2021.

<sup>147</sup> C. TILLY, *Social Movements, 1768-2004*, Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, London, 2004, p. 64.

<sup>148</sup> J. GOODWIN Jeff and JASPER James, *The Social Movements Reader: Cases and Concepts*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.

<sup>149</sup> L. W. BENNETT, "Social Media and Political Activism," in *The International Encyclopedia of Media Effects*, 2017.

<sup>150</sup> Z. TUFEKCI, *Twitter and Tear Gas: The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest*, Yale University Press, 2017, London p. 18.



delicate balance between protecting individuals from harmful content, while upholding democratic principles of freedom of speech and expression, thereby making it impossible to control their access social media.

One of the key advantages of social media for political activism is its ability to amplify marginalized voices and bring attention to social justice issues, as was the case with police brutality in #BlackLivesMatter and the #MeToo movement, which began on social media in 2017, has led to a global conversation about sexual harassment and assault. Also, as it provides a platform for grassroots organizing and community building, enabling activists to connect with like-minded individuals, share resources, and coordinate campaigns.<sup>151</sup> The use of hashtags, viral challenges, and online petitions can help to generate widespread support and pressure policymakers to address political and social issues. However, social media has its limitations, including the potential for misinformation as activists have limited control over who sees their messages and how they are interpreted, echo chambers, and algorithmic bias that can distort or suppress certain voices and perspectives.<sup>152</sup>

Overall, social media offers activists powerful tools for political mobilization for advocacy, collaboration, and empowerment, but also presents challenges in terms of access and control. By leveraging hashtags, organizing campaigns, and navigating platform policies, activists can effectively advocate and coordinated via loose networks, often organized around internet websites or mailing lists, and involving multiple ‘affinity groups’,<sup>153</sup> for their causes and create meaningful social change in the digital age or the society in a whole. And in McIntyre’s perspective, political activism, when done thoughtfully and strategically, can be a valuable means of promoting positive social and political change, but it must be accompanied by a commitment to evidence-based reasoning and constructive dialogue.<sup>154</sup>

### **3.1.3. SHEER VOLUME OF CONTENT**

As McIntyre explains, "the internet and social media have democratized the ability to publish and share information, but this has also made it much harder to control the flow of

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<sup>151</sup> M. CASTELLS, *Networks of outrage and hope: Social movements in the Internet age*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edit, Polity Press, United Kingdom, 2015.

<sup>152</sup> L. W. BENNETT and A. SEGERBERG, "The Logic of Connective Action: Digital Media and the Personalization of Contentious Politics." in *Information, Communication and Society*, vol. 15, no. 5, 2012, pp. 739-768.

<sup>153</sup> W. VAN DE DONK, et al., *Cyberprotest: New Media, Citizens, and Social Movements*, Routledge, London and New York, 2004.

<sup>154</sup> L. MCINTYRE, *How to Talk to a Science Denier: Conversations with Flat Earthers, Climate Deniers, and Others Who Defy Reason*. MIT Press, 2021.

that information."<sup>155</sup> This difficulty in controlling democratic access to social media is the sheer volume of content being generated and shared on these platforms. Every minute, millions of posts, comments, photos, and videos are uploaded onto social media platforms. This vast amount of user-generated content, as McIntyre notes, makes it impractical, if not impossible, for any single entity or authority to effectively monitor and regulate the content being shared,<sup>156</sup> and circulated online through these digital channels, for accuracy or compliance with community guidelines.

One of the key issues related to the volume of content on social media is the spread of misinformation and disinformation. False or misleading information can quickly go viral on platforms like Facebook and X (Twitter), reaching a wide audience and potentially influencing public opinion or behavior.<sup>157</sup> This can have serious consequences, such as the spread of conspiracy theories, fake news, and harmful rumors that can undermine trust in institutions and exacerbate social divisions.

Another challenge posed by the volume of content on social media is the difficulty in controlling harmful or offensive material. Posts containing hate speech, violence, or graphic content can violate community guidelines and terms of service, but the sheer volume of such content makes it challenging for platforms to effectively moderate and remove problematic posts in a timely manner.<sup>158</sup> This can create a toxic online environment and contribute to the proliferation of harmful behavior.

Furthermore, the rapid pace of content creation and sharing on social media can make it challenging for individuals and organizations to keep up with the latest trends, news, and developments.<sup>159</sup> The constant stream of information can be overwhelming, leading to information overload and fatigue among users who may struggle to discern reliable sources from unreliable ones. In all, the sheer volume of content on social media presents a complex and multifaceted challenge for individuals, organizations, and platforms alike. Addressing issues related to misinformation, harmful content, and information overload requires a

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<sup>155</sup> L. MCINTYRE, *Post- Truth*, The MIT Press Essential Knowledge Series, London, 2018, p. 130.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>157</sup> C. WARDLE and H. DERAKHSHAN, *Information Disorder: Toward an Interdisciplinary Framework for Research and Policy Making*, Council of Europe, 2017.

<sup>158</sup> T. GILLESPIE, *Custodians of the Internet: Platforms, Content Moderation, and the Hidden Decisions That Shape Social Media.* Yale University Press, London 2018.

<sup>159</sup> E. TANDOC et al., "The Third-Person Effect on Social Media: How Perceived Social Distance Influences Responses to Misinformation." in *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, vol. 23, no. 1, 2018, pp. 23-39.

coordinated effort involving technology, policy, and user education to promote a safer, more informed digital environment.

### 3.1.4. EVOLUTION OF TECHNOLOGY AND INTERNET

The evolution of technology and the internet has outpaced regulatory frameworks designed to govern online spaces and has presented significant challenges in controlling everyone's access to social media, as highlighted by Lee McIntyre, as the rise of social media platforms has democratized the ability to share information and express opinions, which has had both positive and negative consequences.<sup>160</sup> However, the lack of effective gatekeeping and the ease with which misinformation, hate speech, and extremist content can spread on these platforms have also posed significant challenges.<sup>161</sup>

Moreover, McIntyre has argued that the inability to control everyone's access to social media has contributed to the proliferation of "post-truth" phenomena, where objective facts are increasingly disregarded in favor of subjective beliefs and emotions.<sup>162</sup> And this has increased significantly with the evolution of technology and the internet, as they have raised concerns about privacy, data security, and the potential for surveillance and manipulation by both state and non-state actors.

Also, the collection and use of personal data by social media companies and other tech giants have sparked debates about the balance between technological progress and individual rights.<sup>163</sup> In response to these challenges, there have been calls for greater regulation and oversight of the tech industry, as well as the development of ethical frameworks and guidelines to govern the use of emerging technologies like artificial intelligence.<sup>164</sup>

However, the pace of technological change and the global nature of the internet have made it difficult to implement effective and comprehensive solutions.<sup>165</sup> As the development of encrypted messaging services and virtual private networks (VPNs) has provided users with

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<sup>160</sup> A. M. KAPLAN and M. HAENLEIN. "Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media," in *Business Horizons*, vol. 53, no. 1, 2010, pp. 59-68.

<sup>161</sup> H. ALLCOTT and M. GENTZKOW, Social media and fake news in the 2016 election. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 2017, pp. 211-236.

<sup>162</sup> L. MCINTYRE, *Post-Truth*, The MIT Press Essential Knowledge Series, London, 2018.

<sup>163</sup> H. NISSENBAUM, *Privacy in context: Technology, policy, and the integrity of social life*, Stanford University Press, California 2010.

<sup>164</sup> B. ELEANOR et al., "The ethics of artificial intelligence: Issues and initiatives," in European Parliamentary Research Service, 2020, p. 1.

<sup>165</sup> E. BRYNJOLFSSON and A. MCAFEE, *The second machine age: Work, progress, and prosperity in a time of brilliant technologies*. W. W. Norton and Company, New York 2014, p. 175.

tools to bypass censorship and access blocked social media platforms, despite government efforts to restrict access.<sup>166</sup> This has led to a cat-and-mouse game between authorities and users, with new methods of circumventing restrictions constantly emerging. All in all, the evolution of technology and the Internet has made it increasingly difficult to control access to social media platforms. While this has raised concerns about privacy, security, and misinformation, it has also empowered individuals to connect and communicate in ways previously unimaginable. As technology advance, it will be crucial for stakeholders to find a balance between regulating access and preserving the open nature of the Internet.

### **3.1.5. GLOBAL NATURE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

The issue of controlling everyone's access to social media is further complicated by the global nature of these platforms. Social media transcends geographical boundaries, allowing individuals from different countries and cultures to connect and share information. This poses challenges for governments that seek to regulate content on social media platforms, as laws and regulations vary significantly between jurisdictions. What may be acceptable or protected speech in one country may be deemed offensive or illegal in another.

Furthermore, the global nature of social media presents challenges in controlling access due to its widespread reach diverse user base. Social media platforms geographical boundaries, allowing users from different parts of the world to connect and interact in real-time.<sup>167</sup> This interconnectedness makes it difficult to enforce strict controls on who can access social media content, which according to McIntyre, it is due to the cross-border nature of social media, which allows users to evade local or national restrictions on access and content.<sup>168</sup> As he argues that the global and decentralized nature of these platforms makes it challenging for any one government or regulatory body to assert control over the information ecosystem.<sup>169</sup>

### **3.1.6. FREEDOM OF SPEECH**

In recent years, there have been growing concerns about the spread of misinformation and disinformation on social media platforms, that are potentially influencing public opinion

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<sup>166</sup> D. TROTTIER, *Social Media as Surveillance: Rethinking Visibility in a Converging World*. Routledge, London, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315609508>

<sup>167</sup> D. M. BOYD, *It Complicated: The Social Lives of Teens*. Yale University Press, London 2014.

<sup>168</sup> L. MCINTYRE, *Post- Truth*, The MIT Press Essential Knowledge Series, London 2018, p. 131.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

and undermining democratic processes, under the guise of freedom of speech. Freedom of speech is a fundamental right enshrined in many constitutions and international human rights instruments. The ability to freely express oneself is considered essential for democracy and the exchange of ideas. However, putting restrictions will be seen as violating this right, as efforts to control democratic access to social media have been met with mixed results. Some countries have implemented strict regulations and censorship measures, often under the guise of protecting national security or public order. On the other hand, attempts by social media companies to self-regulate have also faced criticism for being inconsistent and biased.

According to McIntyre, in his book "The Conversation: A Revolutionary Plan for End-to-End Democracy," he, discusses the challenges and opportunities presented by the digital age and social media in relation to freedom of speech. As, he argues that the current model of social media, where a few large platforms control the flow of information and discourse, is problematic and can lead to the suppression of diverse voices and the amplification of misinformation or hate speech. To this effect, suggests that a more decentralized and democratic approach to social media, where individuals have greater control over their own online spaces and the ability to curate their own networks, could help to address these issues.<sup>170</sup> He proposes the idea of a "conversation revolution," where people can engage in meaningful and substantive discussions on a wide range of topics, without the interference of algorithms or the influence of powerful tech companies. While the right to free speech is fundamental, it must be balanced with the need to maintain a safe and inclusive online environment that fosters meaningful dialogue and the exchange of ideas.

### **3.2. DISPARITY IN PEOPLE'S INTELLECTUAL COMFORT OF ACCESS OF SOCIAL MEDIA.**

Social media has become an integral part of modern society, providing a platform for individuals to connect, share information, and engage in various forms of communication. However, not everyone has the same level of comfort or proficiency when it comes to accessing and utilizing these platforms. The disparity in people's intellectual comfort of access to social media refers to the unequal distribution of knowledge, skills, and resources that individuals possess when it comes to using social media platforms, which according to

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<sup>170</sup> L. MCINTYRE, *The Conversation: A Revolutionary Plan for End-to-End Democracy*. Prometheus Books, 2020.

McIntyre is due to the design and algorithms of social media platforms,<sup>171</sup> as he cites research that has found a correlation between the use of social media and the increasing polarization of political and social attitudes,<sup>172</sup> and suggests that this phenomenon is not simply a result of the platforms' algorithms, but also reflects the broader cognitive biases and psychological tendencies of human beings, who often seek out and engage with information that confirms their existing beliefs.<sup>173</sup> This disparity can be influenced by various factors such as age, education level, socioeconomic status, and geographical location.

### 3.2.1. AGE

Age is a significant factor in determining people's comfort and proficiency in accessing and utilizing social media platforms. The digital divide, defined as the gap between those who have access to and knowledge of technology and those who do not, is often influenced by age. As older individuals who did not grow up with technology may find it more challenging to navigate social media platforms compared to younger generations who have been exposed to technology from an early age. According to a study by the Pew Research Center, younger adults are more likely than older adults to use social media. In the United States, 90% of adults aged 18-29 use social media, compared to 40% of adults aged 65 and older.<sup>174</sup> This disparity in usage highlights how younger generations are more comfortable with technology and more likely to adopt social media as a means of communication and information sharing. Furthermore, older adults may face challenges in navigating and understanding the complexities of social media platforms. Issues such as privacy settings, online security, and the rapidly changing features of these platforms can be daunting for individuals who did not grow up with digital technology.<sup>175</sup> This lack of comfort and proficiency can lead to a digital literacy gap between older and younger generations.

The disparity in intellectual comfort in accessing social media can also impact older adults' ability to engage in online discourse and participate in digital communities. While social media platforms offer opportunities for connection and information-sharing, older adults may feel excluded or overwhelmed by the fast-paced nature of online communication.

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<sup>171</sup> L. MCINTYRE, *Post- Truth*, The MIT Press Essential Knowledge Series, London, 2018, p. 131.

<sup>172</sup> E. BAKSHY, et al., "Exposure to Ideologically Diverse News and Opinion on Facebook." in *Science*, vol. 348, no. 6239, USA 2015, pp. 1130-1132.

<sup>173</sup> L. MCINTYRE, *Post- Truth*, The MIT Press Essential Knowledge Series, London, 2018, p. 127.

<sup>174</sup> PEW RESEARCH CENTER, "Social Media Use in 2021." Available at: <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2021/04/07/social-media-use-in-2021/>

<sup>175</sup> E. HARGITAI and G. WALEJKO, "The Participation Divide: Content Creation and Sharing in Social Media." in *Information, Community and Society*, vol. 15 no. 5, 2012, pp. 555-573.

Intergenerational differences in social media usage and proficiency highlight the need for digital literacy initiatives that cater to older adults. Organizations and government agencies can provide training programs and resources to help older individuals navigate social media platforms and develop the skills needed to engage in online communication effectively. In summation, age plays a significant role in determining people's intellectual comfort in accessing social media. Addressing the digital divide and providing support for older adults to enhance their digital literacy skills can help bridge the gap and promote inclusivity in the online space. As society becomes increasingly reliant on digital technology, it is crucial to ensure that individuals of all ages have the knowledge and resources to participate in the digital world.

### 3.2.2. EDUCATION LEVEL

The level of education can play a significant role in determining an individual's intellectual comfort and access to social media platforms. Generally, higher levels of education are associated with greater digital literacy, critical thinking skills, and exposure to diverse information sources. This can lead to a more nuanced and intellectually engaging experience on social media. Individuals with higher education levels may be more adept at navigating the complexities of social media, evaluating the credibility of information, and engaging in substantive discussions on various topics.<sup>176</sup> They may also have a better understanding of the potential benefits and drawbacks of social media use, allowing them to leverage the platforms more effectively for intellectual discourse, knowledge sharing, and personal growth.<sup>177</sup>

In contrast, those with lower levels of education may face greater challenges in accessing and utilizing social media in an intellectually fulfilling manner. They may be more vulnerable to the spread of misinformation, echo chambers, and superficial engagement on social media platforms. This can lead to a widening of the intellectual disparity, where those with higher education levels are better equipped to navigate and extract value from social media, while those with lower education levels may struggle to do so.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> T. CORREA, "Digital skills and social media use: How Internet skills are related to different types of Facebook use among 'digital natives'," in *Information, Communication and Society*, vol. 19 no. 8, 2016, pp. 1095-1107.

<sup>177</sup> C. GREENHOW and B. ROBELIA, "Old communication, new literacies: Social network sites as social learning resources", in *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, vol. 14, no. 4, 2009, pp. 1130-1161.

<sup>178</sup> A. SCHEERDER et al., "Determinants of Internet skills, uses and outcomes. A systematic review of the second- and third-level digital divide," in *Telematics and Informatics*, vol. 34, no. 8, 2017, pp. 1607-1624.

To address this, efforts should be made to improve digital literacy and critical thinking skills across all education levels. This can involve incorporating social media education and digital citizenship into school curricula, providing training and resources for adults, and promoting media literacy initiatives that empower individuals to engage with social media in a more thoughtful and discerning manner. Additionally, social media platforms can play a role in fostering more intellectually engaging environments by prioritizing the curation and distribution of high-quality, credible content, and by implementing features that encourage substantive discussions and the exchange of diverse perspectives.<sup>179</sup> By addressing the educational and structural factors that contribute to the disparity in intellectual comfort and access to social media, we can work towards a more inclusive and enriching digital landscape that benefits individuals of all educational backgrounds.<sup>180</sup>

### **3.2.3. SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS**

Socioeconomic status is another factor that contributes to the disparity in people's intellectual capacity. Individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may have limited access to technology or internet connectivity, which can hinder their ability to engage with social media platforms. Additionally, they may lack the financial resources to afford devices or data plans necessary for regular use of social media. This can create a digital divide where individuals from higher socioeconomic backgrounds have greater access and comfort with social media compared to those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

Furthermore, the relationship between socioeconomic status and access to social media is a complex and multifaceted issue. As individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may have less access to technology and the internet, which can limit their ability to engage with social media platforms. This disparity in access can impact individuals' ability to stay connected with others, access information, and participate in online social and professional networks.

Additionally, individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may also face challenges in acquiring the digital literacy skills necessary to navigate and utilize social media effectively. This can result in a lack of comfort and confidence in using social media platforms, which may further exacerbate the digital divide between different socioeconomic

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<sup>179</sup> K. THORSON, "Facing an uncertain reception: Young citizens and political interaction on Facebook," in *Information, Communication and Society*, 17, no. 2, 2014, pp. 203-216.

<sup>180</sup> E. HARGITAI and A. HINNANT, "Digital inequality: Differences in young adults' use of the Internet," in *Communication Research*, vol. 35, no. 5, 2008, pp. 602-621.



groups. Moreover, the content and use of social media can also be influenced by socioeconomic status, with research suggesting that individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may be more likely to encounter negative or harmful content online.<sup>181</sup> This can impact their overall experience and comfort in engaging with social media platforms.

It is important to note that the relationship between socioeconomic status and access to social media is influenced by a range of factors, including education, employment, and geographic location. Addressing these disparities requires a multifaceted approach that considers both access to technology and digital literacy skills, as well as the broader social and economic factors that contribute to these disparities.

### **3.2.4. GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION**

Geographical location can also play a significant role in shaping disparities in people's access to and comfort with social media. As individuals living in rural or remote areas may face challenges in accessing high-speed internet and reliable connectivity, due to low signals, which can limit their ability to engage with social media platforms. This lack of access can contribute to feelings of isolation and hinder individuals' ability to stay connected with others and access information online.

Furthermore, individuals in geographically isolated areas may also have limited opportunities for in-person social interactions, making social media an important avenue for maintaining social connections and participating in online communities.<sup>182</sup> The lack of access to social media platforms in these areas can exacerbate feelings of social exclusion and limit individuals' ability to engage in digital social interactions. In addition, the content and use of social media can vary based on geographical location, with research suggesting that individuals in different regions may have different preferences for social media platforms and engage with online content in distinct ways.<sup>183</sup> This can impact individuals' comfort and familiarity with social media, as well as their ability to access and engage with relevant information and resources online. In addressing geographical disparities in access to social media requires investment in infrastructure and technology to improve internet connectivity in

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<sup>181</sup> E. HARGITAI, "The digital reproduction of inequality", in *Social Media and Society*, vol. 4, no. 3, 2018, pp. 936-944.

<sup>182</sup> K. N. HAMPTON et al., "Social media and the cost of caring", in *Information, Communication and Society*, vol. 18, no. 4, 2015, pp. 447-461.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*

rural and remote areas, as well as efforts to promote digital literacy and skills development in these communities.

### **3.2.5. CULTURAL AND LANGUAGE BARRIERS**

Cultural and language barriers can present significant disparities in people's access to and comfort with social media. Individuals from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds may encounter challenges in navigating and engaging with social media platforms that are primarily designed for a particular group or audience. This can impact their ability to access and share information, participate in online communities, and engage in digital social interactions.

Also, research has shown that language barriers can limit individuals' ability to fully utilize and benefit from social media platforms, as individuals may struggle to find content in their native language or may feel excluded from online conversations and communities.<sup>184</sup> Additionally, cultural differences in communication styles and social norms can impact individuals' comfort and confidence in using social media, as well as their ability to navigate and interpret online content.

Furthermore, individuals from minority cultural and linguistic backgrounds may also encounter discrimination and exclusion on social media platforms, which can contribute to feelings of discomfort and reluctance to engage with these platforms.<sup>185</sup> This can further exacerbate disparities in access to and comfort with social media among different cultural and linguistic groups.

To this effect, addressing cultural and language barriers in access to social media requires efforts to promote linguistic diversity and cultural inclusivity on social media platforms, as well as initiatives to support digital literacy and skills development for individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds.

### **3.3. THE NON-EXISTENCE OF EDITORIAL LINE IN SOCIAL MEDIA.**

The nonexistence of editorial lines in social media is a complex and multifaceted topic that requires a comprehensive analysis. Social media platforms, such as Facebook, X

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<sup>184</sup> E. HARGITAI and E. LITT, "The tweet smell of celebrity success: Explaining variation in Twitter adoption among a diverse group of young adults," in *New Media and Society*, vol. 13, no. 5, 2011, pp. 824-842.

<sup>185</sup> Z. TUFEKCI, *Twitter and Tear Gas: The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest*, Yale University Press, London 2017.

(Twitter), Instagram, and YouTube, have become powerful tools for communication and information sharing. However, unlike traditional media outlets that have established editorial lines and guidelines, social media platforms do not have a centralized editorial authority. This is because social media platforms are designed to be user-generated content platforms, where individuals can freely express their thoughts, opinions, and share information with others. This decentralized nature of social media allows for a wide range of perspectives and voices to be heard. Users can post content without any editorial oversight or approval process. According to Lee McIntyre, a philosopher and author, who has written extensively on the lack of a clear editorial line in social media platforms, points to the fact that this is due to freedom of speech, algorithmic nature of content distribution, reliance on user-generated content, and revenue driven mentality. Also, he argues that the lack of editorial oversight on social media has contributed to the proliferation of misinformation, conspiracy theories, and other forms of "post-truth" discourse.<sup>186</sup> He suggests that addressing this issue will require a fundamental rethinking of the business models and governance structures of these platforms, as well as the development of new regulatory frameworks to ensure that they prioritize the public good over private profit.<sup>187</sup>

### **3.3.1. FREEDOM OF SPEECH**

One of the key reasons for the nonexistence of editorial lines in social media is the principle of freedom of speech. The principle of freedom of speech is a fundamental human right, enshrined in various international human rights instruments, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights<sup>188</sup> and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.<sup>189</sup> Social media platforms prioritize the freedom of expression and aim to provide a space for individuals to share their ideas or the ability to express their opinions without censorship or interference, especially from the government. This means that users have the freedom to express their opinions, regardless of their accuracy or credibility. However, this lack of editorial oversight also opens the door for misinformation, fake news, and harmful content to spread rapidly on social media platforms. The absence of an editorial line means

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<sup>186</sup> L. MCINTYRE, *Post- Truth*, The MIT Press Essential Knowledge Series, London, 2018, p. 126.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>188</sup> UNITED NATIONS, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, Article 19. (Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers).

<sup>189</sup> UNITED NATIONS, *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, Article 19. (Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice).

that there is no systematic fact-checking or verification process in place. As a result, false information can easily go viral and mislead a large number of users.

Also, in the context of social media, the argument is that platforms should not impose editorial control or curation, as this would infringe on the free speech rights of their users.<sup>190</sup> The platforms often claim that they are merely providing a neutral platform for the exchange of ideas, and that they should not be held responsible for the content posted by their users.<sup>191</sup> However, this argument has been challenged by scholars and policymakers. Some argue that social media platforms have become de facto public squares, where a significant portion of public discourse takes place.<sup>192</sup> As such, they have a responsibility to ensure that these spaces are inclusive, safe, and conducive to meaningful dialogue.<sup>193</sup> Allowing unfettered hate speech, misinformation, or incitement to violence on these platforms can undermine the very principles of free speech and democratic discourse.<sup>194</sup>

Furthermore, the argument that social media platforms are neutral conduits for information has been criticized as a legal fiction. In reality, these platforms employ algorithms and content moderation policies that shape and curate the information that users see, often in ways that prioritize engagement and profitability over the public interest.<sup>195</sup> This raises questions about the extent to which these platforms can truly claim to be neutral arbiters of free speech. In response to these concerns, some jurisdictions have introduced or are considering regulations that would require social media platforms to adopt more robust content moderation practices, while still preserving the core principles of free speech.<sup>196</sup> The goal is to strike a balance between protecting individual rights and ensuring that these platforms do not become breeding grounds for harmful or undemocratic content.

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<sup>190</sup> T. GILLESPIE, "The Relevance of Algorithms." in *Media Technologies: Essays on Communication, Materiality, and Society*, edited by T. GILLESPIE, et al., MIT Press, 2014, pp. 167-194.

<sup>191</sup> K. KLONICK, "The New Governors: The People, Rules, and Processes Governing Online Speech." in *Harvard Law Review*, vol. 131, no. 6, 2018, pp. 1598-1670.

<sup>192</sup> J. M. BALKIN, "Free Speech in the Algorithmic Society: Big Data, Private Governance, and New School Speech Regulation," in *U.C. Davis Law Review*, vol.51, no.3, 2018, pp. 1149-1210.

<sup>193</sup> N. P. SUZOR, et al. "What Do We Mean When We Talk About Transparency? Toward Meaningful Transparency in Commercial Content Moderation." in *International Journal of Communication*, vol. 13, 2019, pp. 1526-1543.

<sup>194</sup> K. D. CITRON and H. NORTON, "Intermediaries and Hate Speech: Fostering Digital Citizenship for Our Information Age," in *Boston University Law Review*, vol. 91, no. 4, 2011, pp. 1435-1484.

<sup>195</sup> F. PASQUALE, *The Black Box Society: The Secret Algorithms That Control Money and Information*. Harvard University Press, 2015, pp. 19-54.

<sup>196</sup> D. KELLER, "Who Do You Sue? State and Platform Hybrid Power Over Online Speech," in *Hoover Institution Aegis*, Series Paper, no. 1902, 2019.

### 3.3.2. ALGORITHMIC NATURE OF CONTENT DISTRIBUTION

The algorithmic nature of content distribution on social media platforms is often cited as a reason for the lack of a clear editorial line. Social media algorithm is a complex set of rules and calculations used by social media platforms to prioritize the content that users see in their feeds. In other words, social media platforms use complex algorithms to determine which content is shown to users based on their preferences, interests, and engagement patterns. These algorithms prioritize engagement metrics such as likes, comments, and shares, rather than the accuracy or reliability of the content. This algorithmic approach creates filter bubbles and echo chambers where users are exposed to content that aligns with their existing beliefs and opinions. As a result, users may be less likely to encounter diverse perspectives or alternative viewpoints. This can further reinforce biases and limit the exposure to different editorial lines.

Furthermore, McIntyre points to social media platforms' use of algorithmic curation and personalization, undermines the development of a coherent editorial line.<sup>197</sup> These algorithms are designed to maximize user engagement, often by prioritizing content that aligns with users' existing beliefs and preferences, rather than presenting a balanced or diverse range of perspectives.<sup>198</sup>

Also, social media platforms rely heavily on algorithms to curate and distribute content to their users.<sup>199</sup> These algorithms are designed to maximize user engagement, time spent on the platform, and ultimately, advertising revenue.<sup>200</sup> The algorithms prioritize content that is likely to generate strong emotional reactions, controversy, or viral sharing, rather than content that may be more informative or balanced. This algorithmic curation has been criticized for creating "filter bubbles" and "echo chambers," where users are exposed primarily to content that reinforces their existing beliefs and biases, rather than being challenged with diverse perspectives,<sup>201</sup> as well as encourages intellectual isolation. The

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<sup>197</sup> L. MCINTYRE, *Post- Truth*, The MIT Press Essential Knowledge Series, London, 2018, p. 125.

<sup>198</sup> E. BAKSHY et al., "Exposure to ideologically diverse news and opinion on Facebook," in *Science*, vol. 348, no.6239, USA 2015, pp. 1130-1132.

<sup>199</sup> T. GILLESPIE, "The Relevance of Algorithms." *Media Technologies: Essays on Communication, Materiality, and Society*, edited by T. GILLESPIE et al., MIT Press, Cambridge 2014, pp. 167-194.

<sup>200</sup> S. ZUBOFF, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*. Public Affairs, New York, 2019, p. 704.

<sup>201</sup> L. MCINTYRE, *Post- Truth*, The MIT Press Essential Knowledge Series, London, 2018, p. 95.

algorithms are often opaque and their inner workings are not fully transparent to users or even the platforms themselves.<sup>202</sup>

In this context, the argument is that social media platforms cannot be expected to maintain a clear editorial line, as their content distribution is driven by these automated algorithms, rather than by human editorial judgment.<sup>203</sup> The platforms often claim that they are merely neutral conduits for user-generated content, and that they should not be held responsible for the nature or consequences of that content. However, this argument has been challenged by scholars and policymakers. They argue that the platforms' algorithms are not truly neutral, but rather reflect the design choices and priorities of the companies that create them.<sup>204</sup> The algorithms are often optimized to maximize engagement and revenue, rather than to promote the public good or to ensure the integrity of public discourse.<sup>205</sup>

Furthermore, the platforms do engage in some level of content moderation, even if it is not always transparent or consistent.<sup>206</sup> They make decisions about what content to remove or demonetize, and these decisions can have significant impacts on the information that users are exposed to.<sup>207</sup> This suggests that the platforms do exercise a degree of editorial control, even if it is not as overt as traditional media outlets. In response to these concerns, some jurisdictions have introduced or are considering regulations that would require greater transparency and accountability around the algorithms used by social media platforms. The goal is to ensure that these algorithms do not unduly distort or manipulate public discourse, and that users have a better understanding of how their information is being curated and distributed.

### 3.3.3. RELIANCE ON USER-GENERATED CONTENT

The reliance on user-generated content as a factor in the absence of editorial line in social media is a complex issue that has been explored by various scholars and experts. One

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<sup>202</sup> F. PASQUALE, *The Black Box Society: The Secret Algorithms That Control Money and Information*. Harvard University Press, 2015, pp. 19-54.

<sup>203</sup> K. KLONICK, "The New Governors: The People, Rules, and Processes Governing Online Speech." in *Harvard Law Review*, vol. 131, no. 6, 2018, pp. 1598-1670.

<sup>204</sup> D. B. MITTELSTADT et al., "The Ethics of Algorithms: Mapping the Debate," in *Big Data and Society*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2016, pp. 1-21.

<sup>205</sup> Z. TUFEKCI, "YouTube, the Great Radicalizer," in *The New York Times*, 10 Mar. 2018, [www.nytimes.com/2018/03/10/opinion/sunday/youtube-politics-radical.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/10/opinion/sunday/youtube-politics-radical.html).

<sup>206</sup> T. GILLESPIE, *Custodians of the Internet: Platforms, Content Moderation, and the Hidden Decisions That Shape Social Media*. Yale University Press, London 2018.

<sup>207</sup> N. P. SUZOR, et al. "What Do We Mean When We Talk About Transparency? Toward Meaningful Transparency in Commercial Content Moderation." in *International Journal of Communication*, vol. 13, 2019, pp. 1526-1543.

perspective on this topic is provided by Lee McIntyre, as he argues that the lack of an editorial line in social media platforms can contribute to the proliferation of misinformation and the erosion of shared truth.<sup>208</sup> This lack to him, is due social media platforms' reliance on user-generated content and their reluctance to take on the responsibilities associated with traditional media outlets, such as employing professional journalists and editors,<sup>209</sup> by positioning themselves as neutral conduits for information, rather than as publishers, the social media companies can avoid the legal and ethical obligations that come with exercising editorial control. He then, suggests that the reliance on user-generated content, where anyone can post and share information without the oversight of professional editors or fact-checkers, can lead to the spread of false, misleading, or biased information.<sup>210</sup> This, in turn, can undermine the public's ability to make informed decisions and can contribute to the polarization of political and social discourse.

Moreover, McIntyre highlights the importance of critical thinking in navigating the digital landscape, emphasizing the need for individuals to be able to evaluate the credibility and reliability of the information they encounter online. He suggests that the absence of an editorial line in social media can make it more challenging for users to distinguish between credible and non-credible sources, potentially leading to the acceptance and propagation of misinformation. This perspective is echoed by other scholars and experts who have examined the impact of social media on the information ecosystem. In their book "The Misinformation Age: How False Beliefs Spread," Cailin O'Connor and James Owen Weatherall, argue that the decentralized and participatory nature of social media can contribute to the spread of misinformation, as users are more likely to share content that aligns with their existing beliefs and biases.<sup>211</sup> Similarly, in "The Age of Surveillance Capitalism," Shoshana Zuboff highlights how the business models of social media platforms, which rely on user engagement and data extraction, can incentivize the amplification of sensational or polarizing content, further exacerbating the problem of misinformation.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> L. MCINTYRE, *Post- Truth*, The MIT Press Essential Knowledge Series, London, 2018, p. 95.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid*, p. 124.

<sup>210</sup> L. MCINTYRE, *The scientific attitude: Defending science from denial, fraud, and pseudoscience*, MIT Press, 2020.

<sup>211</sup> C. O'CONNOR C and J. O. WEATHERALL, *The misinformation age: How false beliefs spread*, Yale University Press, London 2019, p. 116.

<sup>212</sup> S. ZUBOFF, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*. Public Affairs, New York, 2019, p. 704.

In summation, the reliance on user-generated content can be seen as a contributing factor to the absence of an editorial line in social media, as the lack of gatekeepers or curators to filter and verify the information shared on these platforms creates an environment where misinformation thrive, potentially undermining the public's trust in the information they encounter online.

### **3.3.4. REVENUE DRIVEN MENTALITY**

Social media platforms are commercial entities, driven primarily by user engagement and advertising revenue and maximize profits for their shareholders. This revenue-driven mentality has been identified as a key factor in the platforms' approach to content moderation and curation. For the more time users spend on the platform and the more they interact with content, the more valuable they become to advertisers. This business model incentivizes platforms to prioritize content that generates high levels of engagement, regardless of its editorial quality or accuracy.<sup>213</sup> To this, McIntyre argues that the revenue-driven business model of social media companies is a key factor in the absence of a coherent editorial line, as he notes that these platforms are primarily focused on maximizing user engagement and advertising revenue, which incentivizes the amplification of sensational, controversial, and emotionally-charged content, rather than the curation of high-quality, factual information. Also, McIntyre explains that, social media platforms "are not in the business of truth-seeking or public service; they are in the business of profit-making."<sup>214</sup> This profit-driven approach, he argues, leads the platforms to prioritize user engagement over the integrity of the information shared on their networks.

Furthermore, it is important to note that while social media platforms do not have centralized editorial lines, individual users and organizations can still exercise editorial control over their own content. Users can curate their feeds, follow specific accounts, and engage with content that aligns with their preferences. Similarly, organizations and influencers can establish their own editorial guidelines and standards for the content they produce and share. However, these individual editorial lines are subjective and vary greatly from one user or organization to another. They are not enforced or regulated by a central authority, which means that there is no universal standard for editorial lines on social media. As Shoshana Zuboff argues in her book "The Age of Surveillance Capitalism," social media

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<sup>213</sup> E. BAKSHY et al., "Exposure to ideologically diverse news and opinion on Facebook," in *Science*, vol. 348, no.6239, USA 2015, pp. 1130-1132.

<sup>214</sup> L. MCINTYRE, *Post-Truth*, The MIT Press Essential Knowledge Series, London, 2018, p. 123.



platforms are not merely neutral conduits for information, but are actively engaged in the “extraction, analysis, and commodification of human experience” for the purpose of generating profit.<sup>215</sup> This profit-driven approach can lead to the platforms being reluctant to implement robust content moderation policies that might reduce user engagement or advertising revenue.<sup>216</sup>

Furthermore, the platforms’ reliance on user-generated content means that they can avoid the costs and responsibilities associated with traditional media outlets, which employ professional journalists and editors to curate and fact-check the information they publish.<sup>217</sup> By positioning themselves as neutral platforms, rather than as publishers, the social media companies can avoid the legal and ethical obligations that come with exercising editorial control.<sup>218</sup> This revenue-driven mentality has been criticized by scholars and policymakers, who argue that it undermines the platforms’ ability to maintain a clear editorial line and ensure the integrity of public discourse.<sup>219</sup> The platforms’ prioritization of engagement and revenue over the public good can lead to the amplification of misinformation, hate speech, and other harmful content that can have significant societal consequences.<sup>220</sup>

In response to these concerns, some jurisdictions have introduced or are considering regulations that would require social media platforms to be more transparent about their content moderation practices and to take greater responsibility for the content they host.<sup>221</sup> The goal is to ensure that these platforms are not solely driven by profit motives, but also consider the broader public interest and the impact of their actions on democratic discourse.

In conclusion, the challenges of controlling the sources of information on social media are multifaceted and complex. One major difficulty lies in the inability to control everyone's access to social media platforms, the significant gap in people's intellectual comfort levels with accessing and interpreting information on social media and the absence of a clear

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<sup>215</sup> S. ZUBOFF, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*. Public Affairs, New York, 2019, p. 704.

<sup>216</sup> T. GILLESPIE, “*Custodians of the Internet: Platforms, Content Moderation, and the Hidden Decisions That Shape Social Media*.” Yale University Press, London 2018.

<sup>217</sup> V. PICKARD, “The Rise of Non-Profit Journalism.” in *The Routledge Companion to Media and Activism*, edited by G. MEIKLE, Routledge, London 2018, pp. 159-168.

<sup>218</sup> K. KLONICK, “The New Governors: The People, Rules, and Processes Governing Online Speech.” in *Harvard Law Review*, vol. 131, no. 6, 2018, pp. 1598-1670.

<sup>219</sup> J. M. BALKIN, “Free Speech in the Algorithmic Society: Big Data, Private Governance, and New School Speech Regulation,” in *U.C. Davis Law Review*, vol.51, no.3, 2018, pp. 1149-1210.

<sup>220</sup> Z. TUFEKCI, “YouTube, the Great Radicalizer.” in *The New York Times*, 10 Mar. 2018, [www.nytimes.com/2018/03/10/opinion/sunday/youtube-politics-radical.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/10/opinion/sunday/youtube-politics-radical.html).

<sup>221</sup> D. KELLER, “Who Do You Sue? State and Platform Hybrid Power Over Online Speech,” in *Hoover Institution Aegis*, Series Paper, no. 1902, 2019.

editorial line on social media platforms. In light of these challenges, it is evident that controlling the sources of information on social media requires a multifaceted approach that addresses issues of access, literacy, and governance. Efforts to combat misinformation and promote responsible information sharing must involve collaboration between platforms, users, and regulatory bodies to establish standards and practices that uphold the integrity of information online.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE QUESTION OF CASTING ON SOCIAL MEDIA

This chapter, unlike the previous chapter which focused on the difficulty in controlling the sources of information, this one focuses on the casting on social media. This question of casting on social media has become a pressing concern in today's digital age, as individuals and organizations navigate the complex ethical and legal landscape of online communication. To navigate through this, we shall approach this in three different ways, the confusion between private and public life, the ignorance of the limitation of our rights of publishing on social media, and fake news: the risks of social destabilization.

#### 4.1. THE CONFUSION BETWEEN PRIVATE AND PUBLIC LIFE

Social media helps humans to cast or share their information online, for jobs and others. And the users often share personal information, opinions, and experiences without fully considering the implications of their actions or don't understand the aspects of casting on social media. One significant aspect of casting on social media is the confusion between private and public life. With the proliferation of social media platforms, individuals often struggle to distinguish between their personal and professional lives. People often share aspects of their personal lives on social media platforms, while also using these platforms for professional purposes, such as networking or promoting their work. This overlap can lead to misunderstandings about the intended audience or purpose of the content shared. As a consequence, this lack of understanding or blurring of boundaries can lead to unintended consequences, such as compromising or loss of individual privacy or harm one's reputation.

##### 4.1.1. UNDERSTANDING PRIVATE AND PUBLIC LIFE

The distinction between private and public life is a fundamental aspect of individual and societal well-being. Generally, private life refers to one's personal affairs, relationships, and activities that are typically kept confidential or shared with a select group of people. On the other hand, public life encompasses activities and interactions that occur in public spaces or are visible to a broader audience, such as professional endeavors, political participation, and community engagement. This division is crucial for preserving individual autonomy, freedom of expression, and the sanctity of personal information.<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> A. F. WESTIN, "Privacy and Freedom," in *Washington and Lee Law Review*, vol. 25, no. 1, New York, Athenum, 1967, pp. 166- 170.

Furthermore, private life is considered a fundamental human right, and it is protected by various legal frameworks and social norms. This includes one's personal relationships, financial information, health records, and other sensitive data that an individual may not wish to disclose publicly. In other words, private life on social media pertains to content that is meant for a more intimate circle of friends or family members rather than the general public. This may include personal photos or videos not related to work or public interests; sharing thoughts and feelings about sensitive topics; engaging in discussions with close friends; or simply sharing moments from everyday life without any specific agenda for wider dissemination.

In addition, public life on social media refers to content related to one's professional pursuits, career achievements, political views or involvement, community activities, or any other aspect of someone's life that is intended for a wider audience beyond their immediate circle of friends or acquaintances. As individuals in public life are expected to be accountable for their actions and decisions, as they impact the broader community.<sup>223</sup> In summation, it is important to note that individuals have different comfort levels when it comes to sharing aspects of their private lives online. Some people prefer strict boundaries between their private and public lives while others may not mind blurring those lines. However, it is essential to be mindful of how one's actions may impact others and ensure that sensitive information is not carelessly shared publicly without consent.

#### **4.1.2. PRIVACY**

Privacy is the ability of an individual or group to seclude themselves, their information, and their actions from public scrutiny.<sup>224</sup> Also it is a fundamental human right that is essential for maintaining autonomy, dignity, and respect. It allows individuals to control their information and decide how and when it shared with others. Privacy is crucial for protecting individuals from unwanted intrusion, surveillance, and potential harm.

Privacy is essential for the development of personal identity, the fostering of intimate relationships, and the exercise of individual freedoms.<sup>225</sup> It enables individuals to explore their

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<sup>223</sup> J. WEINTRAUB, "The theory and politics of the public/private distinction", in *Public and private in thought and practice: Perspectives on a grand dichotomy*, J. Weintraub and K. Kumar (eds), University of Chicago Press, 1997, pp. 1-42.

<sup>224</sup> I. ALTMAN, *The environment and social behavior: Privacy, personal space, territory, and crowding*. Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, New York 1975, pp. 1-256.

<sup>225</sup> C. FRIED, "Privacy" in *Yale Law Journal*, vol. 77, no. 3, London 1968, pp. 475-493.

thoughts, emotions, and behaviors without the fear of public judgment or scrutiny.<sup>226</sup> Privacy also plays a crucial role in safeguarding personal security and protecting individuals from potential harm or exploitation.<sup>227</sup>

While privacy is primarily associated with the individual, it also has a public dimension. Public privacy concerns the protection of sensitive information and the preservation of personal boundaries within the broader social and political spheres. Maintaining a balance between individual and public privacy is essential for ensuring the well-being of both the individual and the community. And when it comes to social media, there seems to be this lack or compromise of privacy, and this compromise on social media platforms could be as the result of these reasons: default settings as users may not always be aware of these settings and unintentionally share more than they intend, also data collection by social media companies that could fall into the hands of the third party, and also lack of security measures, as some users do not take adequate measures.

#### **4.1.3. REASONS FOR CONFUSION BETWEEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LIFE**

The blurring of boundaries between private and public life has become increasingly prevalent, particularly in the digital age filled with social media platforms. This confusion can be attributed to factors at both the individual and public levels. At the individual level, privacy is important for maintaining personal boundaries, protecting sensitive information, and preserving one's identity. It allows individuals to have control over their personal data, communication, and with others. Privacy also plays a significant role in fostering trust and building relationships both online and offline. But some individuals don't know this, and this could be because of various reasons like: Ignorance of once private life on social media, which refers to the unintentional sharing of personal information or engaging in activities that expose one's privacy to a wider audience. This can happen due to a lack of awareness about privacy settings, the implications of sharing certain content, or the potential risks with online interactions. It is essential for individuals to be mindful of what they share online and take proactive steps to their privacy, as many individuals are unaware of the implications of sharing personal information online, leading to the unintentional exposure of their private lives.<sup>228</sup> Also, the desire for social validation and attention can drive individuals to share

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<sup>226</sup> J. RACHELS, "Why privacy is important," in *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol. 4, no. 4, 1975, pp. 323-333.

<sup>227</sup> H. NISSENBAUM, *Privacy in context: Technology, policy, and the integrity of social life*, Stanford University Press, California 2010.

<sup>228</sup> D. M. BOYD, *It's complicated: The social lives of networked teens*, Yale University Press, London 2014.

intimate details of their lives on social media platforms, blurring the line between private and public.<sup>229</sup> This is a common behavior where individuals seek approval, recognition, or affirmation from others through likes, comments, and shares. This desire for validation can lead people to share personal information, photos, or updates that they may not feel comfortable sharing in other contexts. The quest for validation can sometimes override concerns about privacy and lead to oversharing or risky behaviors online.

Furthermore, at the public level, social media platforms are characterized by a vast amount of content and traffic generated by users worldwide. This content includes personal updates, photos, videos, comments, and interactions that contribute to the overall user experience. The high volume of information shared on social media can make it challenging to maintain privacy and control over one's personal data. This is because social media platforms and digital media outlets often prioritize content that generates high engagement and traffic, incentivizing the sharing of personal information and the blurring of private and public spheres. Also, the complex and often opaque privacy policies of technology companies, coupled with their extensive data mining practices, can undermine individuals' understanding of the boundaries between their private and public lives.<sup>230</sup> As users may not always be aware of how their data is being used or shared, leading to potential privacy risks and vulnerabilities. It is essential for individuals to understand the privacy policies of social media platforms and take steps to protect their personal information online.

#### **4.1.4. CONSEQUENCES OF CONFUSING BETWEEN PRIVATE AND PUBLIC LIFE ON SOCIAL MEDIA**

The confusion between private and public life on social media can have significant consequences, including: Damage to reputation and credibility, as oversharing of personal information or inappropriate content on social media can harm an individual's reputation, credibility, and relationships with others,<sup>231</sup> especially when individuals share personal information or opinions that are meant for private conversations, they risk being misunderstood or judged negatively by the public. This can result in a tarnished reputation, as people may perceive them as unprofessional or unreliable. Furthermore, privacy breaches and

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<sup>229</sup> Z. TUFEKCI, "Grooming, gossip, Facebook and MySpace: What can we learn about these sites from those who won't assimilate?" in *Information, Communication and Society*, 2008, pp. 544-564.

<sup>230</sup> S. ZUBOFF, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*. Public Affairs, New York, 2019, p. 704.

<sup>231</sup> A. E. MARWICK and D. BOYD, "I tweet honestly, I tweet passionately: Twitter users, context collapse, and the imagined audience," in *New Media and Society*, vol. 13, 2011, pp. 114-133.

security risks, as public disclosure of sensitive personal information shared on public platforms can be accessed by unauthorized individuals, potentially leading to identity theft or other forms of cybercrime and can compromise one's safety and well-being. Additionally, it can lead to emotional and psychological impacts, as sharing personal struggles or vulnerabilities publicly without proper context may lead to misunderstandings or judgment from others, causing emotional distress or anxiety, and a loss of personal boundaries, potentially leading to mental health issues.<sup>232</sup>

Furthermore, mixing private and public life on social media has professional and career consequences. As inappropriate or unprofessional behavior on social media can negatively impact an individual's career prospects and employment opportunities.<sup>233</sup> In the professional realm, mixing private and public life on social media can have negative consequences such as loss of job opportunities or damage to professional relationships. Employers may view inappropriate content shared online as a reflection of an individual's character, potentially impacting their career advancement. Finally, confusing between private and public life on social media can strain relationships and social dynamics. The public sharing of personal information can strain interpersonal relationships with friends, family members, colleagues, or even romantic partners and disrupt social dynamics within an individual's personal and professional networks, as miscommunication through online posts may lead to misunderstandings or conflicts that could have been avoided if boundaries were respected. In summation, it is essential for individuals to maintain a healthy balance between their online presence and personal life to avoid these negative outcomes.

#### **4.2. THE IGNORANCE OF THE LIMITATION OF OUR RIGHTS OF PUBLISHING ON SOCIAL MEDIA**

Another crucial aspect in casting on social media, is the ignorance of the limitation of our rights when it comes to publishing content on social media platforms. Many users are unaware that their posts can have legal consequences or that they may be held accountable for defamatory statements or hate speech. This lack of understanding can result in individuals unknowingly infringing upon others' rights or engaging in behavior that violates community standards, this is usually because users sometimes believe that they have the absolute freedom

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<sup>232</sup> TURKLE Sherry, *Alone together: Why we expect more from technology and less from each other*, Basic Books, New York, 2011, p. 384.

<sup>233</sup> D. KLUEMPER et al., "Social networking websites, personality ratings, and the organizational context: More than meets the eye?" in *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 2012, pp. 1143-1172.

to express themselves without considering the potential consequences of their actions, such as the spread of misinformation, hate speech, or defamation. So, understanding these limitations is crucial for maintaining a responsible online presence and avoiding potential legal consequences.

#### 4.2.1. AN UNDERSTANDING OF RIGHTS

Rights are the fundamental freedoms and entitlements that individuals and groups possess, which are recognized and protected by legal and ethical frameworks. These rights are essential for the preservation of human dignity, the pursuit of personal and collective goals, and the functioning of a just society. According to William Wallace:

A right is a person's moral claim to the means of reaching an end that is his and that he is objectively responsible for reaching... He has the right of association with other men in the pursuit of common interests, and a right to his good name in the various communities to which he belongs.<sup>234</sup>

That is to say that a man has a right to live freely and also a right to his good name, whether it is physical or online communities. Also, rights can be classified into various categories, including natural rights, civil and political rights, economic and social rights, and cultural rights. These rights are often enshrined in national constitutions, international human rights treaties, and various legal instruments. The specific rights possessed by individuals and groups may vary across different jurisdictions and legal systems.

Furthermore, while rights are essential, they are not absolute or unlimited. The exercise of one's rights may be subject to certain limitations or restrictions to prevent harm, protect the rights of others, or maintain social order. These limitations are typically defined and enforced through legal and regulatory mechanisms.

Besides, the rights of publishing on social media are a subset of the broader rights of freedom of expression and freedom of information. Individuals generally have the right to share information, opinions, and creative content on social media platforms, within the framework of applicable laws and platform policies.<sup>235</sup> Also, individuals have the right to publish a wide range of information on social media, including personal experiences, opinions, news, and creative works.

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<sup>234</sup> W. A. WALLACE, *The elements of philosophy*, St. Paul Press, New York, 1977, pp. 174-175.

<sup>235</sup> J. M. BALKIN, "Free Speech in the Algorithmic Society: Big Data, Private Governance, and New School Speech Regulation," in *U.C. Davis Law Review*, vol.51, no.3, 2018, pp. 1149-1210.



To exercise the right to publish on social media responsibly, individuals should familiarize themselves with the relevant laws, regulations, and platform policies that govern online content. They should also consider the potential impact and consequences of their published content, and strive to uphold ethical principles of respect, truthfulness, and social responsibility.

#### **4.2.2. FACTORS FAVORING THE RIGHTS OF PUBLISHING ON SOCIAL MEDIA**

Several factors contribute to the protection and promotion of the rights of publishing on social media: Free Speech. this is a fundamental right to freedom of expression, which is recognized in many national and international legal frameworks, provides a strong basis for the right to publish on social media.<sup>236</sup> And this free speech on social media is due to social media platforms' terms of service and content policies, as most social media platforms have established their own terms of service and content policies that generally allow for a wide range of user-generated content, with some limitations.<sup>237</sup> However, restriction of speech and content are based on platform policies, for social media platforms also reserve the right to restrict or remove content that violates their policies, which may include limits on hate speech, incitement to violence, harassment, or other forms of harmful or illegal content.<sup>238</sup>

Furthermore, responsible social media publishing favours the rights of publishing on social media. That is to say that for on to exercise the rights of publishing on social media the person should be responsibly. First, by understanding platform policies and legal guidelines, that help and guide one on how to publish, so users, should familiarize themselves with the terms of service, content policies, and legal guidelines of the social media platforms they use. And also, practice mindful and ethical content creation, this is to say that users should strive to create and publish content that is truthful, respectful, and mindful of its potential impact on others and society and not to tarnish the image of others or incite violence in the society. And lastly by seeking legal advice when necessary, for in cases where the legality or appropriateness of content is unclear, users should consider seeking legal advice to ensure they are not infringing on the rights of others or violating the law.

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<sup>236</sup> M. H. REDISH, "The value of free speech," in *University of Pennsylvania Law Review*, vol. 130, no. 3, 1982, pp. 591-645.

<sup>237</sup> K. KLONICK, "The New Governors: The People, Rules, and Processes Governing Online Speech." in *Harvard Law Review*, vol. 131, no. 6, 2018, pp. 1598-1670.

<sup>238</sup> N. P. SUZOR, *Lawless: The secret rules that govern our digital lives*. Cambridge University Press, 2019.

### **4.2.3. LIMITATIONS TO THE RIGHTS OF PUBLISHING ON SOCIAL MEDIA**

While the rights of publishing on social media are extensive, they are not without limitations. These limitations are primarily shaped by legal and ethical considerations. In the context of the legal limitations, which are limitations based on laws meant to prevent the abuse of social media, like the defamation laws, as users may be held legally liable for publishing false or malicious statements that harm the reputation of others. Also, copyright and intellectual property rights, as must respect the intellectual property rights of others and refrain from unauthorized use of copyrighted material. Lastly, privacy and data protection rights or regulations, must respect the privacy rights of individuals and comply with relevant data protection laws and regulations.

Furthermore, the rights of publishing and limited by ethical limitations. The law of morality states that do good and avoid evil, to do so one must be responsible. Responsibility to avoid harm and respect others, as users should exercise caution and consideration to ensure their published content does not cause harm, infringe on the rights of others, or contribute to social division and conflict. Also, maintaining integrity and credibility, as users should strive to publish truthful, accurate, and transparent information to maintain their personal and professional integrity and credibility.<sup>239</sup> And lastly, balancing personal expression with social impact as users should consider the broader social impact of their published content and strike a balance between personal expression and the responsible use of their rights.

### **4.2.4. CONSEQUENCES OF IGNORANCE OF THE LIMITATIONS OF OUR RIGHTS IN PUBLISHING ON SOCIAL MEDIA**

Ignorance of the limitations of our rights in publishing on social media can lead to several consequences, including: damage to personal and professional reputation, as inappropriate, unethical, or illegal content published on social media can significantly harm an individual's reputation and credibility. Also, potential legal liabilities as individuals may face legal consequences, such as defamation lawsuits or copyright infringement claims, for publishing content that violates the rights of others. Furthermore, suspension or termination of social media account, as social media platforms may suspend or terminate user accounts that repeatedly violate their content policies or terms of service.<sup>240</sup> Lastly, cause conflict and hatred, as ignorance of the limitations of publishing rights and what to post can lead to the

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<sup>239</sup> A. E. MARWICK, *Status update: Celebrity, publicity, and branding in the social media age*. Yale University Press, London 2013.

<sup>240</sup> N. P. SUZOR, *Lawless: The secret rules that govern our digital lives*. Cambridge University Press, 2019.

spread of misinformation, hate speech, and content that contributes to social discord and social disharmony.

### **4.3. FAKE NEWS: THE RISKS OF SOCIAL DESTABILIZATION**

The advancement in science and technology has led us to a brighter future. No human being with the likeness of pleasures, comfort and leisure will not admire the goodness of what we have been able to achieve for the past centuries. The advancement in technology has brought enormous and wonderful things as well as some evil things. The advancement in technology especially with communication and artificial intelligence leads man to a blissful future as well as self-destructive social norms. These self-destructive social norms are due to fake news, as fake news poses a significant threat to social stability in today's digital landscape. With misinformation spreading rapidly across social media platforms, it becomes increasingly challenging to discern fact from fiction. We shall focus on fake news as a risk of social destabilization as a problem of our present society which presents itself as danger to our social life and social norms. The risk of social destabilization because of fake news is a serious issue of major concern today, as this phenomenon can have severe consequences for society as a whole, including undermining trust in institutions, worsening political division, and even inciting violence.

#### **4.3.1. SOCIAL DESTABILIZATION**

Social destabilization refers to the disruption of the normal functioning and cohesion of a society. Or it is destruction of the principles on which our society is build. It involves the change and dissolving of our social norms to which are replaced with artificial principles. It can manifest in various forms, such as political instability, economic crises, social divisions, and the breakdown of public institutions and trust.<sup>241</sup> We shall critically examine how fake news destabilizes the society, by considering, the causes, the effects and the aim social destabilization.

The causes of social destabilization can be complex and multifaceted, but some common factors include economic inequality, political polarization, ethnic or religious tensions, and the erosion of social institutions and norms. As the emergence and spread of misinformation and disinformation, commonly known as "fake news," contributes

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<sup>241</sup> H. ECKSTEIN, "On the etiology of internal wars," in *History and Theory*, vol. 4, no. 2, 1964, pp. 133-163.

significantly to social destabilization.<sup>242</sup> That is why, one of the main causes of social destabilization according to Denise-Marie, is fake spread, because people who spread the information are ignorant of the truthfulness of the new.<sup>243</sup> For Denise, many Americans who share fake news on social media might not lack media literacy skills, however there are higher chances that they do not stop to check the accuracy and a new study to suggest.<sup>244</sup> She explains that people share fake new on social media simply because they are inattention. Another aspect why people share fake new is because of partisanship, which drives major decisions especially in politics. The present social media platforms have contributed in the spread of fake new. She explains that the media platforms allow users to scroll quickly through mix of serious news and emotionally engaging content while receiving instantaneous quantified social feedback on their sharing, which has higher frequency of discouraging people from reflecting on the accuracy of the authors write on the paper.

Furthermore, the effects of social destabilization can be far-reaching and devastating, impacting individuals, communities, and entire nations. These effects can include the breakdown of social cohesion, increased violence and civil unrest, the undermining of democratic institutions, and the weakening of a society's resilience to external shocks and challenges. Also, according to Suada Ajdarpasic, one major effect of social destabilization is unemployment of the young people.<sup>245</sup> She answers two questions on the effects of social destabilization by explaining that some effects are level of employment and poverty in low developing countries around the world. Some of the major effects is social instability involve, less income generating activities for the citizens of a particular country. Degradation of the society which is a very serious ill that our current societies are experiencing. We also have negative psychological consensus which shapes the views of people and their understanding of social and economic norms in the function of the society. Another aspect is indebtedness, people cannot have a good social interaction if they are indebted to others. low self-esteem in a contributing factor to the social instability and the increase in stress and other life draining activities that people daily experience in low developing countries. And finally, we have social pressure and social demoralization of the people which contributes to a greater amount

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<sup>242</sup> C. WARDLE and H. DERAKHSHAN, *Information Disorder: Toward an Interdisciplinary Framework for Research and Policy Making*, Council of Europe, 2017.

<sup>243</sup> O. DENISE-MARIE, "why do Americans share so much fake news? One of the big reasons is that they aren't paying attention, new research suggests" in *The Journalist's Resource Information the News*, March 17 2021.

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>245</sup> S. AJDARPASIC, "Unemployment as a crucial factor of Social Destabilization," in *The Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, June 2014.

to the present state of affairs. These and many others are some the effects of social destabilization.

The ultimate aim of social destabilization, whether intentional or unintentional, is to undermine the stability, unity, and resilience of a society, often for political, economic, or ideological purposes.<sup>246</sup> This can serve the interests of various actors, including foreign adversaries, domestic extremist groups, or even individuals or organizations seeking to disrupt the status quo for their own gain. Furthermore, there are many other reasons why there exist social instability in the society. Some of these reasons included the outdated institutions and organization that guarded the society before the period of social destabilization. When institutions and organization are no longer capable of protecting the citizens, they are not of important again. According to L. E. Grinin and A. V. Korotayev, the concept of social destabilization can be observed as a phenomenon of social dynamics which involve a whole range of things.<sup>247</sup> They explain from a historical perspective that the idea of social destabilization is an inevitable stage in the history of developing societies. Therefore, the aim of social destabilization according to them is a historical occurrence that cannot be avoided. They add to this the failure of institution showing the reaction of people taking the matters of things by themselves. They explain citing the example of U.S. 2016 and 2020 presidential election which caused a considerable division between the American society till date ever since the civil war in the U.S. According to them. The aim of social destabilization is resolving the mistakes committed by the institutions and organizations on the society. To them, the world–system is a whole subject of destabilization, this can be seen with the Covid-19 that shocked many countries, this pandemic caused a rift in many societies across the world.

#### **4.3.2. UNDERSTANDING FAKE NEWS AND ITS ROLE IN SOCIAL DESTABILIZATION**

Fake news as we saw above, is defined as intentionally false or misleading information presented as fact. This fake news, has emerged as a significant contributor to social destabilization.<sup>248</sup> This, makes us to ask about the characteristics of fake and its role in social destabilization. Fake news is often characterized by its sensationalized, emotionally-charged

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<sup>246</sup> J. GALTUNG, “A structural theory of aggression,” in *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1964, pp. 95-119.

<sup>247</sup> L. E. GRININ and A. V. KOROTAYEV, “Introduction. Destabilization as a Phenomenon of Social Dynamics” in *History and Mathematics: Entropy and Destabilization*, 2023, pp. 5–18.

<sup>248</sup> H. ALLCOTT and M. GENTZKOW, Social media and fake news in the 2016 election. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 2017, 211-236.

content, its lack of factual basis, and its rapid and widespread dissemination through social media and other online platforms.<sup>249</sup> It can take various forms, from completely fabricated stories to the selective or distorted reporting of real events.<sup>250</sup> Furthermore, the characteristics of fake news that make it visible to the public is that fake news has in the first place a high volume. The amount of news that is fake is share virally in the internet without users being aware of it as fake. That is one of the characteristics of fake news. According to X. Zhang et A. Ghorbani, the variety of fake news share is one of the easier character of fake news that one can detect through the variety of news share, like rumors, satire news, fake reviews, misinformation, fake advertisements, conspiracy theories, false statement by politicians and many others.<sup>251</sup> Some fake news are detected from the intention to mislead and confuse people. Another character of fake news is the velocity, is so swift. Fake news creators are short lived and wide spread across the globe. They are like a transmission flash in order to avoid detection by the detection systems. The fact that fake news creators make themselves unidentified online makes fake news even more difficult.

Furthermore, the motivations behind the creation and spread of fake news can vary, ranging from political agendas and financial incentives to the simple desire to sow confusion and discord.<sup>252</sup> Actors behind the production and distribution of fake news may include state-sponsored actors, political operatives, or even individuals or groups seeking to manipulate public opinion for their own benefit.<sup>253</sup> Put in another sense, the motivation behind the sharing of fake news is a key factor in the examination of the concept. Given the fact that people spread the fake news without being aware as seen above. The motivation behind sharing fake news is hidden behind the need to avoid being deceived by those sharing the fake news. According to Jean Tsang, the motivation behind the spread and sharing of fake news is found in the motivating reasoning that plays in the spread of fake news.<sup>254</sup> For him, people turn to share fake news simple for the reasons that they think of different views about the news.

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<sup>249</sup> M. LAZER, et al., "The science of fake news," in *Science*, vol.359, no.6380, 2018, pp.1094-1096.

<sup>250</sup> S. VOSOUGHI et al. "The spread of true and false news online", in *Science*, vol.359, no.6380, 2018, pp.1146-1151.

<sup>251</sup> X. ZHANG and A. GHORBANI, "An overview of online fake news: Characterization, detection, and discussion" in *the Canadian Institute for Cybersecurity (CIC)*, Faculty of Computer Science, University of New Brunswick (UNB), 2020.

<sup>252</sup> C. WARDLE and H. DERAKHSHAN, *Information Disorder: Toward an Interdisciplinary Framework for Research and Policy Making*, Council of Europe, 2017.

<sup>253</sup> P. N. HOWARD et al., "Algorithms, bots, and political communication in the US 2016 election: The challenge of automated political communication for election law and administration," in *Journal of Information Technology and Politics*, 2018, pp. 81-93.

<sup>254</sup> S. J. TSANG, "Motivated Fake News Perception: The Impact of News Sources and Policy Support on Audiences' Assessment of News Fakeness" in *the Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, vol. 98, no. 2, 2020.

Many people who share the news are of two different camps, those who do not think it is fake news and those who think it is fake. Hence the non-believers of fake news will always share and spread the false information as true. Many people also believe the fake news to be fake at varying degrees and so go on spreading the false information and other things. Another aspect why many people share the fake news especially those using online forums and platforms, is that they do not have a proof of the news as fake or rumors, hence they believe what is before them. He further explores that people believe in WhatsApp in non-authoritarian and much controlled countries to be a place for marketing and privacy. Hence, they do not really believe in the existence of fake news and the realities because of their conception of the various platforms and forums which they use in communication and doing business and marketing activities.

Moreover, the internet, and particularly social media platforms, have become the primary channels for the rapid and widespread dissemination of fake news. These platforms, with their algorithms and business models that prioritize engagement over accuracy, have created an environment that is highly conducive to the spread of misinformation and disinformation.<sup>255</sup> Also, the dissemination of fake news in platforms and channels is something serious because these are the mediums which fake news find its way out into the public for public consumption. According to Servers and Schneider, citizen journalism has accelerated the spread of fake news, through their activities and social media interactions.<sup>256</sup> The spread of fake news is aided by platforms and social media channels where people meet for entertainment, marketing, and other public interested activities. According to Jean Tsang, the dissemination of fake news is experienced in platforms like WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook, TikTok, Instagram and many others.<sup>257</sup> Servers and Schneider explain that what accounts for the dissemination of fake news is found in online news sites and digital intermediaries which is done by mostly journalists in a threat to democracy. According to him, journalism today has a new look which involves the aspect of people getting news through digital platforms and channels, hence the advancement in technology enables the public to get the news in real time. From the data presented by him, a 2016 survey found that 35% of people in the UK now use social media to access the news, for those under 35 years old, 41% used Facebook and 20%

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<sup>255</sup> A. E. MARWICK, and Lewis, R. Media manipulation and disinformation online. Data & Society Research Institute, 2017.

<sup>256</sup> B. SIERVERS and P. SCHNEIDER, "The Civic Media Crisis and What Philanthropy Can Do," in *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, 2017. (Accessed 05 May 2024)

<sup>257</sup> S. J. TSANG, "Motivated Fake News Perception: The Impact of News Sources and Policy Support on Audiences' Assessment of News Fakeness" in *the Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, vol. 98, no. 2, 2020.

used Twitter as a weekly source.<sup>258</sup> Thus to him the activities of journalist have contributed to digital dissemination information. They have contributed in blurring up the truth between the truth and falsehood.

#### 4.3.3. THE IMPACT OF FAKE NEWS ON SOCIAL STABILITY

Fake news can have a profoundly destabilizing effect on social stability, manifesting in various ways like: undermining trust in institutions and Media. It should be understood that distrust in institutions is associated with reasons for sharing unverified information. According to Van Zoonen et ali, the effects and consequences of fake news on institutions is so disastrous to level, many institutions do no longer possess the trust they had because fake new has place a vacuum of their authority authenticity and reality with the general public.<sup>259</sup>

This undermining trust in institutions and media by fake news, erodes public trust in traditional media, government institutions, and other authoritative sources of information, making it increasingly difficult for citizens to distinguish fact from fiction.<sup>260</sup> This, in turn, can undermine the legitimacy of these institutions and the foundations of a well-functioning democratic society,<sup>261</sup> as citizens become increasingly skeptical of the information they receive from these institutions. It as well as hampers the ability of these institutions to effectively govern and respond to societal challenges.<sup>262</sup> Without exaggeration, the calamities of fake new on public trust are frightful given that news is now a commodity which can be sold like goods which have durable (true) and non-durable (fake news). The erosive aspect of fake new on social media has taken away trust in government maintaining media and their authority, contributing to the fragmentation of a shared understanding of reality, as different groups and individuals come to hold vastly different perspectives on critical issues. The effect of this erosion of trust authority, makes it increasingly difficult to find common ground and consensus, further exacerbating social and political divisions.

Furthermore, fake news often amplifies and exploits existing polarization, social and political divisions, driving people further apart and making it harder to bridge the gaps

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<sup>258</sup> UK Parliament, 'Social Media and Access to Information' (UK-Parliament, Jan 2017) "<http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/offices/bicameral/post/work-programme/physical-sciences/social-media-information-access/>" (accessed 26 May 2024).

<sup>259</sup> W.V. ZONEN et ali, Trust but verify? Examining the role of trust in institutions in the spread of unverified information on social media, << <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2023.107992>>>, accessed on the 26 May 2024.

<sup>260</sup> PEW RESEARCH CENTER, *Trust and distrust in America*. Pew Research Center, 2019.

<sup>261</sup> S. LEWANDOWSKY et al., "Beyond misinformation: Understanding and coping with the "post-truth" era," in *Journal of Applied Research in Memory and Cognition*, 2017, pp. 353-369.

<sup>262</sup> M. J. HETHERINGTON, "The political relevance of political trust," in *American Political Science Review*, 1998, pp. 791-808.



between different groups and perspectives.<sup>263</sup> These divisions can lead to increased conflict, the breakdown of social cohesion, and the undermining of democratic institutions by promoting extreme viewpoints, fostering distrust towards mainstream media, and creating echo chambers where users only interact with like-minded individuals. The increment in the amount of fake news disseminated creates division in the society. What we experience today is an amplification of already existing division of the society which is very destructive. According to M. Saaida and M. Alhouseini:

*The potential benefits of social media are many; including increased citizen empowerment and democratic participation, its drawbacks cannot be ignored. The spread of misinformation, the erosion of trust in political institutions, and the manipulation of public opinion are among the challenges posed by social media. This article delves into the complex and multi-dimensional impacts of social media on global politics, emphasizing the need for critical examination and the development of policies that promote democratic values and civic participation. It highlights the significance of understanding how social media is used in both democratic and authoritarian societies. Authoritarian regimes exploit social media to control information, suppress dissent, and propagate their agendas<sup>264</sup>*

From the above quotation, we can understand that the concept of fake news causes more social divisions and political divisions amongst citizens of a particular country. There is great amplification to the existing divisions that are experienced within the society and within the political sphere. The idea of fake news has divided the social order as well as the political order as seen in the words of these two authors. This is a world issue as it cuts across the globe as a whole.

Moreover, this amplified divide caused by fake news makes it difficult to come to a consensus, as one major difficulty with misinformation is finding a common ground for everyone to come to a consensus. This is seen from the failure of the government and other institutions to curb the activities of those creating and spreading fake news. Due to the fact that there is a difficulty in getting people to come to a common ground to face the threat of opposing views of the news as fake and real, it is hard to solve this issue without digital intermediaries, platforms and forums. The fact that some people think fake news is real while others think fake news is fake makes it more complex to resolve the puzzle. In summation, polarization and social division can have detrimental effects on society by deepening existing

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<sup>263</sup> C. A. BAIL et al., Exposure to opposing views on social media can increase political polarization,” in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 2018, pp. 9216-9221.

<sup>264</sup> M. SAAIDA and M. ALHOUSEINI, “The Influence of Social Media on Contemporary Global Politics,” in *the International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews (IJRAR)*, March 2023.

divides, promoting extremism, and hindering the ability to find common ground and consensus on critical issues. Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort to promote empathy, critical thinking, respectful dialogue, and inclusive decision-making processes that prioritize the greater good over individual or group interests. It is essential for individuals, communities, and institutions to work towards fostering a more cohesive and collaborative society that prioritizes understanding, cooperation, and solidarity.

In addition, fake news can be used to manipulate public opinion, influencing political processes, decision-making, and the integrity of democratic systems.<sup>265</sup> Manipulation of public opinion on social media refers to the deliberate effort to influence and shape the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of the general public through the spread of misinformation, propaganda, and fake news on online platforms. This can have far-reaching consequences, such as the election of leaders or the adoption of policies that are not aligned with the true preferences and interests of the electorate.<sup>266</sup> This manipulation of public opinion, can have a significant impact on political processes and decision making. As false information and propaganda spread through social media, platforms can sway public opinion, influence voter behavior, and ultimately affect the outcome of elections. This can lead to the distortion of democratic processes and undermine the legitimacy of electoral results. Also, exploiting social media algorithms and echo chambers, manipulators can amplify certain narratives, suppress opposing views, and create a polarized environment that hinders constructive political discourse. This can further deepen divisions within society and make it challenging for informed decision making to take place. To this effect, the manipulation of public opinion on social media poses a serious threat to the integrity of democratic systems. Overall, the manipulation of public opinion on social media poses a grave threat to the functioning of democratic systems and the principles of free and fair elections, transparency, and accountability. It is imperative for individuals, organizations, and governments to remain vigilant, promote media literacy, and take measures to combat the spread of misinformation and disinformation online.

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<sup>265</sup> N. PERSILY, "The 2016 US Election: Can Democracy Survive the Internet?" in *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 28, no. 2, 2017, pp. 63-76.

<sup>266</sup> H. ALLCOTT and M. GENTZKOW, M. *Social media and fake news in the 2016 election*. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 2017, pp.211-236.

#### 4.3.4. SPECIFIC RISKS OF FAKE NEWS

The dissemination of fake news poses specific risks that can contribute to social destabilization across various domains, including incitement of violence and unrest, public health risks, and harm to individual and community well-being.

The risk of fake news are enormous, one among the many is incitement of violence and civil unrest as it can trigger strong emotional reactions and the potential for escalation.<sup>267</sup> There are numerous examples of fake news stories, false narratives, rumors, and manipulated images or videos can fuel hatred, discrimination, and conflict among groups, leading to real-world consequences, such as mob violence, protests, and even deaths. In some cases, fake news stories have been intentionally created to fuel existing tensions, provoke emotional responses, and manipulate public opinion for evil purposes. This can result in incidents of mob violence, riots, and other forms of collective aggression, endangering the safety and security of individuals and communities. According to Ella Busch and Jacob Ware, the weaponization of the deep fake is something that was experienced in 2018 with viral videos shared online to incite the desire for far-right violence from extremists who want and love to public violent activities. This she explains in the following words as she says that the sharing of fake news could be to cause people to desire to do violent actions. This she says is common with far-right extremists who have multiple ways of implementing and creating violent deep fake inciting videos that are shared online for people of the far-right to come out and demonstrate. Deep fakes always provide extremists with ideological ammunition, allowing influencers to manufacture proof of alleged wrongdoing that justifies extremist views. According to Flores Myles, as she says in the following words explaining the activities of fake news creators in inciting violence in the society and the world at large, she says:

*The use of violence to elevate one religious or racial group over another is a tale as old as time, used to justify wars, genocide, and societal oppression. These extremist movements often share similar foundational conspiracy theories, such as the Great Replacement theory, the belief that minority groups and Jews are orchestrating a plot to overwhelm the white European population, leading to their “replacement,” and the New World Order theory, the belief that a [Jewish] cabal of elites is conspiring to create a unified international government that will grant them complete control over the world.*<sup>268</sup>

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<sup>267</sup> B. C. STAHL, “On the difference or equality of information, misinformation, and disinformation: A critical research perspective,” in *Informing Science*, 2006, pp. 83-96.

<sup>268</sup> F. MYLES, “The New World Order: The Historical Origins of a Dangerous Modern Conspiracy Theory,” in *the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey*, 31 May 2022. <<<https://www.middlebury.edu/institute/academics/centers-initiatives/ctec/ctec-publication/new-world-order-historical-origins-dangerous>>> accessed on the 20 May 2024.

From the above quote, it is very clear that the incitement of violence is a character of the creative users and disseminators of online fake news. Fake news is used as proof of the ideological perspectives of extremist groups which influences them to get armaments and manufacture a proof to go and do violent activities. According to Ella Busch and Jacob Ware, fake news can be used to incite violence in the sense that far-right extremists are like to implement deep fakes news in multiple creative ways. The use of fake news to empower far-right extremists with the necessary tools to incite violence by mass creating fake content appealing to the violent far-right's innate desire for violence and confrontation, as seen in the 2018 demonstration of the potential ramifications of fake news videos of Jordan Peele, which went viral.<sup>269</sup> This is an indication of how fake news and misinformation can cause violence in the society and in the world at large. In summation, false narratives, rumors, and manipulated images or videos can fuel hatred leading to violence and civil unrest.

Furthermore, fake news can also pose significant public health risks, particularly when it comes to the spread of misinformation about medical treatments, vaccines, and other health-related issues.<sup>270</sup> This can undermine public health efforts, leading to poor individual and community-level health outcomes.<sup>271</sup> In addition, fake news can contribute to public health risks by spreading misinformation about medical treatments, health interventions, and vaccines. Inaccurate or deceptive information regarding diseases, pandemics, and public health measures can undermine trust in scientific expertise, public health authorities, and evidence-based practices. This idea of misinformation has brought to consciousness many issues in our society. It has cut across institutions that make up our society. We have cases of people committing violence actions because of the misinformation of the medical practitioners. A man killing his wife and children because of a DNA test profile. A marriage being annulled because of a revelation that after a period of marriage between the couples the children are proven with the use of the DNA codes not to belong to the father and husband of the spouses. They're very severe cases from the medical perspective of fake news and the consequences of fake news across the globe at large. Also, false information about the COVID-19 pandemic, including conspiracy theories about the virus origin, misleading claims about treatments, and anti-vaccine narratives, have fueled vaccine hesitancy, misinformation, and non-compliance

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<sup>269</sup> B. ELLA and W. JACOB, "Deepfake and the Incitement of Far-Right Violence" or "The Weaponisation of Deepfake" in *the International Center for Counter-Terrorism*, 2023. (Accessed on the 26 May 2024)

<sup>270</sup> W. Y. S. CHOU and W. M. KLEIN, "Addressing health-related misinformation on social media," in *Jama*, 2018, pp. 2417-2418.

<sup>271</sup> X. NAN and K. MADDEN, "HPV vaccine information in the blogosphere: How positive and negative blogs influence vaccine-related risk perceptions, attitudes, and behavioral intentions," in *Health Communication*, 2012, pp. 829-836.

with public health guidelines. Moreover, misleading health claims, unverified remedies, and conspiracy theories related to medical science can pose serious risks to individual and community well-being by discouraging people from seeking proper healthcare, adhering to preventive measures, or getting vaccinated against contagious diseases. For example, pranks and myths about specific diseases or health conditions have led individuals to engage in harmful behaviors, delay seeking medical help, or avoid evidence-based treatments, resulting in adverse health outcomes and increased community vulnerability.

In addition, fake news can evoke strong emotional reactions and escalate tense situations by spreading sensationalized or fabricated content that plays on people's fears, prejudices, or anxieties. Manipulative tactics, exaggerated claims, and inflammatory language used in fake news stories can trigger intense emotional responses and provoke impulsive behavior. Since, human beings are emotional beings by nature who can be very difficult to understand. The dissemination of fake news with malicious intent or harmful consequences can aggravate social divisions, heighten mistrust, and foster a climate of fear, anger, or outrage among the public. When individuals are misled or manipulated by false information that preys on their emotions, it can lead to unintended consequences and negative outcomes for societal cohesion and well-being. People who have more feelings, both positive or negative, are more likely to believe fake news headlines. In fact, more emotional people are more likely to fall for fake news regardless of whether it is consistent or inconsistent with their political ideology, or many participants of social media who have high emotional reactivity are more likely to take action that can spread or suppressed fake new, and while people with low emotions turn to ignore everything while disengaging from spreading false information and fake new.<sup>272</sup> High negative emotions and low positive emotions were associated with suppressing the spread of fake new. For instance, Bodenhausen and co, found that anger elicits greater reliance upon heuristic cues in a persuasion paradigm, whereas sadness promotes an opposite, decreased reliance on heuristic cues.<sup>273</sup> Literature on the relationship between emotion and gullibility has found that a negative mood state generally increases skepticism, whereas a positive mood state increases gullibility and decreases the ability to detect deception. Affective feelings have also been found to demonstrate a flexible influence on cognition; that is, both positive and negative emotions may improve cognitive

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<sup>272</sup> C. MARTEL et al. "Reliance on emotions promote the belief in fake new" in *The Mit Initiative On The Digital Economy 2021*, Vol.1 <<<https://cognitiveresearchjournal.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s41235-020-00252-3>>> accessed on the 26 May 2024.

<sup>273</sup> G. V. BODENHAUSEN et al., "Negative affect and social judgment: The differential impact of anger and sadness," in *European Journal of Social Psychology*, vol. 24, no. 1, 1994, pp. 45–62.

performance, depending on the nature of the task (e.g., creative versus analytic) and processing styles available (e.g., heuristic versus systematic).<sup>274</sup> More specifically within the domain of political fake news, anger has been suggested to promote politically aligned motivated belief in misinformation, whereas anxiety has been posited to increase belief in politically discordant fake news due to increased general feelings of doubt. In other words, anger may promote biased, intuitive, motivated reasoning, whereas anxiety may encourage individuals to consider opposing viewpoints and perhaps even improve the overall quality of information seeking. These hypotheses suggest that experience and use of specific emotions may elicit distinct, dissociable effects on news accuracy perception. In summation, fake news poses specific risks to society by inciting violence and unrest, contributing to public health challenges, and emotions. Addressing these risks requires vigilance, critical thinking, media literacy, and responsible information sharing practices to combat the spread of false information and mitigate its harmful effects on public discourse, social harmony, and public health outcomes.

In a nutshell, in an attempt to elaborate on the question of casting on social media in the contemporary world, we have come across the confusion between private and public life, so as to know when and how to use social media in the most appropriate way. We have also seen the ignorance of the limitation of our rights in publishing on social media, aimed at help social media users know their boundaries. Above all, we have understood that fake news is geared towards social destabilization and not to maintain global peace. From this, we must fight against fake news on social media and use social media in the right way.

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<sup>274</sup> C. G. HORNER et al., “Emotions: The Unexplored Fuel of Fake News on Social Media,” in *Journal of Management Information Systems*, vol. 38, no. 4, Philadelphia 2021, pp. 1039–1066.

## **PART THREE**

### **SOCIAL MEDIA AS AN IMPROVEMENT OF GLOBALIZATION OF THE WORLD**

Having examined some challenges, we face with social media, in the light of casting and difficulties in controlling the sources of information, this part of our work sets out to elaborate on the relevance social media in our contemporary world, in the light of globalization, which is defined as the stretching of economic, political, and social relationships in space and time,<sup>275</sup> as technology have made the world into a more connected and interdependent place. This globalization nature of social media in interconnecting the world, contributes to the development of individuals and the progress of a society, as many believe. For McIntyre, social media is the basis tool used to foster development given the fact that it paves a way for the unfolding of one's innate potentials. In the previous chapters, we have seen how the lack of critical editorial lines and strict control of social media that promotes the development of human potentials has led to some of the crisis plaguing the world today. Understanding McIntyre's perspectives on social media equips us with concrete ideas on how to use social media to achieve the best results. In chapter five, we shall be looking at social media as the fastest means of acquiring knowledge and information, both at the personal and general level. Chapter six on its part shall focus on the rise of cyber-control and the ways to tackle fake on social media.

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<sup>275</sup> V. ADAM, "Globalization." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 16 Feb. 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/money/globalization>. (Accessed 29 May 2024).

## CHAPTER 5

### SOCIAL MEDIA AS THE FASTEST MEANS OF ACQUIRING KNOWLEDGE

This chapter presents the contributions made by social media in promoting the globalization of knowledge and information. As technology advances, social media platforms have become integral to our daily routines, shaping our interactions, communication patterns, and self-perceptions. The term social media as we defined before, refers to a category of online platforms that enable users to create and share content, interact with others, and form virtual communities. This convenience of instant messaging and virtual communities has facilitated global connectivity, transcending geographical barriers and fostering relationships.<sup>276</sup> It should be noted that despite the risks brought by fake news, as we saw in the previous chapters, McIntyre still places social media as a means of developing the potentialities of each and every user, who uses social media for right purpose. Overall, social media has become an integral part of globalization, in connecting people across borders and cultures.<sup>277</sup> Here, we are going to demonstrate the necessity of being connected on social media, be it at the individual and the community level. Social media enhances of our willingness to learn and the advantages of everyone getting access to information on social media.

#### 5.1. THE NECESSITY OF BEING CONNECTED

In today's interconnected world, being connected through social media is essential for various reasons, including staying informed, collaborating with others, and maintaining relationships. Being connected through social media allows individuals to access a wealth of information and knowledge in real-time, enabling them to stay informed about current events, trends, and developments.<sup>278</sup> For as Plato says, virtue is knowledge and gives us confidence and power and ignorance is vice,<sup>279</sup> and if being connected on social media makes us informed and takes away this ignorance and we don't do it, therefore we can say that ignorance is not an excuse.

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<sup>276</sup> S. VIRK, *Connecting in The Digital Age: Navigating Technology and Social Media*, June 9, 2023.

<sup>277</sup> A. M. KAPLAN and M. HAENLEIN. "Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media," in *Business Horizons*, vol. 53, no. 1, 2010, pp. 59-68.

<sup>278</sup> D. M. BOYD and N. B. ELLISON, "Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship," in *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2007, pp. 210-230.

<sup>279</sup> L. S. PANGLE, *Virtue is Knowledge: The Moral Foundations of Socratic Political Philosophy*. Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2014. ix, 276. ISBN 9780226136547.



### 5.1.1. THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING CONNECTED IN THE MODERN WORLD

In today's digital age, being connected is more important than ever before. The rapid advancements in technology have transformed the way we communicate, work, and interact with one another. Connectivity has become a fundamental aspect of our daily lives, enabling us to stay in touch with friends and family, access information and resources, and engage with the world around us. This connection can be individual connectivity as well as community connectivity.

To begin with, at the individual level, being connected through social media fosters collaboration and networking opportunities for individuals, enabling them to connect with like-minded individuals, share ideas, and work together on projects.<sup>280</sup> One of the key reasons why being connected by an individual is crucial in the modern world is the ability to stay informed and up-to-date. With the rise of the internet and social media platforms, we have instant access to news, events, and developments from around the globe. This is because social media provides individuals with access to a vast source of information and news, enabling them to stay well-informed of current events and trends. This connectivity allows individuals to be aware of current affairs, trends, and changes in our society, empowering them to make informed decisions and stay relevant in a fast-paced world. Furthermore, being connected fosters the individual's collaboration and networking opportunities among individuals with shared interests, fostering innovation and the exchange of ideas. Whether in a professional or personal context, connectivity enables individuals to connect with like-minded individuals, share ideas, and collaborate on projects. This interconnectedness not only enhances their social relationships but also opens up new possibilities for growth and innovation. Moreover, being connected plays a vital role in maintaining individual relationships and fostering a sense of community. Through social media platforms, messaging apps, and video calls, we can stay connected with loved ones, even across long distances. That is to say that it allows individuals to stay in touch with friends, family, and colleagues, regardless of geographical barriers,<sup>281</sup> thereby helping individuals maintain connections with friends and family members who live far away or are otherwise difficult to stay in touch with.<sup>282</sup> This connectivity helps us build and strengthen relationships, support one another, and

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<sup>280</sup> H. RHEINGOLD, *Net Smart: How to Thrive Online*. MIT Press, 2012, p. 78.

<sup>281</sup> B. WELLMAN and M. GULIA, "Net Surfers Don't Ride Alone: Virtual Communities as Communities," in *Communities in Cyberspace*, 1999, p. 25.

<sup>282</sup> J. E. KATZ and R. E. RICE, "Social consequences of Internet use: Access, involvement, and interaction," in *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 2002, pp. 115-125.

create a sense of belonging in an increasingly globalized world. Overall, the importance of being connected in the modern world cannot be overstated for an individual. From staying informed and collaborating with others to maintaining relationships and fostering a sense of community, connectivity has become an essential aspect of our lives.

Furthermore, at the community level, being connected through social media fosters collaboration and networking opportunities for communities and cultures, enabling them to connect with like-minded individuals, share ideas, and work together on projects. One of the key reasons why being connected by a community is crucial in the modern world is the public awareness and information dissemination. Social media enables governments, organizations, and individuals to disseminate information to a wider audience, raising public awareness on important issues.<sup>283</sup> That is to say that, being connected through social media is crucial for society at large as it ensures that the public is informed and up-to-date on important issues, events, and developments.<sup>284</sup> Also, being connected plays a vital role in maintaining community collaboration and networking opportunities, as social media platforms can be utilized as tools for community engagement, allowing citizens to collaborate on projects and initiatives. And also enabling organizations, businesses, and communities to work together towards common goals and initiatives. In addition, being connected helps in maintaining public relationships and fostering a sense of community, as social media provides a platform for public dialogue and interaction, promoting understanding and fostering a sense of community, and helps build trust, solidarity, and cohesion within society, leading to a more connected and engaged population.<sup>285</sup> Overall, the importance of being connected in the modern world cannot be overstated for the society at large. Be it at the level of the government, in sending out instructions and information to keep the public informed on all necessary matters concerning them and at the level of the general public to use the social media to give their opinions and collaborate with the government. This can only be achieved, by staying informed through being connected on social media, and having social media accounts available and accessible to all in the society, so as to promote collaboration, maintain relationships and foster a sense of community.

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<sup>283</sup> A. CHADWICK, “*The hybrid media system: Connecting old and new media in the age of convergence,*” in *Journalism Practice*, 2013, pp.181-206.

<sup>284</sup> Z. TUFEKCI, *Big Questions for Social Media Big Data: Representativeness, Validity and Other Methodological Pitfalls*. ICWSM, 2014, p. 33.

<sup>285</sup> R. PUTNAM, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. Simon and Schuster, 2000, p.112.

### 5.1.2. THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN FACILITATING CONNECTIVITY

Social media platforms as we saw already have revolutionized the way we connect and communicate with others. With billions of users worldwide, platforms like Telegram, TikTok, Likee, Facebook, X, Instagram, and LinkedIn have become integral parts of our daily lives, enabling us to share updates, engage with content, and connect with people from all walks of life. The role that social media plays in facilitating connectivity, has various levels, from individual interactions to global collaborations.

To begin with, social media plays a great role in facilitating connectivity at the individual level, by providing the platforms for an individual to connect, maintain relationships and facilitate knowledge sharing. One of the key roles of social media in facilitating connectivity as we said is its ability to provide a communicating platform which bridges geographical barriers. Through social media platforms, we can connect with individuals from different parts of the world, breaking down physical and geographical barriers, share experiences, and engage in conversations that transcend borders. This global reach allows us to broaden our perspectives, learn about diverse cultures, and build connections with people we may never have met otherwise. This has led to a sense of interconnectedness and a blurring of boundaries between individuals, creating a more globalized and interconnected society. Additionally, social media serves as a powerful tool for building and maintaining relationships, as McIntyre says that social media has the potential to bring people together and facilitate communication.<sup>286</sup> Whether reconnecting with old friends, staying in touch with family members, or networking with colleagues, social media platforms provide a convenient and accessible way to communicate with others, as individuals can form relationships with people they have never met in person or interact with those who are far away. Features like messaging, video calls, and group chats make it easy to stay connected and engage with others in real-time. Moreover, social media plays a crucial role in facilitating collaboration and knowledge-sharing. The dramatic development of this social media form has revolutionized how people share their knowledge, and communicate and collaborate with each other, while engaging in conversations in the workplace in a timely manner.<sup>287</sup> This is seen, as social media platforms incorporate a wide range of online media, including forums such as Social Networking like Facebook, microblogs like personal blogs or X, pictures or

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<sup>286</sup> L. MCINTYRE, *Post- Truth*, The MIT Press Essential Knowledge Series, London, 2018, p. 93.

<sup>287</sup> Y. A. AHMED et al, "Social media for knowledge-sharing: A systematic literature review", in *Telematics and Informatics*, vol. 37, 2019, pp.72-112. ISSN 0736-5853, (<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0736585317306688>)

video-sharing applications like YouTube, Instagram, and collaborative websites like Wikipedia.<sup>288</sup> And platforms like LinkedIn enable professionals to connect with industry peers, share insights, and collaborate on projects and even seek for jobs. They are known for creating knowledge sharing channels, where people are able to find other individuals with similar interests, and share their thoughts with them, learn from one another and engaging in meaningful conversations with a wider audience. This connectivity can lead to the development of new insights, the creation of innovative solutions, and the advancement of various fields of endeavor to the individual.

Furthermore, nowadays, social media applications have moved beyond personal use to global use, thereby facilitating connectivity at the global or international level. They have been increasingly adopted by organizations as tools for knowledge sharing and communication, through countless different means. This connectivity at the global level, is done by providing the platforms used for communication and knowledge sharing. For being connected through social media fosters collaboration and networking opportunities for communities, cultures, professional forums, organizations and governments. One of the key roles of social media in facilitating connectivity is its ability to providing a communication platform used for communication. Through social media platforms, cultures, organizations and governments can connect with other different organizations or their other branches, in and from different parts of the world, there by breaking down the physical and geographical barriers, share experiences, and engage in conversations that transcend borders. This global reach allows them to broaden their perspectives, learn diverse cultures, and build and maintain connections others. This has led to a sense of interconnectedness and a blurring of boundaries between governments and organizations, creating a more globalized and interconnected world. Moreover, social media plays a crucial role in facilitating collaboration and knowledge sharing and communication. For instance, some organizations, including those in the public sector, are exploring the ways social media can be used for knowledge sharing, as a way of enriching citizen's awareness, and the actions of governments. Others may use the tool as a means of generating knowledge within business sectors, and integrating customers into several areas of activity. Higher education institutions have also adopted social media as a means of inspiring learning activities. Health care organizations have adopted the internal use of social media tools for knowledge sharing, facilitating the efficient flow of work-related

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<sup>288</sup> A. M. KAPLAN and M. HAENLEIN. "Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media," in *Business Horizons*, vol. 53, no. 1, 2010, pp. 59-68.

information within and between teams. Moreover, since the 2010 Haiti earthquake, social media has increasingly been used for knowledge sharing within the disaster management field.<sup>289</sup> All in all, the knowledge sharing applications of social media has dramatically changed how we live, work, learn and interact. They allow for smooth and continuous knowledge sharing within the virtual world. Overall, social media has become a central hub for facilitating connectivity in the modern world. From bridging geographical barriers and building relationships to enabling collaboration and knowledge-sharing, social media platforms play a vital role in connecting individuals and communities across the globe.

### **5.1.3. THE DEPENDENCY ON SOCIAL MEDIA FOR ACCESSING INFORMATION**

In an era of information overload, social media has become a primary source of news, updates, and knowledge for many individuals and communities. However, the dependency on social media for accessing information also raises concerns about the reliability and credibility of sources. With the proliferation of fake news, misinformation, and clickbait headlines, users must exercise caution and critical thinking when consuming content on social media. Fact-checking, verifying sources, and seeking multiple perspectives are essential practices to navigate the vast landscape of information available online. Despite the rise of fake news, misinformation, and biased sources, social media platforms have emerged as key channels for accessing information and staying informed about current events. This is because, no one wants to be left out and with that they depend on social media, instead of going to check newspapers. This dependence on social media for accessing information, has two levels, the individual level on how individuals get their information using social media and the community level, on communities, governments and organizations get their information in and through to the citizens, through social media.

To begin with, at the individual level, one of the main reasons for the dependency on social media by individuals for accessing information is the convenience and accessibility it offers. With just a few clicks, users can access a wealth of information, articles, and updates on a wide range of topics. This ease of access makes social media a go-to source for news and updates, especially for individuals who are constantly on the go or prefer digital platforms over traditional media outlets. Furthermore, social media algorithms play a significant role in shaping the information we consume. Platforms like Facebook and X use algorithms to curate

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<sup>289</sup> Y. A. AHMED et al, "Social media for knowledge-sharing: A systematic literature review", in *Telematics and Informatics*, vol. 37, 2019, pp.72-112. ISSN 0736-5853, (<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0736585317306688>)

content based on our interests, preferences, and online behavior. While this personalized approach can enhance user experience and engagement, it also creates filter bubbles and echo chambers, where users are exposed to information that aligns with their existing beliefs and biases. Moreover, the viral nature of social media can amplify the spread of information, both accurate and misleading. Posts, tweets, and videos can quickly go viral, reaching millions of users within a short period. This rapid dissemination of information can have a profound impact on public opinion, shaping narratives, and influencing discussions on various issues. Still the rapid nature makes individuals to have access to information, and it is left on the individuals to check whether the information received is authentic. With all this we can say that individuals whether we deny it or not depend on social media for information and knowledge.

Furthermore, at the global level, organizations and communities sometimes depend on information gotten from the social media. This is because social media has become an integral part of our daily lives, significantly impacting how communities' access and share information. One of the main reasons for the dependency on social media for information is real-time information dissemination, whether it's sharing news, updates, or events, communities can quickly disseminate information to a wide audience. Social media platforms such as X, Thread and Facebook provide a real-time avenue for communities, organizations, and governments to access information.<sup>290</sup> As it provides local and up-to-date information, communities can stay informed about local events, weather, traffic, and other relevant news. This accessibility is especially crucial during emergencies or crises. During emergencies or crises, social media enables quick dissemination of updates, alerts, and instructions to a wide audience. This rapid communication can be crucial for public safety, disaster response, and crisis management.<sup>291</sup> This is well illustrated by Junpeng Guo et al., when he writes that:

For crisis management, GSMAs provide an open channel for crisis information exchange and disseminate timely local updates on the crisis to reduce citizens' anxieties. GSMAs can gather timely feedback from the citizens to improve the quality of informational and emotional support given to the citizens during crises. Thus, increased access to and the use of GSMAs have increased citizens' participation in crisis management, because citizens' interaction with GSMAs is critical to the success of digital crisis management. In particular, commenting on GSMA posts are valuable sources of public feedback and suggestions on the activities of government agencies. Sharing GSMA posts will broaden the

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<sup>290</sup> A. M. KAPLAN and M. HAENLEIN. "Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media," in *Business Horizons*, vol. 53, no. 1, 2010, pp. 59-68.

<sup>291</sup> J. SUTTON et al., "Backchannels on the front lines: Emergency uses of social media in the 2007 Southern California wildfires," in *Proceedings of the 5th International ISCRAM Conference*, 2008, pp. 44-54.

situational awareness of a crisis. Hence, the citizen's participatory behaviors of commenting on and sharing posts is important to achieve the goal of GSMA, which is to convey the right information to the right target through social networks.<sup>292</sup>

From this abstract we can say that Government Social Media Accounts (GSMA), are important for the government to keep the citizens informed.

Also, at the global level, there is engagement and participation. Social media allows for direct engagement with the audience, enabling communities, organizations, and governments to gather feedback, opinions, and suggestions,<sup>293</sup> through the participation of the citizens. Given the fact that social media amplifies voices of citizens, as such, communities can share their perspectives, advocate for causes, and raise awareness about issues that matter to them. So, by monitoring social media conversations, these entities can understand public sentiment, address concerns, and tailor their communication strategies accordingly. This two-way communication fosters transparency, trust, and accountability,<sup>294</sup> for growth and peace in the society. Moreover, there is targeted messaging and reach, as social media platforms offer sophisticated targeting tools that allow communities, organizations, and governments to reach specific demographics or geographic areas.<sup>295</sup> By leveraging data analytics and algorithms, they can tailor their messages to resonate with different audience segments. This targeted approach enhances the effectiveness of communication campaigns, public awareness initiatives, and community engagement efforts.<sup>296</sup> Furthermore, communities can use social media to find local services, businesses, and resources. Whether it's recommendations for a good restaurant or information about health clinics, social media connects people to essential services. And lastly, social media can play a crucial role in community building and security, enabling the coordination of emergency response efforts, the dissemination of public safety information, and the strengthening of social bonds within a community. As it gives the government and the security organizations the opportunity to easily get access to criminal information online, which they access and can act on time, for the security of the community,

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<sup>292</sup> J. GUO, "Why do citizens participate on government social media accounts during crises? A civic voluntarism perspective" in *Information And Management*, vol. 58, no. 1, Elsevier B.V., January 2020, pp. 103-286. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.im.2020.103286>

<sup>293</sup> R. D. WATERS et al., "Media Catching and the Journalistic Field: Unpacking the Public's Engagement with News," in *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 2010, pp. 38-56.

<sup>294</sup> K. LOVEJOY and G. D. SAXTON, "Information, Community, and Action: How Nonprofit Organizations Use Social Media," in *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 2012, pp. 337-353.

<sup>295</sup> D. BOYD and K. CRAWFORD, "Critical questions for big data: Provocations for a cultural, technological, and scholarly phenomenon," *Information, Communication and Society*, 2012, pp. 662-679.

<sup>296</sup> J. H. KIETZMANN et al., "Social media ? Get serious! Understanding the functional building blocks of social media," in *Business Horizons*, 2011, pp. 241-251.

government and even the organizations. For example, organizations like the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF use platforms such as X, Instagram and TikTok to disseminate information about diseases, vaccination programs, and preventive measures, reaching audiences worldwide and fostering a sense of global solidarity, as such, we can say that social media has been instrumental in raising awareness about global health issues and promoting public health campaigns. In summation, social media has transformed the way communities, governments and organizations access information, fostering connectivity, engagement, and empowerment. It's no longer just a tool for personal communication; it's a vital resource for community well-being.

## **5.2. THE ENHANCEMENT OF WILLINGNESS TO LEARN ON SOCIAL MEDIA.**

As technology advances, social media platforms have become integral to our daily routines, shaping our interactions, communication patterns, self-perceptions and most of all in our willingness to learn and be informed. Social media platforms have played a crucial role in facilitating the desire to learn and acquire knowledge by providing access to a vast amount of educational resources and opportunities for learning. According to Koehler and Mishra, social media platforms such as X, Thread, Facebook, and YouTube have created new avenues for individuals to explore their interests, share knowledge, and engage with like-minded individuals.<sup>297</sup> This means that these social media platforms enhances learn whether we are aware or not.

### **5.2.1. THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE LEARNING PROCESS**

Social media has had a significant impact on the learning process by enhancing willingness to learn through various means. The accessibility of educational content on social media, contributes to the enhancement of willingness to learn. Which according to Sánchez-Valenzuela and Diéguez-Díaz, social media platforms have facilitated the desire to learn and acquire knowledge by providing easy access to a wealth of educational content.<sup>298</sup> This view is supported by Greenhow and Askari, as they noted that social media platforms offer a wide range of educational resources that are readily available to users,<sup>299</sup> such as online courses,

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<sup>297</sup> M. J. KOEHLER and P. MISHRA, "What is technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK)?" In *Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2009, pp. 60-70.

<sup>298</sup> A. V, SÁNCHEZ and F. D. DIÉGUEZ, "Motivation in the Use of Digital Teaching Resources: The Role of Social Media as Innovation in Higher Education, 2020" In F. J. GARCÍA-PENALVO (Ed.), "Augmented and Virtual Reality in Education: First International Conference, AVR 2019," in *Proceeding E-book AISC 1018*, Springer, pp. 121-131.

<sup>299</sup> C. GREENHOW and E. ASKARI, "Learning and teaching with social network sites: A decade of research in education," in *Education and Information Technologies*, 2017, pp. 623-645.



webinars, and educational videos, that can be accessed anytime and anywhere.<sup>300</sup> This ease of access encourages users to expand their knowledge in a way that is convenient, engaging and flexible for individuals, and as such users can explore new topics, engage in discussions, and access a wide range of resources on platforms such as YouTube, X, Facebook, Telegram, Instagram, Thread and Kawlo. This accessibility has helped individuals to enhance their willingness to learn and engage in continuous self-improvement.

Furthermore, social media has the ability to make learning more interactive and engaging. As platforms like Zoom, Telegram, Instagram, YouTube and TikTok provide users with a visually stimulating and interactive way to consume educational content. Through the use of multimedia elements, collaborative tools, and the ability to connect with experts and peers globally, social media has transformed traditional learning methods. This is best explained by Nasser Alalwan, as he writes that:

When students are learning from peers or lecturers, they show a high level of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion, which extends to their desire to learn and learning of the students. Social media comprises various web-based tools and services created for the promotion of community development via collaboration and sharing of information. According to current studies, social media use in the educational field can result in increased student engagement. Social media engagement can also assist in cementing students' relationships with peers, creating a virtual community of learners and eventually contributing to the level of overall learning.<sup>301</sup>

This abstract above shows the importance of interaction and engagement in impacting learning, especially in the education field and as he says is best done through social media. This helps to hold the user's interest and make the learning process more enjoyable.

In addition, social media impacts learning by its ability to facilitate collaboration in information sharing and communication in discussions. By allowing users to share information, engage in discussions, and collaborate with others, social media platforms contribute to the democratization of knowledge. Users can easily exchange ideas, debate topics, and access diverse perspectives, which enriches the learning experience. More especially, students can connect with classmates, teachers, and professionals in their field to

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<sup>300</sup> N. DABBAGH and A. KITSANTAS, "Personal learning environments, social media, and self-regulated learning: A natural formula for connecting formal and informal learning," in *The Internet and Higher Education*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2012, pp. 3-8.

<sup>301</sup> N. ALALWAN Nasser, "Actual use of social media for engagement to enhance students' learning," in *Education and Information Technologies*, Educ Inf Technol, 5 April 2022, pp. 1-23. 10.1007/s10639-022-11014-7 - PMC - PubMed

ask questions, seek feedback, and share resources. This instant access to a global network of knowledge allows for a more dynamic and engaging learning experience. Additionally, social media platforms offer a wide range of multimedia tools that enhance learning through visual and interactive content. Videos, infographics, podcasts, and live streams can make complex concepts more accessible and engaging, catering to different learning preferences, for example children learn alphabets, words and other educational stuffs on YouTube. Interactive features such as polls, quizzes, and live question and answers sessions further encourage active participation and critical thinking skills. Overall, social media has proven to be a valuable tool for enhancing willingness to learn by providing easy access to educational content, making learning more engaging and interactive, facilitating information sharing and discussions and multimedia tools. Users can leverage the power of social media, to access a wealth of knowledge and resources to enhance their educational journey.

#### **5.2.2. THE WAYS IN WHICH SOCIAL MEDIA ENCOURAGES EXPLORATION AND KNOWLEDGE ACQUISITION**

Social media is now part and portion of the reality of man, and this reality cannot be denied. Unlike the traditional way of searching and acquiring knowledge, by reading hardcopy books, newspapers and other means, which are still relevant and used today, social media opens one to easy search and acquiring of knowledge, through online books, google search, artificial intelligent apps and other applications for exploring and acquiring knowledge. This leads us to say that social media has become a powerful tool for encouraging exploration and knowledge acquisition, by providing users with platform, that help explore and acquire knowledge. Social media platforms like Kawlo, YouTube, Facebook, X, Google Search Engine are very essential, and the may existence of these social media platforms encourages exploration and knowledge acquisition.

Furthermore, with its vast sources of information and resources, social media platforms have become powerful tools for encouraging exploration and knowledge acquisition. With the rise of smartphones and mobile devices, people can access social media platforms and information readily available and accessible to users,<sup>302</sup> often at no cost, from virtually anywhere, at any time. This accessibility allows individuals to learn about various topics, from academics to hobbies, at their own convenience. Also, the diverse range of content, from educational articles and videos to discussions and debates. This diversity

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<sup>302</sup> C. GREENHOW and E. ASKARI, "Learning and teaching with social network sites: A decade of research in education," in *Education and Information Technologies*, 2017, pp. 623-645.

accommodates to different learning styles and preferences, making it easier for users to find and absorb information in a format that suits them best. To further portray this, vast sources of information and resources, allows users to explore topics independently and at their own pace. This autonomy can be particularly beneficial for lifelong learners and those seeking to acquire new skills or knowledge outside of a formal educational setting. The vast collection of information and resources on social media encourages knowledge exploration and acquisition by providing accessible, diverse, and personalized learning opportunities.

Furthermore, social media encourages exploration and knowledge acquisition, by providing a platform for personalized learning experiences through targeted content recommendations and algorithm-driven suggestions based on users' interests and interactions. This is well captured in the words of Manca and Ranieri, who say that social media platforms provide users with the ability to follow their interests, discover new content, and engage with diverse perspectives.<sup>303</sup> Platforms like YouTube, Facebook, X, Instagram, Pinterest, and Reddit allow users to explore a wide range of topics through visual content and user-generated content. This is possible through features such as hashtags, trending topics, and algorithms that recommend relevant content, social media encourages users to explore new ideas and topics they may not have encountered otherwise. Through the use of hashtags, by clicking on a hashtag, users can discover a wide range of posts related to a specific topic, allowing them to explore different perspectives and sources of information. This feature encourages users to delve deeper into subjects they are interested in and discover new areas of interest. Additionally, by featuring trending topics that highlight popular discussions and current events. By engaging with these trending topics, users can stay informed about important issues and explore different viewpoints on a particular subject. This encourages users to broaden their understanding of the world around them and engage in meaningful conversations with others. Furthermore, social media algorithms play a key role in recommending content to users based on their interests and browsing history. By suggesting relevant posts, articles, and videos, these algorithms encourage users to explore new content and expand their knowledge base. This personalized approach to content discovery helps users discover new ideas and perspectives that align with their interests.<sup>304</sup> To further portray this point, Greenhow et al. notes that, platforms like Facebook and Twitter use algorithms to show

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<sup>303</sup> S. MANCA and M. RANIERI, "Is it a tool suitable for learning? A critical review of the literature on Facebook as a technology-enhanced learning environment," in *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, vol. 32, no. 2, 2016, pp. 139-149.

<sup>304</sup> L. MCINTYRE, *Post- Truth*, The MIT Press Essential Knowledge Series, London, 2018, p. 94.

users content that aligns with their preferences, encouraging them to explore new topics and expand their knowledge.<sup>305</sup> As such, users can direct their feeds to follow accounts related to their interests and goals, creating a tailored learning environment that is both relevant and engaging. In summation, social media platforms play a crucial role in encouraging exploration and knowledge acquisition by providing users with access to a diverse range of information and resources and targeted content recommendations, social media empowers users to explore new ideas, engage with different perspectives, and expand their knowledge in a dynamic and interactive way.

### **5.2.3. THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN FACILITATING INFORMATION SHARING AND DISCUSSIONS**

Social media platforms have revolutionized the way people communicate, share information, and engage in discussions. The dramatic development of this social media form has revolutionized how people share their knowledge, and communicate and collaborate with each other, while engaging in conversations in the workplace in a timely manner.<sup>306</sup> Also, social media has created a global network where individuals from diverse backgrounds can interact, learn, and collaborate. These platforms provide users the ability to create, share, engage with content in real-time, fostering dynamic and interactive environment for communication.

To begin with, social media enhances willingness to learn in the role it plays in information sharing. Firstly, the broad reach of social media platforms allows users to share information with a vast audience, transcending geographical boundaries, this broad reach enables the rapid dissemination of information, making it more accessible to a wider population. In other words, social media allows users to share a wide of content formats, including text, images videos, and links across the globe. This multimedia approach enables users to convey information in a more engaging and visually appealing manner increasing the likelihood of content being shared and discussed by a wider audience. For example, platforms like YouTube, X, TikTok, Likee, Facebook and Instagram allow users share short, concise messages or visually images that can quickly capture the attention followers and spark discussions. Secondly, social media platforms provide users with the ability to connect with a

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<sup>305</sup> C. GREENHOW et al., “Learning, teaching, and scholarship in a digital age Web 2.0 and classroom research: What path should we take now?” in *Educational Researcher*, 2009, pp. 246-259.

<sup>306</sup> Y. A. AHMED et al, “Social media for knowledge-sharing: A systematic literature review”, in *Telematics and Informatics*, vol. 37, 2019, pp.72-112. ISSN 0736-5853, (<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0736585317306688>)

diverse range of individuals and communities.<sup>307</sup> This interconnectedness, makes information to spread rapidly across networks, in a larger audience than traditional forms of communication. Users can follow, like, and content from others, amplifying the reach of information and facilitating discussions among users with similar interests or viewpoints. Moreover, social media platforms are designed to be user-friendly, allowing users to upload, share, and access information with minimal technical expertise. This ease of use encourages more people to participate in information sharing, fostering a culture of openness and collaboration and willingness to learn. Furthermore, social media platforms enable real-time updates, ensuring that information is current and relevant.<sup>308</sup> This real-time feature is particularly beneficial for breaking news, allowing users to stay informed about events as they unfold.

Furthermore, social media enhances willingness to learn in the role it plays in interactive discussions. Social media platforms facilitate interactive discussions by allowing users to comment, like, and share content. This is due to the fact that, social media platforms offer features such as comments, likes, shares, and direct messaging.<sup>309</sup> This interactive nature encourages users to engage in discussions and debates of their perspectives on a particular topic, provide feedback, fostering a culture of critical thinking and open dialogue. For example, when a teacher makes a video on YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and X and opens the space for comments, people comment in different ways, to approve, to denial or in doubt, seeking for clarification, and this usually ends up with persons learning. Also, social media platforms bring together users from diverse backgrounds, providing an opportunity for exposure to different perspectives and ideas. This exposure can broaden users' worldviews and stimulate intellectual growth. Additionally, social media serve as a hub for trending topics and news updates. Users can be informed about current events and discussions by following relevant hashtags, accounts, or news outlets. This real-time access to information enables participation in ongoing conversations, sharing of opinions, and contributing to the collective base within the platform. Moreover, social media platforms foster the creation of online

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<sup>307</sup> N. B. ELLISON, and D. M. BOYD, "Sociality through Social Sites," In W. H. DUTTON (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Internet Studies*, Oxford University Press, New York 2013, p. 160.

<sup>308</sup> K. Y. KWAHK, et al, "the effects of network sharing on knowledge-sharing activities and job performance in enterprise social media environments", in *Computers in Human Behavior*, vol. 55, Part B, 2016, pp. 826-839. ISSN 0747-5632, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.09.044>.

<sup>309</sup> A. E. MARWICK and D. BOYD, "I tweet honestly, I tweet passionately: Twitter users, context collapse, and the imagined audience," in *New Media and Society*, vol. 13, 2011, pp. 114-133.

communities based on social networking. Social networking is a valuable method of information dissemination and can be used to encourage student engagement.<sup>310</sup>

Overall, social media has transformed the way information is shared and discussions are conducted by providing users a platform. Through multimedia content formats, interconnected networks, interactive features, and real-time, social media facilitates the rapid dissemination information and the exchange of ideas among users, thereby increasing willingness to learn. Information sharing and discussions, can be summed up in these words: comments sections on posts allows for real-time conversations to take place, fostering dialogue and debate users. Likes and shares help to signal the popularity and relevance of content, the visibility and reach of information within the platform's algorithm.

### **5.3. THE ADVANTAGES OF UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE**

In an age dominated by social media, the dissemination of knowledge and information has become unprecedentedly widespread. Universal exposure to knowledge and information on these platforms has its distinct advantages, revolutionizing the way individuals interact with information and enhancing their cognitive capabilities. These advantages can be seen human and social advantages, ethical and political advantages, and epistemological and logical advantages.

#### **5.3.1. THE HUMAN AND SOCIAL ADVANTAGES**

The universal access of information and knowledge on social media has brought about a range of advantages that have significantly impacted the human and social life of mankind, from empowerment and personal growth to the democratization of knowledge, enhanced social connectivity, and the cultivation of values and social responsibility.

To begin with, universal access to information and knowledge on social media has enormous human advantages, both to the individual and the society at large. It provides unprecedented opportunities for self-education, skill development and promotes personal growth and development. The universal access to information and knowledge on social media

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<sup>310</sup> S. ARUNKUMAR et al., "Social Media Influence on Students' Knowledge Sharing and Learning: An Empirical Study" in *Education Sciences*, vol. 13, no. 7, 2023, p. 745. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci13070745>

platforms empowers individuals and personal growth.<sup>311</sup> That is, social media encourages continuous learning and personal growth by providing access to new information and ideas. By personal growth, we mean growth towards human maturity. Human maturity, as shown by a mature personality, is a harmony of elements and an integration of tendencies and values. Thus, exposure to diverse perspectives and in-depth discussions can foster critical thinking, intellectual maturity and interpersonal maturity, thus contributing to individuals' sense of agency, self-efficacy, overall personal well-being and most importantly self-awareness. In addition, as individuals are exposed to diverse perspectives and global issues on social media, they may be inspired to engage in critical reflection on their own values, beliefs, and ethical stances.<sup>312</sup> As access to knowledge empowers individuals to make informed decisions, advocate for causes, and engage in meaningful discussions. Thus, this can lead to the development of a well-informed understanding of complex social, political, and environmental issues, which can in turn shape individual and collective values, promote social responsibility, and contribute to the creation of a more just and equitable society.<sup>313</sup>

Furthermore, from social standpoint, universal access to information and knowledge on social media has enormous advantages. It promotes innovation and creativity, as exposure to new ideas and information on social media can spark creativity and innovation inspiration in various fields. As well as, individuals can collaborate on innovative projects and leverage each other's knowledge and skills to create new solutions, since social media fosters communities of like-minded individuals who can share knowledge, resources, and support each other, thus empowering them with what they need for engagement. Moreover, universal access to information and knowledge on social media bridges communication gaps, leading to global social connectivity, that breaks down geographical barriers, allowing individuals from different parts of the world to connect and share knowledge and also can have a positive impact on mental health, personal well-being, and the overall sense of community belonging,<sup>314</sup> thereby promoting cultural awareness and understanding.

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<sup>311</sup> C. GREENHOW and C. LEWIN, "Social media and education: Reconceptualizing the boundaries of formal and informal learning", in *Learning, Media and Technology*, 2016, pp. 6-30.

<sup>312</sup> Z. TUFEKCI, "Engineering the public: Big data, surveillance, and computational politics," in *First Monday*, 2014.

<sup>313</sup> B. D. LOADER and D. MERCEA, "Networking democracy? Social media innovations and participatory politics", in *Information, Communication and Society*, vol. 14, no. 6, 2011, pp. 757-769.

<sup>314</sup> P. A. THOITS, "Mechanisms linking social ties and support to physical and mental health," in *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 2011, pp. 145-161.

### 5.3.2. THE ETHICAL AND POLITICAL ADVANTAGES

The advent of social media has revolutionized the way information and knowledge are shared, disseminated, and accessed globally and they have had a significant impact on both political and ethical perspectives. However, it is important to note that social media also has its drawbacks, thus raising an ethical and political problem, such as the spread of misinformation and the potential for political manipulation. Nevertheless, the universal access of information and knowledge on social media offers numerous political and ethical advantages, like political participation, transparency, global understanding, and empowerment of marginalized communities make it a valuable tool for promoting a more informed and morally upright community.

To begin with, universal access to information and knowledge on social media has enormous ethical advantages, both to the individual and the society at large. Man is a moral being, born with the will, and needs to do good and avoid evil. Information and knowledge are very vital for man to be held accountable. As Plato says knowledge is virtue and ignorance is vice, meaning that we should fight ignorance, and this is where social media comes in, giving us universal access to information and knowledge. With this universal access of information and knowledge therefore, social media facilitates the sharing of knowledge and ideas, encouraging collaboration among individuals from diverse backgrounds. This can lead to innovation, problem-solving, and the advancement of collective intelligence. Also, social media provides a platform for the free exchange of ideas and information, fostering a culture of openness and transparency, this aligns with the fundamental human right to freedom of expression as outlined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Also, the universal access to information on social media encourages empathy and understanding among individuals by exposing them to diverse perspectives and experiences.<sup>315</sup> This exposure can lead to greater tolerance and respect for different cultures, beliefs, and lifestyles, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and compassionate society.<sup>316</sup> Furthermore, social media allows for the rapid dissemination of information during times of crisis or injustice, enabling individuals to raise awareness, organize relief efforts, and hold perpetrators accountable for their actions.<sup>317</sup> This ability to mobilize collective action in response to social issues promotes

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<sup>315</sup> N. EISENBERG and P. A. MILLER, "The Relation of Empathy to Prosocial and Related Behaviors." In *Psychological Bulletin*, 1987, pp. 91-119.

<sup>316</sup> M. VERKUYTEN, "Multiculturalism and Group Equality: The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations and Social Identity," in *Social Issues and Policy Review*, 2006, pp. 35-58.

<sup>317</sup> K. STARBIRD and L. PALEN, "Pass it on?: Retweeting in mass emergency," in *Proceedings of the ACM 2010 conference on Computer supported cooperative work*, 2010, pp. 721-730.



ethical engagement and solidarity within communities. Moreover, the universal access to information on social media promotes the principles of freedom of expression and freedom of information, as individuals have the right to seek out and share information without censorship or restriction, allowing for the exchange of ideas and the promotion of intellectual diversity. This can lead to greater tolerance and understanding among different groups within society, due to the fact that one is aware of the differences and what unite them together, and if there is no knowledge on this, then what disunity sets in. In addition, information and knowledge are advantageous to man living a moral life, as one who has knowledge or information on what is right or wrong, is in the best place to make a moral choice, and this knowledge on moral principles can be easily found on social media. Therefore, from all we have said about the ethical advantages, we can say that from the ethical perspective, the universal accessibility of information and knowledge on social media is of utmost importance to man.

Furthermore, from a political standpoint, universal access to information and knowledge on social media has enormous advantages. According Aristotle man by nature is a political being,<sup>318</sup> who is ruled and also rules, and has rights and duties to perform for the betterment of the society. With the rise of social media as we saw above, there comes the problem of fake news and propaganda meant to deceive, for the purpose of winning elections. On the brighter part social media gives everyone access to information and knowledge, thus giving everyone the equal opportunity to know for themselves what is true, in the political world. With this universal access of information and knowledge from the political perspectives, there is the advantage of citizen participation and empowerment, that is to say that social media provides a platform for citizens to voice their opinions, participate in public discourse, share their opinions, mobilize for collective action and engage with political leaders.<sup>319</sup> This increased participation contributes to a more inclusive democratic process, where diverse voices are heard and considered in decision-making, thus fostering a more democratic society. This democratic society accords the citizens right and duties and limits the government's authority, to this Pojman asked questions like:

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<sup>318</sup> ARISTOTLE, *Politics*, 1, 1, 8.

<sup>319</sup> L. W. BENNETT and A. SEGERBERG, "The Logic of Connective Action: Digital Media and the Personalization of Contentious Politics." in *Information, Communication and Society*, vol. 15, no. 5, 2012, pp. 739-768.

By what right does the government demand my obedience? Why should I obey the State? What is the justification of government? What are the limits of governmental authority in light of my right or need to be free?<sup>320</sup>

These questions of Pojman, suggest the limitation of the government to our rights and our need for freedom. For us to participate in the society we must first have knowledge or information about our rights, freedom and those of the state, to be able to build an engaging democratic society. Also, there is an increased transparency and accountability within governments and institutions, as social media facilitates the sharing of information about government activities, thereby allowing citizens to scrutinize government actions and hold officials accountable for their decisions, and thus promoting a culture of accountability. This transparency enhances accountability, as public officials are more likely to act ethically when their actions are subject to public scrutiny.<sup>321</sup> In other words, citizens have the ability to access a wide range of perspectives and sources of information, enabling them to make more informed decisions about political issues and hold their leaders accountable for their actions. Furthermore, social media provides a platform for marginalized groups to amplify their voices and advocate for their rights. This can lead to greater inclusivity and diversity in political discourse, ultimately fostering a more representative and equitable society. Additionally, the widespread dissemination of information on social media can facilitate the mobilization of public movements and promote civic engagement. In summation, the universal access to information and knowledge on social media brings significant advantages from both political and ethical perspectives. It enhances transparency, promotes political participation, fosters empathy and understanding, and encourages ethical engagement. However, it is important to remain vigilant and address the challenges and risks associated with the misuse of information and fake news on social media, in promoting destabilization and immorality in the society.

### **5.3.3. THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL AND LOGICAL ADVANTAGE**

Exposure to knowledge and information on social media offers numerous advantages, especially in both epistemological and logical perspectives. By embracing the transformative potential of universal knowledge dissemination on social media, individuals can harness these benefits to broaden their intellectual capacities and a critical thinking mind in the post-truth world.

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<sup>320</sup> L. POJMAN, "Justification of the State," in L. POJMAN (ed.), *Political Philosophy*, 1999, p. 130.

<sup>321</sup> M. BOVENS, "Analysing and assessing accountability: A conceptual framework," in *European Law Journal*, 2007, pp. 447-468.

To begin with, universal access to information and knowledge on social media has enormous epistemological (Intellectual) or educational advantages, both to the individual and the society at large. Epistemologically the unrestricted flow of information on social media allows individuals to expand their knowledge base, challenge existing beliefs, and engage in critical thinking. Social media platforms serve as a vast repository of diverse perspectives ideas, enabling users to access a wide range of information sources and viewpoints. This exposure to diverse content can lead to a more comprehensive understanding by broadening their knowledge and understanding of various topics and issues, fostering intellectual growth and promoting cognitive development. Thus, challenging traditional hierarchies of knowledge production and dissemination and empowering diverse voices and perspectives to be heard and considered.<sup>322</sup> Furthermore, universal access to information on social media facilitates and enables the rapid dissemination of knowledge, information and ideas, accelerating the process of knowledge exchange and discovery.<sup>323</sup> This rapid dissemination facilitates interdisciplinary collaboration and innovation by connecting individuals with diverse expertise and experiences, and empowers users to make well-informed decisions and enhances their ability to engage in meaningful discussions and debates.<sup>324</sup> Also, by providing a platform for the exchange of ideas and information, social media promotes collaborative learning and the sharing of knowledge among individuals from different backgrounds and cultures. Thus, individuals have been able to expand their understanding of various topics and have helped each other grow and develop. In addition, social media has democratized access to educational resources, allowing individuals to access courses, tutorials, and other forms of knowledge that were previously inaccessible. This has helped bridge the knowledge gap between different socio-economic groups and has empowered individuals to educate themselves on various topics, thus giving them equal educational opportunities and raises awareness about social issues, health topics, environmental concerns, and more.

Furthermore, from a logical standpoint, universal access to information and knowledge on social media has enormous advantages. Universal access to information on social media can help combat misinformation and disinformation, thus it promotes transparency and accountability, as it allows users to fact-check information and verify the credibility of

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<sup>322</sup> M. FOUCAULT, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, Pantheon Books, 1980, p. 130.

<sup>323</sup> M. CASTELLS, *The Power of Identity: The Information Age: Economy, Society, and Culture*, John Wiley and Sons, 2010, p. 23.

<sup>324</sup> J. N. CUMMINGS and S. KIESLER, "Collaborative Research Across Disciplinary and Organizational Boundaries," in *Social Studies of Science*, 2005, pp. 703-722.

sources of the information they encounter.<sup>325</sup> This emphasis on evidence-based reasoning and critical evaluation of information encourages individuals to think critically and evaluate information objectively and thus contributes to the development of logical thinking skills and helps individuals to evaluate sources, discern credibility, analyze arguments as well as distinguish between reliable and unreliable sources of knowledge. This cultivation of critical thinking skills is essential for navigating the complex landscape of online information and distinguishing between fact and misinformation,<sup>326</sup> thus it can help prevent the spread of false information, fake news and promote a more informed and educated public. Moreover, the interactive nature of social media platforms encourages users to engage in rational discourse and logical argumentation, fostering a culture of intellectual inquiry and debate. Furthermore, universal access to information on social media fosters a culture of open dialogue and debate, where ideas are subjected to scrutiny and refinement through peer review and constructive criticism.<sup>327</sup> This process of collective intelligence enhances the quality and reliability of information by harnessing the collective wisdom and expertise of online communities. In summation, the advantages of social media in terms of access to diverse perspectives, critical thinking skills, verification of information, collaborative learning, and access to educational resources make it a valuable tool for promoting a more informed and engaged citizenry.

In a nutshell, we have shown how social media is the fastest means of being informed or getting knowledge. Also, we went on to give reasons why we should be connected on social media and how this social media makes us willing to learn. Lastly, we looked at the advantages of the universal access of information and knowledge. By addressing these aspects, we can work towards a more globalize world connected through social media. From what we have said, social media has become an integral part of globalization, in connecting people across borders and cultures and most importantly in being informed, and so it should be encouraged and improved.

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<sup>325</sup> L. MCINTYRE, *Post- Truth*, The MIT Press Essential Knowledge Series, London, 2018, p. 121.

<sup>326</sup> C. WARDLE and H. DERAKHSHAN, *Information Disorder: Toward an Interdisciplinary Framework for Research and Policy Making*, Council of Europe, 2017.

<sup>327</sup> Y. BENKLER, *The wealth of networks: How social production transforms markets and freedom*. Yale University Press, London 2006, p. 212.

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE RISE OF CYBER-CONTROL AND THE WAYS TO TACKLE FAKE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

The world is continuously evolving, there is an unavoidable need to top-up every sector in the society to meet the challenges of the time, especially in this digital age. In the digital age, the proliferation of misinformation and fake news on social media platforms has become a pressing concern. As the virtual space continues to evolve, it is imperative to sensitize individuals to question the ethical implications of their online actions,<sup>328</sup> since they act freely. This is in line with Lee McIntyre, an advocate of truth, who often discusses issues related to misinformation and fake news. He argues that tackling fake news and misinformation on social media requires a multi-faceted approach, involving both technological solutions and critical thinking skills among users. It is to this, that in this chapter we shall dwell on the sensitization of people to enquire the ethics of social media which deals with the importance of raising awareness about the presence of fake news on social media, enforcing the regulation rules on social media and the necessity to track down cyber criminality, and ways of tacking fake news on social media

#### 6.1. SENSITIZING PEOPLE TO ENQUIRE THE ETHICS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media has become an integral part of modern society, shaping how individuals communicate, consume information, access information, form opinions<sup>329</sup> and engage with the world around them. However, this digital revolution has also given rise to concerns about the ethical implications of social media use. As the influence of social media continues to grow, it is essential to sensitize people to enquire about the ethics surrounding its use and to critically examine the ethics surrounding social media and its impact on individuals, society, and democracy.<sup>330</sup> Ethical considerations in social media encompass issues such as privacy, data security, misinformation, and the impact of algorithms on content and information dissemination. This ethical awareness in social media can be fostered through education and critical thinking. By encouraging individuals to question the ethical implications of their online actions, we can promote responsible digital citizenship, as well as foster a culture of responsible online behavior. This involves understanding the consequences of sharing

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<sup>328</sup> S. S. ABDUL, *Navigating-the-Ethical-Complexities -Unveiling-the-Implications-of-Social-Media-Research*, 2024.

<sup>329</sup> N. CARR, *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains*. W. W. Norton & Company, 2011.

<sup>330</sup> Z. TUFEKCI, "Engineering the public: Big data, surveillance, and computational politics," in *First Monday*, 2014.

personal information, recognizing the power dynamics at play in online interactions, and being mindful of the potential harm that can result from spreading misinformation. Furthermore, this point further elucidated by a study done by Taddeo and Floridi, they emphasize the importance of ethical reflection in the digital age, highlighting the need for individuals to critically assess the ethical dimensions of their online behavior.<sup>331</sup> By engaging in ethical inquiry, people can develop a deeper understanding of the impact of their actions on themselves and others in the digital realm.

### **6.1.1. CREATING AWARENESS OF THE PRESENCE OF FAKE NEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA**

In the digital age is the proliferation of fake news and misinformation on social media platforms has become a great challenge.<sup>332</sup> To combat this issue, raising awareness about the prevalence of fake news and its potential consequences and to equip them with the skills to discern credible information from false or misleading content is therefore essential. This can be achieved through educational campaigns, media literacy initiatives, and fact-checking efforts that empower users to critically evaluate the information they encounter online.<sup>333</sup> According to a research by Pennycook and Rand, which underscores the prevalence of misinformation on social media and the cognitive factors that contribute to its spread. They highlight the role of critical thinking in evaluating the credibility of online information and emphasize the importance of fact-checking and verifying sources before sharing content.<sup>334</sup> Furthermore, educational initiatives and media literacy programs can play a vital role in raising awareness about fake news and equipping individuals with the tools to navigate the digital information landscape effectively. By promoting media literacy skills such as source evaluation, critical analysis, and fact verification, people can become more discerning consumers of online content and better equipped to identify and combat fake news. Overall, fake news, alternative facts, misinformation, and disinformation spread rapidly on social media, influencing public opinion and shaping narratives. It is essential to create awareness in the mind of the users about the prevalence of fake news and equip them with the skills to discern fact from fiction.

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<sup>331</sup> FLORIDI and TADDEO., "What is Data Ethics?" in *Philosophical Transactions A of the Royal Society*. p.374.

<sup>332</sup> H. ALLCOTT and M. GENTZKOW, "Social media and fake news in the 2016 election", in *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, vol.31, no.2, 2017, pp. 211-236.

<sup>333</sup> A. GUESS, et al., "Less than you think: Prevalence and predictors of fake news dissemination on Facebook", in *Science Advances*, 2019, vol. 5, no. 1.

<sup>334</sup> G. PENNYCOOK, and D. RAND, "Fighting misinformation on social media using crowdsourced judgments of news source quality," in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, vol.116 no.7, 2019, pp. 2521-2526.

### 6.1.2. EDUCATION ON THE PROPER USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Alongside raising awareness about fake news, as social media platforms offer a powerful means of communication and connection, but their use also comes with responsibilities and potential pitfalls, that its misuse can have detrimental effects on individuals and society,<sup>335</sup> it is therefore crucial to educate people on the responsible and ethical use of social media.<sup>336</sup> Educating people on the right way to use social media involves promoting positive online behaviors, fostering digital well-being, teaching digital literacy skills, such as how to verify sources, identify biases, and critically evaluate the information they encounter online and encouraging ethical engagement with digital platforms. Additionally, promoting the importance of digital wellbeing and mindful social media use can help mitigate the negative consequences associated with excessive or unhealthy social media engagement.<sup>337</sup> Furthermore, according to a research done by Kuss and Griffiths, they highlighted the importance of promoting healthy and balanced social media use to mitigate the negative effects of excessive screen time and online engagement.<sup>338</sup> They also emphasized the need for individuals to set boundaries, practice self-regulation, and cultivate meaningful offline relationships to maintain well-being in the digital age. Moreover, educational campaigns and resources can provide guidance on best practices for using social media responsibly, such as respecting others' privacy, engaging in constructive dialogue, and being mindful of the impact of one's online presence. By promoting digital literacy and ethical awareness, we can empower individuals to harness the benefits of social media while mitigating potential risks and harms. Overall, if one is not been thought on how to use social media, he or she be end up being the victim or the propagator of fake news or disinformation, therefore it is important to teach people the right way of using social media and too they should be willing to learn and use it the knowledge rightly.

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<sup>335</sup> C. JAMES, E. WEINSTEIN and K. MENDOZA, *Teaching digital citizenship today's world: Research and insights behind the Common Sense K–12 Digital Citizenship Curriculum*. (Version 2). San Francisco, CA: Common Sense Media, 2021.

<sup>336</sup> N. STEINFELD, "I agree to the terms and conditions": (How) do users read privacy policies online? An eye-tracking experiment," in *Computers in Human Behavior*, vol. 55, 2016, pp. 992-1000.

<sup>337</sup> A. D. KRAMER, J. GUILLORY and J. HANCOCK, "Experimental evidence of massive-scale emotional contagion through social networks," in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, vol. 111, no.24, 2014, pp. 8788-8790.

<sup>338</sup> M. GRIFFITHS and D. KUSS, Adolescent social media addiction (revisited)," in *Education and Health*, Vol. 35, no. 3, 2017, pp. 49-52.

### 6.1.3. TRUTH AND ITS IMPORTANCE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

In an era of widespread misinformation, the importance of truth and factual information on social media cannot be overstated.<sup>339</sup> Truth according to the Oxford dictionary is the quality or state of being based on fact,<sup>340</sup> and according to W. Wallace he says:

Truth means in general some kind of agreement between thought and its object, between knowledge and that which is known. It is sometimes applied to things, and a thing is said to be true in the sense of ontological truth.<sup>341</sup>

From what Wallace says it means that the word truth refers to the truth of the intellect, of thought. So, truth is a property of intellectual knowledge and is not relative, but it must be in reality, just as it is in thought, and is present when one expresses what is in his or her mind. To further elucidate this, truth according to Aquinas is *adequatio intellectus ad rem* that is, the conformity of the intellect to the thing. This is the definition of truth, as it exists in the intellect.<sup>342</sup> Augustine had earlier asserted that ‘the truth is that which is,’<sup>343</sup> Aquinas gives a confirmation to this by stating that truth is *adequatio rei et intellectus*<sup>344</sup> that is, the conformity of the thing to the intellect, presupposing that truth exists in the thing - ontological truth. Also, truth can be taken as that by which a person speaks truly. It is the reason for his being called truthful. ‘So understood truth or truthfulness has to be a virtue. For, to speak the truth is a morally good act and that which makes its possessor and his actions good is virtue.’<sup>345</sup> It follows therefore, that truth is a virtue.

Furthermore, the human being’s intellect is restless until it finds tranquility in the truth, this is same for all even the social media users. This is because man by nature desires to know and to know is always to know the truth and it is obligatory that no one’s intelligence be insulted by being fed with falsehood instead of truth, under the assurance of truth,<sup>346</sup> and according to Aristotle ‘every kind of falsehood is evil and must be avoided’<sup>347</sup> Thus, his very nature abhors that which is untrue, although he may himself attempt deceiving others. St.

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<sup>339</sup> S. VOSOUGHI et al. “The spread of true and false news online”, in *Science*, vol. 359, no. 6380, 2018, pp. 1146-1151.

<sup>340</sup> S. WEHENEIER (ed.), *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary*, Oxford University Press, New York 2001, 1285.

<sup>341</sup> W. A. WALLACE, *The elements of philosophy*, St. Paul Press, New York, 1977, p. 113.

<sup>342</sup> M. NIBA, *Metaphysics*, Unpublished Work, p. 46.

<sup>343</sup> AUGUSTINE, *Soliloquy II*, 5.

<sup>344</sup> T. AQUINAS T., Ia, q. 16, a. 4.

<sup>345</sup> AUGUSTINE, *Soliloquy II*, 5.

<sup>346</sup> M. GONSALVES, *Fagothey’s Right and Reason, Ethics in Theory And Practice*, Merrill Publishing Company, London 1985.

<sup>347</sup> ARISTOTLE, *Ethics IV*, 7, 1127a5.



Augustine in this regard says: ‘I have met many who wanted to deceive but none who wanted to be deceived.’<sup>348</sup> This is merely because man knows that he has a right to that which is true, and until his intellect recognizes the tranquilizing drug, truth, he remains in the sweltering pot of unrest, suspicion, or milling about in the cobweb of doubt, confusion, and worst of all ignorance. So, it is important to be truthful at all times<sup>349</sup> and when necessary to preserve life and harmony.

So from what we have said of truth, educating social media users the truth, encourages them to verify the accuracy and reliability of the content they engage with, and to actively seek out authoritative and trustworthy sources, is crucial for maintaining the integrity of public discourse and informed decision-making.<sup>350</sup> By prioritizing truth and factual information, social media users can contribute to a more informed and responsible digital ecosystem, thus making them in the light of social media usage, virtues persons and defenders of truth. Overall, by promoting ethical considerations, raising awareness of fake news, educating users on responsible usage, and emphasizing the significance of truth, we can navigate the complexities of the digital age with wisdom and discernment

## **6.2. ENFORCING THE REGULATION RULES ON SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE NECESSITY TO TRACK DOWN CYBER CRIMINALITY**

The rise of social media platforms has brought great opportunities in the communication, business, religious sectors and despite the good it has brought, it has also brought disadvantages, this does not mean that social media is bad, it is the manner in which it is used that makes us talk of disadvantages. So, it is of utmost importance to put regulation rules and enforce them, in order to ensure the safety and security of users in the digital world, especially this era of proliferation of harmful content and cyber criminality on social media. To fight against these aggressors on social media, it is imperative for social media companies, technology companies, and policymakers to make and enforce strict regulation rules and work closely with law enforcement agencies to track down cybercriminals.<sup>351</sup> It is in this light, that McIntyre in his book *Post-Truth*, emphasizes the importance of combating fake news and disinformation, highlighting the need for robust regulation to address these issues. McIntyre

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<sup>348</sup> AUGUSTINE, *The Confessions*, X, 23, p. 33.

<sup>349</sup> I. KANT, *On A Supposed Right to Tell Lies from Benevolent Motives*, Longman’s, London 1881, p. 361.

<sup>350</sup> A. BESSI, et al., “Science vs Conspiracy: Collective narratives in the age of misinformation”, in *PLOS ONE*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2015. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0118093>

<sup>351</sup> R. KENNEDY, W. LAWRENCE and J. ROUNTREE, *Social Media Regulation: How should we decide what speech is acceptable/unacceptable on social media?* UHD CPD, 2023, p. 3.

argues that the spread of misinformation on social media can have detrimental effects on public discourse and democratic processes, underscoring the urgency of tracking down cyber criminality and enforcing regulation rules to safeguard the integrity of online information.<sup>352</sup> Furthermore, cyber criminality is on the rise, with hackers using social media platforms to spread malware and commit fraud. So, enforcing regulation rules on social media can help deter cybercriminals and hold them accountable for their actions, thereby safeguarding the integrity of online platforms.

### **6.2.1. SOCIAL MEDIA COMPANIES SHOULD SELF REGULATE**

In light of the challenges posed by cyber criminality and harmful online content on social media, making them a tool for hate-based harassment, contribute to terror attacks and cause discord among people, can threaten community health with false information and they can further polarization and hatred between various groups.<sup>353</sup> And the fact that social media companies are the owners of these platforms, they are then gatekeepers of online communication and content, as they possess the resources, expertise, and technological capabilities to proactively identify and address harmful content, misinformation, and other problematic activities.<sup>354</sup> To this effect, there is a growing call for social media companies to self-regulate their platforms to ensure the responsible dissemination of information and protection of users. Self-regulation involves setting and enforcing guidelines for user behavior, content moderation, and data privacy to ensure a safe and responsible online environment. By taking proactive measures to regulate their platforms, like implementing their own guidelines and policies, social media companies can demonstrate their commitment to user safety and well-being and upholding true and factual news. With the rise and spread of harmful content and misinformation on these social media platforms, McIntyre suggests that social media companies have a responsibility to implement their own guidelines and policies to combat the dissemination of false information and harmful content. However, McIntyre also cautions that self-regulation alone may not be sufficient, as it may lack the necessary oversight and enforcement mechanisms to effectively address the complex challenges posed by harmful content on social media platforms.<sup>355</sup>

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<sup>352</sup> L. MCINTYRE, *Post- Truth*, The MIT Press Essential Knowledge Series, London, 2018, p. 117.

<sup>353</sup> R. KENNEDY, W. LAWRENCE and J. ROUNTREE, *Social Media Regulation: How should we decide what speech is acceptable/unacceptable on social media?* UHD CPD, 2023, p. 3.

<sup>354</sup> T. GILLESPIE, "Content Moderation, AI, and the Question of Scale" in *Big Data and Society*, vol.7, no.2, 2020, pp. 1-11.

<sup>355</sup> L. MCINTYRE, *The Scientific Attitude: Defending Science from Denial, Fraud, and Pseudoscience*. MIT Press, 2019.

Furthermore, the proliferation of fake news and misinformation on social media platforms as we have seen throughout this work, has become a significant threat to public discourse, contributing to the erosion of trust in institutions and factual information.<sup>356</sup> To address this pressing concern, the banning of websites dedicated to the dissemination of deliberately false or misleading content should be seriously considered. This can be done, by identifying and removing the sources of fake news from social media platforms, in so doing, users can be protected from being misled and manipulated by deceptive content they spread. To elucidate this, according to Allcott banning fake news websites can help mitigate the harmful effects of false information on society and promote a more informed and discerning online community, this is because fake news websites, often masquerading as legitimate news sources, they not only sow confusion and division among the public but also has the potential to incite violence, erode social cohesion, and undermine the foundations of a well-informed citizenry.<sup>357</sup> Though we advocate the banning of such website platforms, it is important that, any such bans must be implemented with due diligence and in accordance with principles of free speech and the protection of legitimate journalistic activities.<sup>358</sup> The criteria for identifying and banning fake news websites should be clear, transparent, and subject to independent oversight to ensure that the measures are not misused or abused.<sup>359</sup>

In addition, when harmful content or cyber criminality occurs on social media platforms, it is essential for companies to take swift action to stop the dissemination of harmful content and repair the damages caused. This may involve removing offensive or illegal content, suspending accounts engaged in malicious activities, and implementing measures to prevent similar incidents from occurring in the future. This is well express by Citron Danielle, as she emphasizes the importance of addressing online harassment and harmful content on social media, highlighting the need for platforms to prioritize user safety and well-being, especially when it comes to women. By stopping and repairing damages caused by harmful content, social media companies can demonstrate their commitment to creating a positive and secure online environment for users.<sup>360</sup> Overall, self-regulation allows

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<sup>356</sup> C. WARDLE and H. DERAKHSHAN, *Information Disorder: Toward an Interdisciplinary Framework for Research and Policy Making*, Council of Europe, 2017.

<sup>357</sup> H. ALLCOTT and M. GENTZKOW, Social media and fake news in the 2016 election. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 2017, pp. 211-236.

<sup>358</sup> J. M. BALKIN, "Free Speech in the Algorithmic Society: Big Data, Private Governance, and New School Speech Regulation," in *U.C. Davis Law Review*, vol. 51, no. 3, 2018, pp. 1149-1210.

<sup>359</sup> N. PERSILY, "The 2016 US Election: Can Democracy Survive the Internet?" in *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 28, no. 2, 2017, pp. 63-76.

<sup>360</sup> D. K. CITRON, "Law's Expressive Value in Combating Cyber Gender Harassment", in *Michigan Law Review*, vol. 108, no. 3, 2009, pp. 317-415. Available at: <https://repository.law.umich.edu/mlr/vol108/iss3/3>

for greater flexibility and responsiveness to the rapidly evolving digital landscape, enabling social media companies to adapt their policies and practices more swiftly than the often slow-moving legislative process.<sup>361</sup> This approach can help to build public trust and demonstrate the industry's commitment to being good corporate citizens, ultimately strengthening their social license to operate.

Moreover, social media companies can agree to create an independent group to develop a set of industry standards. The group could include representatives of social media platforms, users, and perhaps even government officials. This will definitely be met with challenges, but these policies proposed by Ryan Kennedy et al., can be recommended, we should:

Strengthen of current regulations to require large social media companies to remove illegal and pornographic content within four days, while letting sites regulate all other content as they see fit. Secondly, social media sites should form independent oversight boards to evaluate when a public official or celebrity has violated the community standards of the site. The board would make determinations about whether the user should be barred from the site and for how long. Lastly, social media sites should form independent oversight boards to evaluate when a public official or celebrity has violated the community standards of the site. The board would make determinations about whether the user should be barred from the site and for how long.<sup>362</sup>

From the proposals given above they are drawbacks to them, the problem we face with the first is too much content, so which content is illegal given different laws in different countries concerning illegal laws. In the second one, not all companies will like to join the association, and in the last one, raises the problem of controversial split decisions taken. Despite the drawbacks this can be recommended to help social

### **6.2.2. SOCIAL MEDIA COMPANIES SHOULD BE LEGALLY LIABLE FOR HARMFUL CONTENT**

In addition to self-regulation, social media companies should also be legally liable for harmful content posted on their platforms. This would motivate companies to take greater responsibility for the content that is shared on their networks and prompt them to proactively remove harmful content that violates their terms of service. In other words, as the influence and reach of social media platforms continue to grow, there is a pressing need to hold these

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<sup>361</sup> N. P. SUZOR, *Lawless: The Secret Rules That Govern Our Digital Lives*. Cambridge University Press, 2019.

<sup>362</sup> R. KENNEDY, W. LAWRENCE and J. ROUNTREE, *Social Media Regulation: How should we decide what speech is acceptable/unacceptable on social media?* UHD CPD, 2023, p. 8.

companies legally accountable for the harmful content that proliferates on their platforms.<sup>363</sup> By imposing legal liability, policymakers can incentivize social media companies to take decisive action in mitigating the spread of misinformation, hate speech, and other damaging content that threatens the well-being of individuals and society. This is elucidated, by Ryan Kennedy et al., as they wrote:

In contrast, many European democracies take a different approach to free speech. Following the Holocaust, many European nations prioritized preventing something similar from ever happening again. Thus, many European nations prohibit hate speech. For example, in Germany, it is a crime to deny the Holocaust. It is also a crime to incite hatred against groups or to insult, slur, or defame them in a way that violates their dignity. A law passed in 2017 holds social media sites responsible if they do not remove hate speech within a week of its being posted.<sup>364</sup>

From this, we can say that, though other countries don't hold social media country accountable because of free speech, others still hold them responsible for allowing things that disrupt their societal harmony. Notwithstanding, currently, many social media platforms enjoy broad legal protections under laws such as Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act in the United State of America, which shields them from liability for user-generated content.<sup>365</sup> This has led to a culture of complacency and a lack of robust content moderation efforts, as the companies face little consequence for the harms that arise from their platforms.<sup>366</sup> So, by removing or significantly limiting these legal shields, social media companies would be compelled to implement more stringent content moderation policies, invest in advanced technologies to detect and remove harmful content, and establish transparent processes for user reporting and redress.<sup>367</sup> This would not only reduce the prevalence of harmful content but also incentivize the development of more ethical and user-centric platform designs. Moreover, legal liability would hold social media companies accountable for the tangible harms caused by the content on their platforms, whether it be the incitement of violence, the erosion of democratic discourse, or the facilitation of criminal

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<sup>363</sup> J. M. BALKIN, "Free Speech in the Algorithmic Society: Big Data, Private Governance, and New School Speech Regulation," in *U.C. Davis Law Review*, vol. 51, no. 3, 2018, pp. 1149-1210.

<sup>364</sup> R. KENNEDY, W. LAWRENCE and J. ROUNTREE, *Social Media Regulation: How should we decide what speech is acceptable/unacceptable on social media?* UHD CPD, 2023, p.3.

<sup>365</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>366</sup> T. GILLESPIE, *Custodians of the Internet: Platforms, Content Moderation, and the Hidden Decisions That Shape Social Media*, Yale University Press, London 2018.

<sup>367</sup> N. P. SUZOR et al., "Human Rights by Design: The Responsibilities of Social Media Platforms to Address Gender-Based Violence Online," in *Policy and Internet*, vol. 11 no. 1, 2019, pp. 84-103.

activities.<sup>368</sup> Imposing financial penalties, court-ordered remedies, and, in egregious cases, criminal prosecution, would serve as a powerful deterrent and send a clear message that the companies have a fundamental duty of care to their users and the broader public. Overall, the imposition of legal liability on social media companies is a necessary step in addressing the societal threats posed by the proliferation of harmful content and restoring public trust in these powerful digital platforms.

### **6.2.3. SOCIAL MEDIA COMPANIES SHOULD BE REQUIRED TO PROVIDE ALTERNATIVE ALGORITHMS**

Rather than deleting content and banning accounts from social media platforms as we have seen above, users should be given more control over what they see, and as social media platforms continue to wield significant influence over the information and content that users are exposed to, there is a growing need for these companies to provide alternative algorithms that prioritize the promotion of diverse perspectives and factual information.<sup>369</sup> This would help to moderate the echo chamber effect and the amplification of polarizing or misleading content that has become a pressing societal concern. After all, some people believe that the way we combat bad speech is with more speech, not through censoring speech. Algorithms control what appears in a user's social media feed.<sup>370</sup> The current algorithms employed by many social media platforms are primarily designed to maximize user engagement and maximize advertising revenue, often at the expense of fostering a healthy and well-informed public discourse.<sup>371</sup> These algorithms frequently prioritize content that is sensational, divisive, or emotionally charged, contributing to the proliferation of misinformation and the erosion of trust in authoritative sources.

Furthermore, social media companies design algorithms to figure out how to increase their users' engagement as much as possible and to manipulate user behavior for the purposes of selling ads. Social media users, in essence, are the product social media companies sell. Social media companies have an unprecedented amount of information about its users, it is to because of this that Shoshana Zuboff, explains that social media companies can directly

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<sup>368</sup> E. DOUEK, "Governing Online Speech: From "Posts-as-Trumps" to Proportionality and Probability." in *Columbia Law Review*, vol. 121, no. 3, 2019, pp. 759-829.

<sup>369</sup> N. HELBERGER, et al. "Governing Online Platforms: From Contested to Cooperative Responsibility." in *The Information Society*, vol. 34, no. 1, 2018, pp. 1-14.

<sup>370</sup> R. KENNEDY, W. LAWRENCE and J. ROUNTREE, *Social Media Regulation: How should we decide what speech is acceptable/unacceptable on social media?* UHD CPD, 2023, p. 3.

<sup>371</sup> T. GILLESPIE, "Content Moderation, AI, and the Question of Scale" in *Big Data and Society*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2020, pp. 1-11.

manipulate social media behavior and emotions without its users even being aware.<sup>372</sup> To solve this problem of algorithm manipulation of its users to think rationally, social media companies should be required to develop and offer alternative algorithms that prioritize the distribution of high-quality, factual content and diverse viewpoints, policymakers can help to counteract these harmful dynamics,<sup>373</sup> so that these alternative algorithms could, for example, emphasize content from reputable news sources, promote posts that have been fact-checked, and limit the viral spread of unsubstantiated claims or conspiracy theories. Importantly, the implementation of these alternative algorithms should be accompanied by clear and transparent disclosure requirements, allowing users to make informed choices about the type of content curation they prefer.<sup>374</sup> This is expounded by Ryan Kennedy et al, as they explain that:

While we know the impact of algorithms, how those algorithms work exactly is not made public. This option would require companies to be transparent about how their algorithms work. It would also require them to provide alternatives so users can decide how they want their content to be determined. Making algorithms more transparent might help users be more aware of how they are manipulated to form silos and like-minded groups and to become less likely to seek diverse perspectives.<sup>375</sup>

This indicates that social media should not be the one to decide what users often see, through algorithms. Thus, this will empower individuals to actively engage with a broader range of perspectives and information, fostering a more nuanced and balanced understanding of complex societal issues. This therefore means that, requiring social media companies to provide alternative algorithms can help in diversifying content and reducing the spread of misinformation.

In a nutshell, social media regulations are very important as they ensure online safety and fairness. These rules protect users from cyberbullying, harassment, hate speech, and misinformation. They also want people and businesses to use social media responsibly without violating others' rights or being deceptive. Also, regulations are needed to protect these platforms and prevent the spread of harmful or misleading information with real-world

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<sup>372</sup> S. ZUBOFF, "Big other: Surveillance Capitalism and the Prospects of an Information Civilization," in *Journal of Information Technology*, vol. 30, no. 1, 2015, pp. 75–89. <https://doi.org/10.1057/jit.2015.5>

<sup>373</sup> J. M. BALKIN, "Free Speech in the Algorithmic Society: Big Data, Private Governance, and New School Speech Regulation," in *U.C. Davis Law Review*, vol.51, no.3, 2018, pp. 1149-1210.

<sup>374</sup> N. PERSILY, "The 2016 US Election: Can Democracy Survive the Internet?" in *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 28, no. 2, 2017, pp. 63-76.

<sup>375</sup> R. KENNEDY, W. LAWRENCE and J. ROUNTREE, *Social Media Regulation: How should we decide what speech is acceptable/unacceptable on social media?* UHD CPD, 2023, p. 12.

consequences. Furthermore, social media regulations are both legal and moral. By regulations, individuals and businesses can promote a healthier online culture, meaningful connections, and a positive digital presence. Thus, enforcing regulation rules on social media, promoting self-regulation by companies, holding companies legally liable for harmful content, and requiring the provision of alternative algorithms are all critical steps in safeguarding the integrity and safety of online platforms. Thus, by addressing cyber criminality, promoting responsible online behavior, and fostering a culture of accountability and transparency in the digital space, we can create a more secure and ethical online environment for all users.

### **6.3. WAYS OF TACKLING FAKE NEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA**

Throughout this work, we have been talking about the rise and benefit of social media and its impacts in the society, also addressing how it has led to fake news and disinformation. Fake news, alternative facts and misinformation are very real in this digital world we find ourselves and no one can't deny the reality of its presence. The question that arises is, how can we end this fake news? What is and what is not fake news? With the advancement of technology and evolution of artificial intelligence and Deepfake how can we fight it? It is based on these questions, as we have tried answering in this work that, McIntyre and many others, gave possible ways to tackle these problems affecting our digital age and society.

#### **6.3.1. FIGHTING BACK FAKE NEWS BY LEE MCINTYRE**

In his book "*Post-Truth*" from pages 117 to 121,<sup>376</sup> McIntyre explores the phenomenon of fake news and its impact on public discourse, highlighting the need for proactive measures to combat misinformation in the digital age. McIntyre argues that fake news poses a systemic problem that is exploited by those seeking to manipulate public opinion and undermine the truth. McIntyre emphasizes the importance of fact-checking and media literacy education to empower individuals to discern credible information from misinformation. To counteract fake news on social media, McIntyre proposes two key strategies: recognizing the systematic problem and promoting critical thinking among users.

The first way to counteract fake news according to McIntyre is to, recognize the systematic problem and how it is exploited. McIntyre emphasizes the systemic nature of fake news, pointing to the ways in which misinformation is disseminated and amplified through social media platforms. He argues that fake news thrives in an environment where algorithms

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<sup>376</sup> L. MCINTYRE, *Post- Truth*, The MIT Press Essential Knowledge Series, London, 2018, pp. 117-121. (What we have here is summary of what Lee McIntyre said about fight fake news).



prioritize sensationalist content, echo chambers reinforce confirmation bias, and clickbait headlines attract user engagement. By recognizing the systemic problem of fake news, users can better understand how it is exploited to spread false information and manipulate public opinion. In line with efforts to combat misinformation, McIntyre supports the banning of fake news websites from social media platforms. He argues that the deliberate spread of false information can undermine public trust and contribute to societal polarization. McIntyre emphasizes the importance of holding purveyors of fake news accountable and preventing their content from reaching wide audiences through social media channels. Additionally, he advocates for greater transparency from social media platforms regarding their algorithms and content moderation practices to mitigate the spread of fake news.

Furthermore, the second way to counteract fake news according to McIntyre is through critical thinking. McIntyre advocates for the promotion of critical thinking skills among social media users. He argues that critical thinking enables individuals to evaluate information critically, question sources, and discern credible content from misinformation. By fostering a culture of critical thinking, users can become more resilient to the influence of fake news and better equipped to navigate the digital information landscape. Also, Pennycook and Rand support the importance of critical thinking in combating misinformation on social media, by highlighting the role of cognitive factors such as analytic thinking and skepticism in reducing belief in fake news and promoting fact-checking behaviors.<sup>377</sup> By encouraging users to engage in critical evaluation of online content, we can empower individuals to make informed decisions and resist the influence of false information.

In addition to the main two, McIntyre notes that social media sites could be vigilante in stamping out fake news but often provokes a conservative backlash.<sup>378</sup> But this raises two problems, first, how to be sure that one has identified all and only those websites that promote fake news and how to handle backlash?<sup>379</sup> Furthermore, he says we could also flood the zone with good news sources but is doubtful of this approach, as information silos will indeed still channel many partisans away from legitimate news sources.<sup>380</sup> McIntyre supports efforts to bolster Americans' critical thinking skills and notes how many educational institutions are attempting to tackle this task. He encourages all Americans to stand up to lies wherever they

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<sup>377</sup> G. PENNYCOOK, and D. RAND, "Fighting misinformation on social media using crowdsourced judgments of news source quality," in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, vol. 116 no. 7, 2019, pp. 2521-2526. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1806781116>

<sup>378</sup> E. LAWRENCE, "Book Review: *Post-Truth*." in *Sociation*, vol. 19 no. 2, 2020, pp. 70-72.

<sup>379</sup> L. MCINTYRE, *Post-Truth*, The MIT Press Essential Knowledge Series, London, 2018, pp. 118.

<sup>380</sup> E. LAWRENCE, "Book Review: *Post-Truth*." in *Sociation* vol. 19 no. 2, 2020, pp. 70-72.

find them in their everyday lives, saying, "One must always fight back against lies. We should never assume that any claim is 'too outrageous to be believed.'<sup>381</sup> A lie is told because the person telling it thinks there is a chance that someone will believe it. The point of challenging a lie is not to convince the liar, who is likely too far gone. But because every lie has an audience, there may still be time to do some good for others. In an era of post-truth, we must challenge each and every attempt to obfuscate a factual matter and challenge falsehoods before they are allowed to fester."<sup>382</sup> He notes that research suggests that even partisans can change their minds if faced with the evidence repeatedly, as long as we do so in a non-threatening manner.

Overall, Lee McIntyre's insights on fighting back fake news underscore the need for a multifaceted approach that addresses the systemic nature of misinformation and promotes critical thinking skills among users. Thus, McIntyre's perspective aligns with the idea that combating fake news requires a combination of technological innovation, education, and transparency.

### **6.3.2. FLOODING THE SOCIAL MEDIA WITH ACTUAL NEWS**

In today's digital age, the rise of social media has revolutionized the way information is disseminated and consumed, and social media has become a primary source of news and information for many individuals. While these social media platforms have brought numerous benefits, they have also become a breeding ground for the proliferation of fake news. Fake news, as we defined it, is deliberately fabricated or misleading information presented as factual, has become a significant concern, with its potential to sow confusion, manipulate public opinion, and undermine the democratic process.<sup>383</sup> In response to this challenge, one proposed strategy is to flood social media with actual news as a way of tackling the spread of fake news.<sup>384</sup> According to Brooke Binkowski, managing editor of the fact-checking website Snopes, "pinching off fake news isn't the answer. The answer is flooding it with actual news. And that they will find vetted, nuanced, contextual, in-depth information."<sup>385</sup> That is why to McIntyre flooding social media with accurate information is not wrong, since it is through flooding that there is fake news.<sup>386</sup> The rationale behind this approach involves actively increasing the volume of credible, promoting and sharing credible news sources and fact-

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<sup>381</sup> E. LAWRENCE, "Book Review: *Post-Truth*." in *Sociation* vol. 19 no. 2, 2020, pp. 70-72.

<sup>382</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>383</sup> H. ALLCOTT and M. GENTZKOW, Social media and fake news in the 2016 election. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 2017, pp. 211-236.

<sup>384</sup> S. VOSOUGHI, et al., "The spread of true and false news online", in *Science*, vol. 359, no. 6380, 2018, pp.1146-1151.

<sup>385</sup> R. MEYER, "The Rise of Progressive 'Fake News,'" in *Atlantic*, Feb. 3, 2017.

<sup>386</sup> L. MCINTYRE, *Post-Truth*, The MIT Press Essential Knowledge Series, London, 2018, p. 119.

checked information in order to counteract the influence of fake news. When users are exposed to a greater number of reliable news sources and accurate reporting, it becomes more difficult for false narratives to gain traction and spread.<sup>387</sup> This strategy aims to create a more balanced information landscape, where factual content can compete with and ultimately overshadow the influence of fake news. Therefore, with accurate and verified news content, it is possible to create a more balanced information environment and reduce the impact of fake news on public discourse.

The effectiveness of flooding social media with actual news as a way of fighting fake news is a topic of ongoing debate. Some studies have suggested that exposure to accurate information can help to reduce belief in fake news and increase media literacy among social media users.<sup>388</sup> Additionally, efforts to promote credible news sources and fact-checking initiatives have shown promise in raising awareness about the prevalence of misinformation online. However, challenges remain in terms of reaching and engaging with audiences who may be predisposed to consuming and sharing fake news.

Furthermore, one key aspect of this approach is the involvement of traditional media outlets and news organizations. By actively sharing their content on social media platforms, these established and trusted sources can contribute to the flood of actual news. This can include not only breaking news stories but also in-depth analyses, investigative reports, and fact-checking initiatives.<sup>389</sup> By leveraging their reputation and credibility, these media outlets can help to counter the impact of fake news and provide users with the reliable information they need to make informed decisions. In addition to the participation of traditional media, this strategy also encourages individual users and social media influencers to actively share and engage with accurate news content. By amplifying the reach of legitimate news sources, these users can help to create a more robust ecosystem of credible information on social media platforms.<sup>390</sup> This grassroots approach can be particularly effective in addressing the spread of fake news within specific communities or echo chambers, where users may be more inclined to trust and share content from their peers and trusted sources. However, it is important to note that flooding social media with actual news is not a cure for the problem of fake news.

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<sup>387</sup> A. GUESS et al., “Less than you think: Prevalence and predictors of fake news dissemination on Facebook”, in *Science Advances*, 2019, vol. 5, no. 1.

<sup>388</sup> A. SMITH and M. ANDERSON, “Social media use in 2018,” in *Pew Research Center*, 2018.

<sup>389</sup> G. PENNYCOOK, and D. RAND, “Fighting misinformation on social media using crowdsourced judgments of news source quality,” in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, vol. 116 no. 7, 2019, pp. 2521-2526.

<sup>390</sup> E. BAKSHY et al., “Exposure to ideologically diverse news and opinion on Facebook,” in *Science*, vol. 348, no. 6239, USA 2015, pp. 1130-1132.

Challenges such as the speed and scale at which misinformation can spread, the difficulty in debunking false narratives, and the potential for social media algorithms to amplify sensationalized content must also be addressed.<sup>391</sup> Nonetheless, this strategy can be a valuable component of a broader, multi-faceted approach to tackling the threat of fake news and strengthening the credibility of information on social media platforms.

In a nutshell, the strategy of flooding social media with actual news presents a potential avenue for addressing the problem of fake news on social media. While its effectiveness may vary depending on the context and audience, this approach reflects a proactive and community-driven response to the challenges of misinformation. As social media continues to evolve as a primary source of news and information, efforts to promote credible news sources and combat fake news will remain essential in fostering a more informed and responsible digital public sphere.

### **6.3.3. EQUIPPING SOCIETY WITH THE TOOLS TO RECOGNIZE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FAKE NEWS AND TRUE NEWS**

The proliferation of fake news on social media has become a significant challenge to the integrity of information and the well-being of society. In response to this threat, one proposed strategy is to equip society with the tools to recognize the differences between fake news and true news as a way of tackling the problem at its source.<sup>392</sup> The motivation is that, by empowering individuals with the knowledge and skills to discern between accurate and false information, the impact and reach of fake news can be diminished. When users are better equipped to critically evaluate the content they encounter on social media, they are less likely to be deceived by false narratives and more likely to trust and share legitimate news sources.<sup>393</sup> This strategy aims to create a more informed and discerning public, capable of navigating the complex information landscape of social media and making well-informed decisions.

Furthermore, implementation of digital literacy and media education programs. These initiatives, often spearheaded by educational institutions, non-profit organizations, and government agencies, focus on teaching individuals the skills necessary to identify the hallmarks of fake news, such as lack of credible sources, sensationalized language, and

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<sup>391</sup> D. M. LAZER, et al., “The science of fake news,” in *Science*, vol.359, no.6380, 2018, pp.1094-1096.

<sup>392</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>393</sup> G. PENNYCOOK, and D. RAND, “Fighting misinformation on social media using crowdsourced judgments of news source quality,” in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, vol. 116 no. 7, 2019, pp. 2521-2526.

inconsistencies with established facts.<sup>394</sup> By equipping people with the tools to recognize these characteristics, they can become more discerning consumers of information and less susceptible to the manipulation of fake news. In addition to formal educational programs, this strategy also encourages the development of user-friendly tools and resources that can assist individuals in evaluating the credibility of online content. This can include browser extensions, mobile applications, and fact-checking websites that provide real-time analysis and verification of news articles, social media posts, and other digital content.<sup>395</sup> By leveraging technology to aid in the identification of fake news, users can make more informed decisions about the information they consume and share. Moreover, this approach also emphasizes the importance of promoting critical thinking and digital citizenship skills. By encouraging individuals to question the sources of information, cross-check claims, and consider the broader context of news stories, they can develop a more nuanced understanding of the information landscape and be less likely to fall victim to the spread of fake news.<sup>396</sup> This shift in mindset can have a ripple effect, as users become more proactive in identifying and countering the dissemination of false information on social media platforms.

In a nutshell, while equipping society with the tools to recognize the differences between fake news and true news is not a standalone solution to the problem, it can be a powerful component of a multi-faceted approach to tackling the threat of fake news. By empowering individuals with the knowledge and skills to navigate the digital world more effectively, this strategy has the potential to create a more informed and resilient society, better equipped to distinguish fact from fiction and preserve the integrity of information on social media platforms.

#### **6.3.4. FACT-CHECKING AND INFORMATION VERIFICATION BY SKEPTICISM**

As we have said before, the proliferation of fake news, alternative facts on social media has become a significant threat to the integrity of information and the well-being of society. With the presentation of traditionally vetted, fact-checked stories right alongside lies and propaganda, how can one tell what is true anymore?<sup>397</sup> In response to this question, one

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<sup>394</sup> A. GUESS, et al., “Less than you think: Prevalence and predictors of fake news dissemination on Facebook”, in *Science Advances*, 2019, vol. 5, no. 1.

<sup>395</sup> E. BAKSHY, et al., “Exposure to ideologically diverse news and opinion on Facebook,” in *Science*, vol. 348, no. 6239, USA 2015, pp. 1130-1132.

<sup>396</sup> S. MCGREW, S., et al., “The challenge that’s bigger than fake news: Civic reasoning in a social media environment”, in *American Educator*, vol. 41 no. 3, 2017, pp. 4-39.

[https://www.aft.org/ae/fall2017/mcgrew\\_ortega\\_breakstone\\_wineburg](https://www.aft.org/ae/fall2017/mcgrew_ortega_breakstone_wineburg)

<sup>397</sup> L. MCINTYRE, *Post- Truth*, The MIT Press Essential Knowledge Series, London, 2018, pp. 97.

proposed strategy is to employ a skeptical approach to fact-checking and information verification as a way of tackling the spread of fake news on social media. This approach is that by cultivating a culture of critical thinking and skepticism, individuals can become more adept at evaluating the credibility of the information they encounter online. Skepticism, in this context, refers to a mindset that questions the veracity of claims, examines the evidence supporting them, and seeks to uncover potential biases or ulterior motives.<sup>398</sup> By applying this skeptical lens to the consumption and sharing of content on social media, users can develop a more nuanced understanding of the information landscape and be less susceptible to the influence of fake news.

Furthermore, rigorous fact-checking and verification processes should be implemented. This involves thoroughly scrutinizing the sources, claims, and evidence presented in news articles, social media posts, and other digital content.<sup>399</sup> Fact-checkers and skeptical individuals can leverage a range of tools and techniques, such as cross-referencing information, checking for inconsistencies, and verifying the credentials of cited experts, to assess the credibility of the content they encounter. This point is elucidated by Schot Bedley, a fifth-grade teacher in Irvine, California, who thought his class how to spot fake news, he says:

I needed my students to understand that “fake news” is news that is being reported as accurate, but lacks reliability and credibility. A good example are the widely shared stories of the pope endorsing one presidential candidate over another. I decided to devise a game, the goal being to tell fake news from real news. ... My students absolutely loved the game. Some refused to go to recess until I gave them another chance to figure out the next article I had queued.<sup>400</sup>

If Bedley, can teach the fifth-grade how to verify fake news, as McIntyre puts it, so what excuse do the rest of us have?<sup>401</sup> Thus Bedley gave seven ways to do so: look for copyright, verify from multiple sources, assess the credibility of the source (e.g., how long has it been around?), look for a publication date, assess the author’s expertise with the subject, ask: does this match my prior knowledge? And ask: does this seem realistic? The problem with this system according to McIntyre is, Bedley students won’t stop fact checking him.<sup>402</sup>

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<sup>398</sup> G. PENNYCOOK, and D. RAND, “Fighting misinformation on social media using crowdsourced judgments of news source quality,” in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, vol.116 no.7, 2019, pp.2521-2526.

<sup>399</sup> A. GUESS, et al., “Less than you think: Prevalence and predictors of fake news dissemination on Facebook”, in *Science Advances*, 2019, vol. 5, no. 1.

<sup>400</sup> S. BEDLEY, “I Taught My 5th-Graders How to Spot Fake News: Now They Won’t Stop Fact-Checking Me,” *Vox*, May 29, 2017, <http://www.vox.com/first-person/2017/3/29/15042692/fake-news-education-election>.

<sup>401</sup> L. MCINTYRE, *Post- Truth*, The MIT Press Essential Knowledge Series, London, 2018, p. 97.

<sup>402</sup> *Ibid*, p. 121.

In addition to individual efforts of fact-checking, it also emphasizes the role of established fact-checking organizations and media outlets in the fight against fake news. These entities, which have built reputations for their commitment to accuracy and objectivity, can play a crucial role in debunking false narratives and providing authoritative information to the public.<sup>403</sup> By regularly fact-checking and verifying the claims circulating on social media, these organizations can help to counteract the spread of misinformation and maintain the integrity of the information ecosystem. Moreover, this strategy also encourages the development and adoption of technological tools that can aid in the verification process. This includes browser extensions, mobile applications, and AI-powered algorithms that can automatically flag potentially false or misleading content, providing users with real-time alerts and analysis.<sup>404</sup> By leveraging technology to streamline the fact-checking process, individuals and organizations can more effectively identify and counter the dissemination of fake news on social media platforms.

In a nutshell, a skeptical approach to fact-checking and information verification is not a silver bullet for the problem of fake news, it can be a powerful component of a multi-faceted strategy. By cultivating a culture of critical thinking and empowering individuals and organizations to rigorously scrutinize the information they encounter, this approach has the potential to create a more discerning and resilient social media landscape, where the spread of fake news is diminished, and the integrity of information is preserved.

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<sup>403</sup> E. BAKSHY, et al., “Exposure to ideologically diverse news and opinion on Facebook,” in *Science*, vol. 348, no.6239, USA 2015, pp. 1130-1132.

<sup>404</sup> S. VOSOUGHI, et al., “The spread of true and false news online”, in *Science*, vol.359, no. 6380, USA 2018, pp. 1146-1151.

## GENERAL CONCLUSION

This research work has attempted to expose the rise of social media and how this social media, which is in itself good, to aid man live comfortably has been invaded by falsehood, misinformation, alternative truth and misinformation, and all these are opposed to truth.

Using the analytic and deductive methods; which helped in critical analysis of some areas of necessity in the work and the drawing of general conclusions. The inductive method used in sections of the work that demands conclusions drawn from general facts. Also, phenomenological hermeneutic approach, for the content reflection, our whole project was anchored on three parts, with two chapters each in order to bring Lee McIntyre's thought to a logically conclusion. In part we focused on social media and the question of selecting information, where in chapter one, we looked at the enhancement of information sources and the possibility of controlling them. In an attempt to do so, we are focused from a general way on identifying and expounding on the influence exerted by social media in different sectors of life, be it in the society, economy and in education, while looking at the possibility of controlling the use of social media. Chapter was based on the enhancement of social media due to the growth of human intelligence, where we dwelled on ideologies that characterize the basis of McIntyre's idea of social media due to human intelligence. We moved on to the second part, on towards anarchism and fake on social media. Here chapter three looked at the difficulties in controlling the sources of information on social media and chapter four on the question of casting on social media. Lastly, part three was dedicated to show social media as an improvement of globalization of the world, where in chapter five, we looked at social media as the fastest means of acquiring knowledge or information and ended with chapter six on the rise of cyber-control and the ways to tackle fake on social media.

Throughout this work we kept in mind the necessity of truth, and how to uphold it despite the challenges of falsehood. Our point of focus is to examine how Lee McIntyre's view of social media helps in the development of human potentialities and enhances globalization, its necessity in this digital age and finally how to fight fake news. This can only be achieved through the search for knowledge. True knowledge exist only in truth and any form of falsehood is not knowledge, that is why it is important to know what truth is.

The notion of truth and falsehood (fake news or misinformation) has kept philosophers in great turmoil for decades and came to be thought central to Philosophy, and the nature of



verification itself highlighted. Beginning from ancient times till this post-truth era with the rise of social media, we have had some philosophers like Socrates and Plato who criticized the Sophists for leading people away from the truth by calling up memorized passages and having the memory activated instead of reason, also Aristotle, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, Wittgenstein, Bertrand Russel, Nietzsche, Edmund Husserl, Hannah Arendt, Foucault, Ken Wilber, Immanuel Kant, Lee McIntyre and many others.

The immense preoccupation with Epistemology took hold with Plato and has never diminished since then. In Logic, Epistemology, Theology, Metaphysics, and Ethics, the topic truth ‘has continued to absorb almost limitless energies.’<sup>405</sup> No other concept seems to puzzle and yet draw thinkers so powerfully. From the genesis of human speculation about the world and through the Anthropomorphic era to our golden age, the question about truth has loomed large. Every known philosopher had to grapple with it. The discussion about truth becomes a caricature if not complemented by the corresponding principle of conscience. This conscience needs to be a correct and certain one. Such a conscience is a guarantor and an expression of human freedom, and contributes to a sound morality formed by reality itself, by community, by God, and his revelation, by one’s own subjective perceptions and decisions,<sup>406</sup> known as conscience training.

Generally, the human being’s intellect is restless until it finds tranquility in the truth. This is because man by nature desires to know and to know is always to know the truth. Thus, his very nature abhors that which is untrue, although he may himself attempt deceiving others. St. Augustine in this regard says: ‘I have met many who wanted to deceive but none who wanted to be deceived.’<sup>407</sup> This is merely because man knows that he has a right to that which is true, and until his intellect recognizes the tranquilizing drug, truth, he remains in the sweltering pot of unrest, suspicion, or milling about in the cobweb of doubt, confusion, and worst of all ignorance. It is imperatively obligatory that no one’s intelligence be insulted by being fed with falsehood instead of truth, under the assurance of truth.<sup>408</sup> This is nothing less than that which the liar does. By the subjection of another’s intelligence to lies, for his own advantage, the liar orchestrates the degradation of the personality of his victim and in the event is himself degraded. No morally upright person would advocate lying as a *modus*

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<sup>405</sup> S. BOK, *Lying, Moral Choice in Public and Private Life*, Quartet Books, New York 1980, p. 5.

<sup>406</sup> J. RATZINGER, *On Conscience*, Ignatius Press, California 2007, p. 9.

<sup>407</sup> AUGUSTINE, *The Confessions*, X, 23, p. 33.

<sup>408</sup> M. GONSALVES, *Fagothey’s Right and Reason, Ethics in Theory and Practice*, Merrill Publishing Company, London 1985.

*vivendi* for in so doing the fundamentals of social life and humanity itself are eroded. Immanuel Kant is very clear on this when he states ‘lying is the throwing away and, as it were, the obliteration of one’s dignity as a human being (...) in lying, he renounces his personality and as a liar, he manifests himself as a mere deceptive appearance of a man, not as a true man.’<sup>409</sup> To Aristotle ‘every kind of falsehood is evil and must be avoided.’<sup>410</sup> Truth telling, while being a duty and a virtuous act must never be dissociated from the circumstances, else this act may be vicious. It must be admitted that the trivialization of the truth can have greater import on individuals than expected. Lies in times of crisis can expand into vast practices where the harm to be averted is less obvious and the crisis less immediate. Furthermore, white lies can shade into equally vast practices, with immense cumulative costs, and lies to protect individuals and to cover up their secrets can be told for increasingly dubious purposes to the detriment of all.<sup>411</sup>

From what we have said of truth and falsehood, we can say that, the concept of social media and fake news for the digital man, has kept truth seekers worried in this post-truth era. What is fake news for a modern man? Is it what he thinks or is it independent of his thought or thinking? Man has succeeded to be thinking that the nature of truth is because he thinks of truth. That is why, added to the many philosophers and does who defend truth, we talk of Lee McIntyre, who’s philosophical career aims at defending truth from falsehood as we have seen in this work. Through numerous books, articles, YouTube Videos, he has critically examined the intersection of truth, social media, science, politics, and culture. His thought-provoking insights bridge academic scholarship with broad public concerns, making complex ideas accessible and relevant to contemporary societal issues.

During our research, we attempted to validate the point of view that social media effectively develops human potentials if used rightly. This means that the supreme goal of social media is to aid and assist man to live a comfortable life, of easy communication, studies and entertainment. But with the invasion of social media by fake news, it has been used to misinform and mislead man. We have been able to come to a conclusion as McIntyre that fake news is not simply news that is false, it is deliberately false, which is created for a purpose.

Lee McIntyre, in his chapter five of *Post-Truth*, “The Rise of Social Media and the Problem of Fake News,” clarified the relation between fake news and post-truth, and how it

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<sup>409</sup> J. ELLINGTON (tr), *The Metaphysical Principles of Virtue*, Bobbs-Merill, Indianapolis 1964, p. 91.

<sup>410</sup> ARISTOTLE, *Ethics IV*, 7, 1127a5.

<sup>411</sup> S. BOK, *Lying, Moral Choice in Public and Private Life*, Quartet Books, New York 1980, p. 166.

leads to confusion and doubt. According to Lee McIntyre, Fake News is not merely news that is false, it is news that is intentionally false. In other to create fake news one has to do it on purpose with the goal of trying to get someone believe what is not true. He expands on the phenomenon of the decline of traditional media by describing new trends in the media landscape. The rise of social media platforms like Telegram, Facebook, YouTube, and X has overruled newspapers, causing the lines between news and opinions to be blurred.

Furthermore, social media algorithms according to McIntyre allows people to see and click on “news” stories that they want to hear, regardless of their accuracy, as opposed to some of the factual content from mainstream media that may have been less palatable. Within this newly enforced framework of news-silos and information bubbles, the phenomenon of fake news could gain the strength it has today. Most importantly, McIntyre then traces the history of fake news all to the way to the invention of the printing press, showing that the *ethos* of investigative fact-based journalism in the United States only came into its own by the early 20th century. Without editorial control, there is no way to identify reliable sources, therefore, society can be easily manipulated. This is essentially propaganda, as fake news intends to build an allegiance. However, McIntyre states that there are two ways to fight back against fake news: recognize systematic problems and make a bid for more critical thinking.

In the World, Africa and Cameroon today in particular we continue to face the challenges of social media. This is because it has affected the way we reason, gradually eroding the traditional physical communication and the so much fake news, makes many people to be stereotype and convinced in the wrong information gotten. Everyone wants to be the first to report breaking news, to the extent that instead of helping those who are in need, at the moment, especially in cases of accidents, we are focused on posting, sometimes even with wrong and misleading captions, and hypocritical emotions of concern, while not lifting a hand to help in anyway. This irresponsible use of social media makes the modern man an alien to man and thus not being helpful to the needs of the individual and the society in. Furthermore, as McIntyre says, “without knowing that they were doing so, people could feed their desire for confirmation bias directly, without bothering to patronize traditional sources,”<sup>412</sup> that is to say no one wants to spend money on buying newspapers that has editorial line, but wants to get it cheap from the social media, and mostly from the sites that align with their mentality. How can social media contribute to the development of the self and the society in which we find ourselves? What are the favorable conditions under which social media can help in the

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<sup>412</sup> L. MCINTYRE, *Post- Truth*, The MIT Press Essential Knowledge Series, London, 2018, p. 93.

development of human potentialities? In what ways can we reshape social media and solve the problem of fake news? McIntyre thus offers the way out, which is responsible social media usage and the ways to solve the problem of fake news.

The objective of our study has been to take back truth from the post-truth thinkers in reiterating the true nature of truth and to counteract the attack on the backbone of truth in news by social media thinkers in our contemporary society, especially in the internet as Thomas Jefferson once said “don’t believe everything you read on the internet.”<sup>413</sup> Thus telling us of the presence of falsehood on social media.

The birth of concepts such as post-truth, post-trust, epistemology, post-modernism, post-modern, transhumanism, alternative facts, social constructionism and many others have directly confronted the core of philosophy which is knowledge itself. These new concepts seek to prove that truth is built on conventions. They want to destroy truth, facts and thinking by proposing false, alternatives facts, representations, imaginary concepts of the very foundations on which truth is built. They propose new foundations or opinions for themselves and reject their original foundations or truths, they do this by sharing falsehood to the people. The conception of truth in social media in our present society has been subjectified, and as such McIntyre calls for verification by ourselves by using skepticism. Truth is viewed from various perspectives. Science has devalued the truth, as with the advent of deep fake apps which are used to create fake news with the intention to misinform man. Philosophy has experienced a paradigm shift by which truth is considered to be less important in philosophical thinking in social media, as it was in the time of the Sophists who spread false philosophies. Today in our contemporary society we shall continue to reflect and contemplate on this issue of existence and reality as well as the concept of the rise of social media and the problem of fake news in the philosophy of Lee McIntyre in the post-truth society. The problems we tackled in this study are, is the of concept truth based on the knowledge of truth or is it independent of the knowledge truth? Are the things we see and know to be real on social media, in light of advanced deepfake real? And with the decline in vetting and editing, how are we supposed to know anymore which stories are reliable? With the presentation of traditionally vetted, fact-checked stories right alongside lies and propaganda, how can on tell what is true anymore? With all these questions, how then can we use social media rightly so as to put an end to the problem of fake news on social media in the contemporary post-truth society?

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<sup>413</sup> L. MCINTYRE, *Post- Truth*, The MIT Press Essential Knowledge Series, London, 2018, p. 81.

We achieved this, as we argued that social media should be encouraged and everyone should be taught how to use it rightly, so as to enjoy of its enormous benefits. Also, we agreed with McIntyre on the skeptical approach to fact-checking and information verification through critical thinking and empowering individuals and organizations to rigorously scrutinize the information they encounter, this approach has the potential to create a more discerning and resilient social media landscape, where the spread of fake news is diminished, and the integrity of truth is preserved.

This research work helps to create awareness of the dangers of fake news on social media, to the individual and the society at large. It serves as an indicator to the social media platform organizations and policy makers to bring up strategies that will enhance the building of human potentials and not destroy it. This study is also important in the sense that it helps to promote truth and encourages social media users and everyone to stop falsehood. As such, social media users at this juncture are given the chance to critically think by themselves, make judgement and access true news from fake news. This research is open for further research: how to maintain truth in the post-truth era; how to verify deepfake and uphold truth; truth and facts vis-à-vis alternative truths...

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