

# An Empirical Study on Fake News Menace and Misinformation with Special Reference to India

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**Abstract:** Fake news are the news, cooked up stories or hoaxes that are created to deliberately misinform or deceive the consumers/readers. Usually, these stories are created to either influence people's views, push a political agenda or cause confusion and it's a profitable business for online publishers in most cases. Fake news has been in existence from the beginning of the printing press but in the age of the internet and social media, it has found a tremendous application. Fighting against fake news menace is of importance concerning the platforms like Facebook, Google, the news media, the government and an informed citizenry. The objective of the study is to understand the Motivation behind the creation of fake news and it's financial gain and to study the concept and nature of the creation of fake news. The independent variables are Age, gender, educational qualification and occupation. The dependent variables are Whether the motivation to create fake news include financial gain and agreeability towards that fake news is any information that is deliberately meant to be wholly or largely false or misleading. The Sample Size collected is 204 responses. The results observed from the analysis is that The respondents working in public sectors between the age of 37-60 years have agreed that the motivation behind the creation of fake news includes financial gain than the respondents between the age of 37-60 years who own businesses. Thus, the paper suggests that Quality in journalism is the solution to curb fake news and money's the motivation behind the creation of fake news, the journalists are also ought to have the responsibility of not creating fake news and media hoaxes just for the views instead must focus genuine news and earn people's belief. The author in this paper concludes that fake news menace is a global issue and has to be controlled and monitored by the government.

**Keywords:** Misinform, social media, press, motivation and gain

## I. INTRODUCTION

Over the decades, the idea of fake news has been used to target communities, on the basis of religion, nationality, and even political alignment. And fake news first came to existence at the time of beginning of the printing press in 1439. Fake news menace has always been in existence and it is linked to the rise of social media, on the contrary from the times of ancient Greece, the governments and political actors (anyone in the business of mobilizing public opinion) have always invested in disinformation campaigns to build narratives of their choice. The issue of fake news and misinformation appears to be a foremost problem in India. There are no specific provisions relating to this in Indian law. But several offenses in India's Penal Code criminalizes certain forms of speech that are related to fake news and also applies to online or social media subjects, like the crimes of sedition and promoting enmity between different groups. The Press Council of India is a regulatory body which can warn, advice or censor the contents of newspaper, the news agency, the editor or the journalist or disapprove the actions of the editor, the journalist if it finds that a newspaper or a news agency has violated the professional/journalistic ethics. News Broadcasters Association (NBA) has represented the private television news and current affairs. The self-regulatory body can regulate the complaints against electronic media. Indian Broadcast Foundation (IBF) deals with the complaints against contents aired by different channels. Broadcasting Content Complaint Council (BCCC) receives complaints against TV broadcasters for objectionable TV content and fake news or any false information. Indian Penal Code (IPC) consist of sections that help to curb fake news: Sections 153 (whoever creates content with intent to cause riot) and 298 (harming or defiling a place

of worship/religious spot with the intention of insulting any religion) can be invoked to guard against fake news. Media hoaxes, Erosion of Media Ethics, Social Media, Polarization of society, Lack of legislation and Confirmation Bias are the factors that contribute to fake news menace. The current trends include that a state government in India is planning to create legislation that's aimed at punishing the ones spreading online misinformation, specifically doctored photographs. Currently, citizens can be jailed in the state for posting misinformation if it causes fear or alarm in public. The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology has made changes to the 2000 IT Act that would require social media platforms to start tracing the originators of messages that are compelled by the Government for their information. The effort is aimed at curbing the spread of unlawful content and misinformation on platforms like whatsapp. In Greece, 55 percent of people said they saw false news every day. And in Spain, one in five people told that they saw fake news less than once a week. And 18 percent in Finland said they encountered fake news every day, or almost every day. France passed two anti-fake news laws following allegations of Russian interference in the 2017 presidential election. The laws allow candidates and political parties to seek court injunctions to prevent the publication of false information, and give the French broadcasting authority to take any network spreading misinformation off the air. The aim of the study is to curb fake news in India.

#### OBJECTIVES:

- To understand the motivation behind the creation of fake news and its financial gain
- To study the concept and nature of the creation of fake news
- To find the experience of being fooled by fake news thinking it's real.
- To analyze the technology's role in making people smarter and more informed.

#### II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The author in his article concludes that raising awareness about the demerits and opportunities for businesses that are currently on the quest to help detect fake news automatically like developing web services, but who will most certainly, in the long term, profit from the massive usage of social media. (Shu and Liu 2019) The author discusses how circulating fake news on social media platforms is an international concern and researches give only minimal insight into the motives behind such sharing. The research results also pinpoint that social media users who are into active corrective measures are the most unlikely to share fake news. (Safieddine and Yasmin Ibrahim (Reader in international business and communications) 2020) The author researched about the circulation of fake news on social media and the need for policy reforms in India. The paper attempts to find the purpose of circulating 'misinformation' and gives certain guiding principles to draft policies to regulate its exorbitant rise online. (Safieddine and Yasmin Ibrahim (Reader in international business and communications) 2020) The author examined the menace of fake news: Legal issues and challenges. There is a need to formulate a standard law to tackle the issue of fake news so that its genesis can be identified. Specific amendments are required in IT regulations and Representation of People Act, 1951. (Chiluwa and Samoilenko 2019) The author discusses the Digital Media and Ethical concerns: The growing menace of fake news in India. (Kamalipour 2019) The author says that a nation and society becomes strong only when quality decisions are taken by its citizens and authoritative structures. (Kamalipour 2019; Ainsworth 2020) The author analyzed Digital Tools and Technologies for Debunking Fake News. Debunking fake news involves four major skills: reverse image search, smart keywords search, strong observational skills and good old-fashioned journalism skills. (Woolley 2020) The author discusses the Using Blockchain to Rein in the New Post-Truth World and Check the Spread of Fake News. In recent years fake news has become a global issue that raises unprecedented challenges for human society and democracy. This problem has arisen due to the emergence of various concomitant phenomena such as the digitisation of human life and the ease of disseminating news through social networking applications. (Singh and Sharma 2021) The author examined the new social media and impact of fake news on society. The results from primary and secondary resources are used to highlight cases of fake news on social media and provide technical guidelines to detect impact on society. (Kaliyar, Goswami, and Narang 2021) This article offers a review of scholarly research on the phenomenon of fake news. Fake news also derives its power from its appeal to partisanship, perceived novelty, and repeated exposure facilitated by both bots and human users that share them in the online sphere. (Kaliyar, Goswami, and Narang 2021; McNair 2017) The authors' results indicate that messages focused on fake health information are

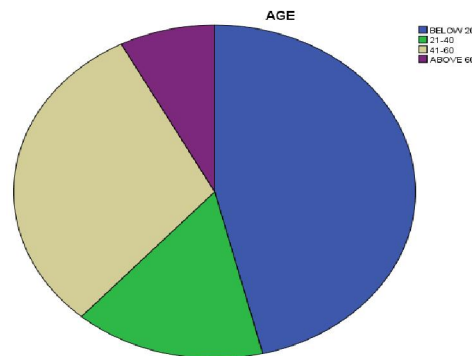
mostly aggressive, those based on evidence of social impact are respectful and transformative, and finally, deliberation contexts promoted in social media overcome false information about health. **(Seneviratne 2019)** The author conducted a survey on identification and mitigation techniques and the author described the modern-day problem of fake news and, in particular, highlighted the technical challenges associated with it. **(Zimdars and McLeod 2020)** The author says India is facing information wars of an unprecedented nature and scale. Indians are bombarded with fake news and divisive propaganda on a near-constant basis from a wide range of sources, from television news to global platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp. **(Burkhardt 2017)** The author says politicians, media, and members of the public have used and misused the term, fake news, in a variety of contexts. This focuses on the impact of fake news as it is linked to political participation through internet activism. **(Dalkir and Katz 2020)** The author’s findings are Fake news and misinformation are widespread and detrimental to democracy. A misinformed electorate undermines the political system. **(Barclay 2018)** The author researched about The role of cognitive ability on the impact of false information on social impressions. The present results indicate that, even in optimal circumstances, the initial influence of incorrect information cannot simply be undone by pointing out that this information was incorrect, especially in people with relatively lower cognitive ability. **(Dalkir and Katz 2020)** The author conducted a survey on Media-Rich Fake News Detection. Fake News has been around for decades and with the advent of social media and modern day journalism at its peak, detection of media-rich fake news has been a popular topic in the research community. **(McBrayer 2020)** In this article, the author presents a comprehensive overview of the findings to date relating to fake news. They characterize the negative impact of online fake news, and the state-of-the-art in detection methods. **(Kendeou, Robinson, and McCrudden 2019)** The author investigates the effectiveness of the platform’s policy in mitigating the detrimental impact of fake news on the agents’ learning environment. **(Greene and Murphy 2021)** This article aims to highlight the ways through which individuals authenticate fake news while using social media platforms. This study provides insights into the usage patterns of social media platforms and ways of fake news authentication. **(Grimm 2020)**

**III. MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY**

The researcher obtained the primary source of data by conducting an empirical study with a convenient sampling method for seeking responses from the general public based on a questionnaire and also relied on secondary sources of data such as books, journals, e-sources, articles and newspapers. The present research is conclusive, descriptive and based on empirical design. Qualitative data was generated to test the research hypothesis. This research paper used the empirical type of research which is done by the survey method. The sampling size of the paper is 204. Statistics is on percentage analysis. The independent variables are Age, gender, educational qualifications and Occupations. The dependent variables are: Whether Thermal pollution can be eradicated completely and rating thermal pollution in our country. The primary sources are taken from the general public in the form of survey methods. The information was collected from secondary sources from journals, articles, books and reports of the presidency and non-governmental organizations.

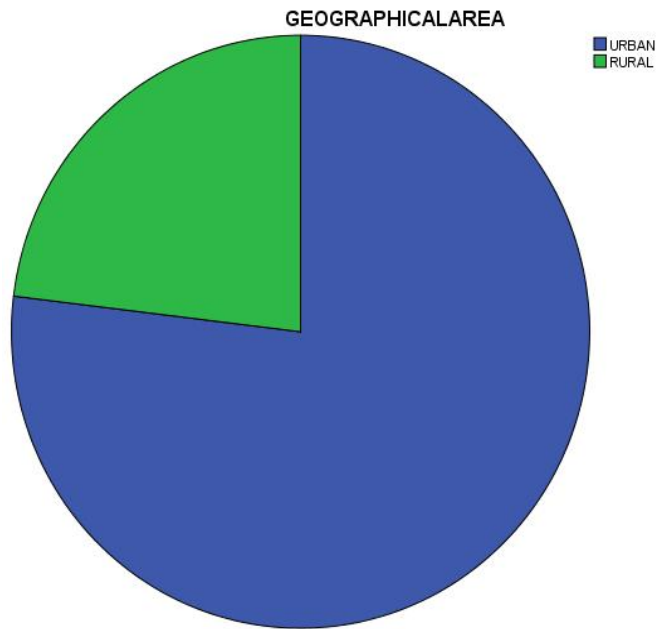
**IV. ANALYSIS**

**Fig 1:**



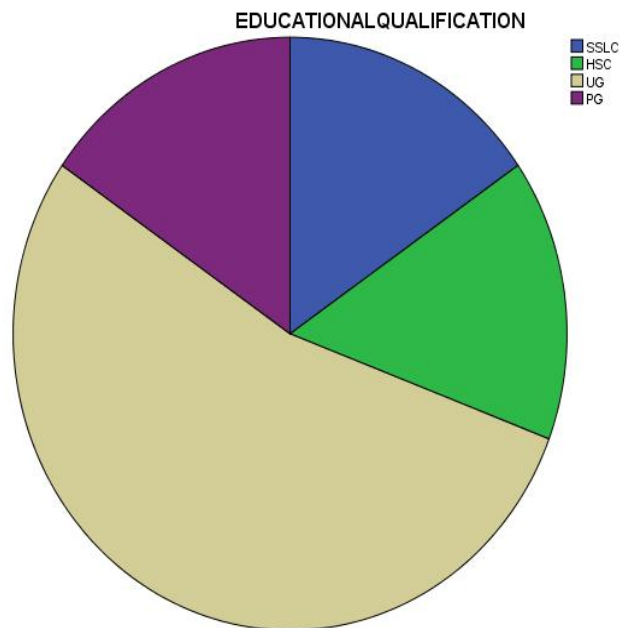
**LEGEND:** The pie chart shows the age of the respondents.

Fig 2:



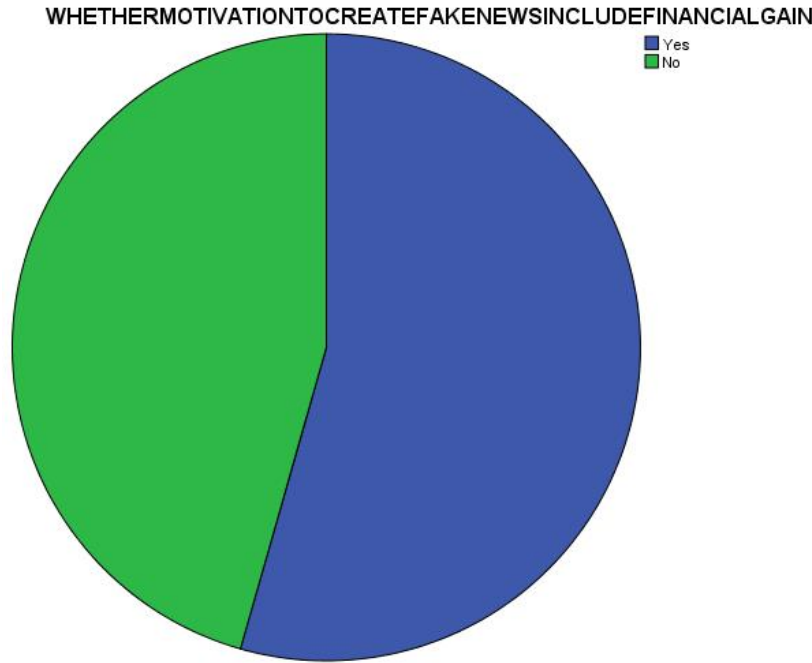
LEGEND: The Pie chart shows the geographical area of the respondents.

Fig 3:



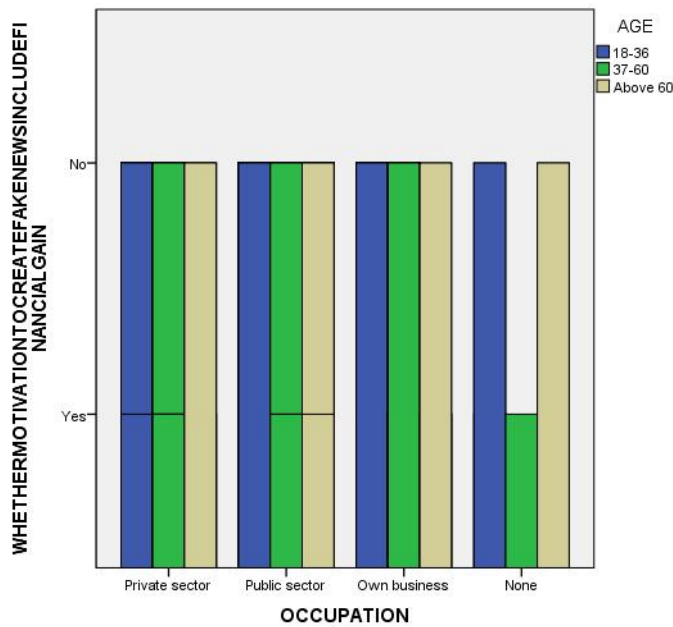
LEGEND: The pie chart shows the educational qualification of the respondent.

Fig 4.1:



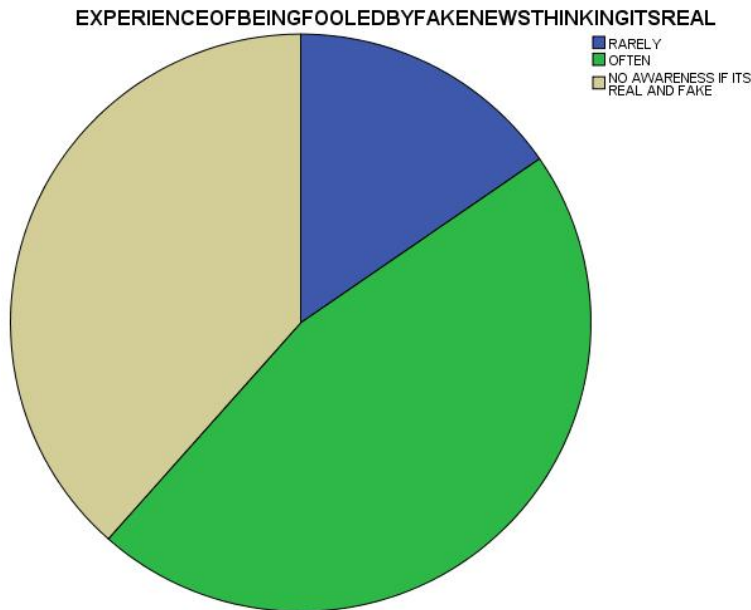
**LEGEND:** The pie chart shows the response of the respondents towards the motivation behind the creation of fake news and the financial gain out of it.

Fig 4.2



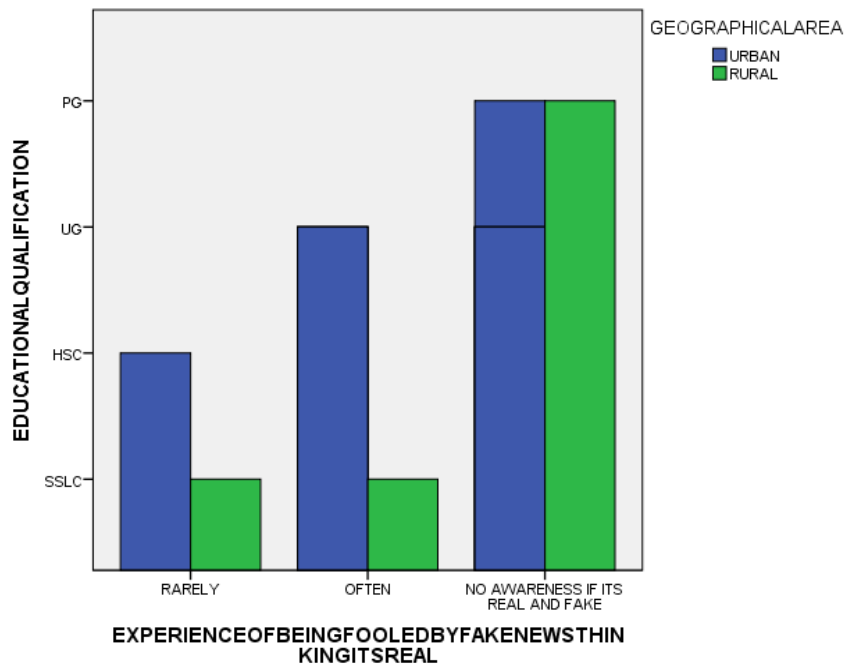
**LEGEND:** The bar graph shows the various age groups of the respondents along with their occupation and their response towards the motivation behind the creation of fake news and the financial gain out of it.

**Fig 5.1:**



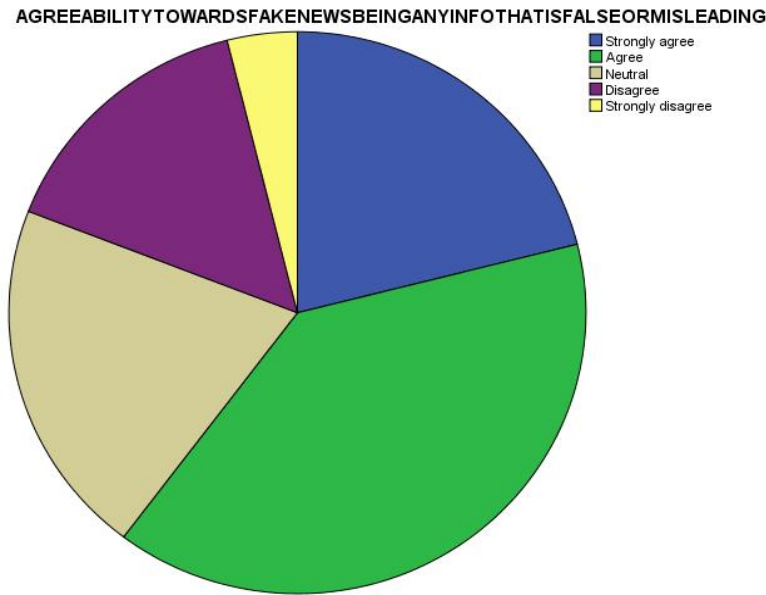
**LEGEND:** The pie chart shows the respondent's experience of being fooled by fake news thinking it's real

**Fig 5.2:**



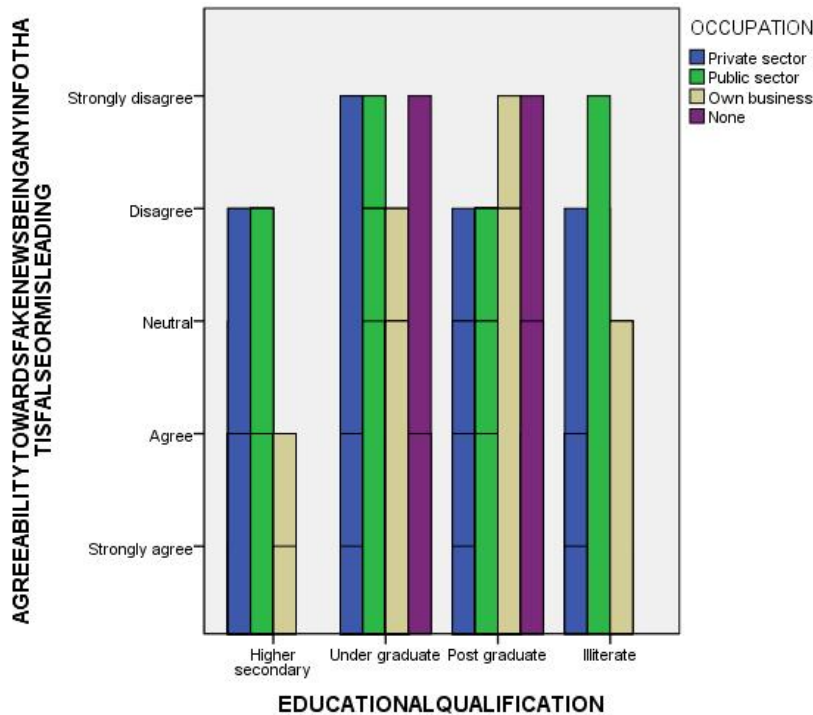
**LEGEND:** The bar graph shows the respondent's experience of being fooled by fake news thinking it's real wrt educational qualification and geographical area.

Fig 6.1:



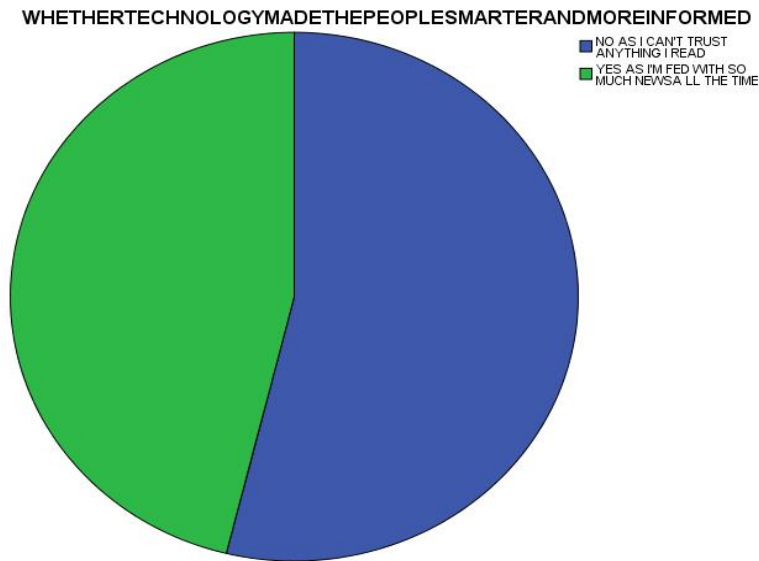
**LEGEND:** The pie chart shows the responses of the respondents on the agreeability towards fake news being any false or misleading information.

Fig 6.2:



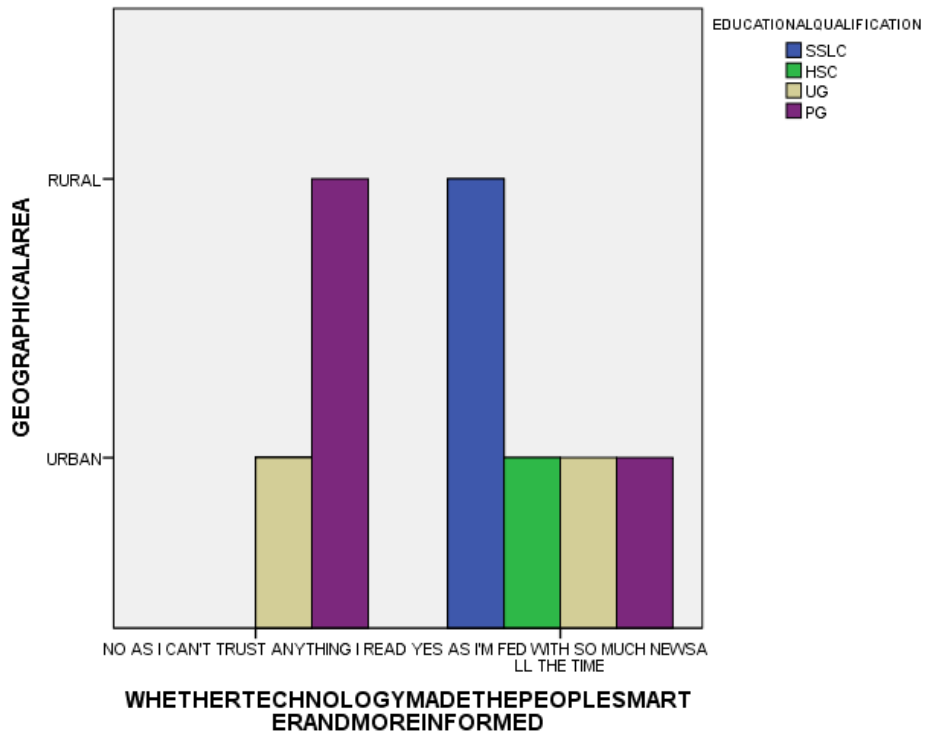
**LEGEND:** The bar graph shows the educational qualification of the respondents along with their occupation and their response on the agreeability towards fake news being any false or misleading information.

Fig 7.1:



**LEGEND:** The pie chart shows the responses towards whether technology made the people smarter and more informed.

Fig 7.2:



**LEGEND:** The bar graph shows the responses towards whether technology made the people smarter and more informed wrt educational qualification and geographical area.



## V. RESULTS

Most of the respondents are aged below 20 (**Figure 1**). Most of the respondents are from urban areas (**Figure 2**). Most of the respondents are undergraduates (**Figure 3**). The respondents working in public sectors between the age of 37-60 years have agreed that the motivation behind the creation of fake news includes financial gain more than the respondents between the age of 37-60 years who own businesses (**Figure 4.1,4.2**). Most of the respondents chose between 'often' and 'No awareness if it's real or fake' (**Figure 5.1**). Most of the respondents chose often and No awareness if it's fake or real wrt educational qualification and geographical area (**Figure 5.2**). The Undergraduate respondents working in a private sector have agreed that fake news is any false or misleading information than the Undergraduate respondents working in the private sector (**Figure 6.1,6.2**). Most of the respondents chose "No" as they can't trust anything they read (**Figure 7.1**). Most of the respondents chose "No" wrt geographical area and educational qualification (**Figure 7.2**).

## VI. DISCUSSION

The highest no. of respondents are below 20 age group(46.2%), the next highest no. of respondents are aged between 41 to 60(30.8%), then the 21-40 aged people(15.8%), and the least no. of respondents are above 60 (7.7%) (**Figure 1**). The highest no. of respondents are from urban(76.9%), and other few are from rural(23.1%) (**Figure 2**). The highest no. of respondents are undergraduates (53.8%), the next are HSC and SSLC students, then the post-graduates (**Figure 3**). Most respondents chose between "often"(46.2%) and "No awareness if it's fake or real"(38.5%) (**Figure 4.1**). Most respondents chose "No awareness if it's real or fake" wrt educational qualification and geographical area (**Figure 4.2**). Most no. of respondents chose between agree and strongly agree as their response towards fake news being misleading in nature wrt educational qualification and occupation (**Figure 5.1**). Most respondents chose "No" and the least chose "Yes" to whether technology made them smarter and more informed wrt geographical area and educational qualification (**Figure 5.2**). Most chose "Yes" and the least no. of respondents chose "No" as their response to whether motivation to create fake news include financial gain wrt occupation and age (**Figure 6.1**). Most respondents chose "No" to technology making them smarter and more informed person (**Figure 7.1**). Most respondents chose "No" to technology making them smarter and more informed person as they can't trust anything they read (53.8%) and a few chose "Yes" as they are fed with so much information all the time(46.2%) (**Figure 7.2**). The opinion of the author is that 'fake news' is not new. Contemporary discourse, particularly media coverage, seems to define fake news as viral posts based on fake accounts made to look like news reports. The term fake news is in practice used broadly to cover any misleading and inaccurate information produced and delivered online as a news story with different motivations and purposes. Two main motivations are behind the production of fake news: financial and ideological. On one hand, outrageous and fake stories that go viral – precisely because they are outrageous – provide content producers with clicks that are convertible to advertising revenue. On the other hand, some other fake news providers produce fake news to promote ideas or people that they favor, often by discrediting others.

## VII. LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The Major limitation of the study is the sample frame. The sample frame Collected through online platforms like sending mail, sending links via WhatsApp is the limitation of the study, the real field experience is missed out due to pandemic. The restrictive area of sample size is yet another drawback of the research. Collection of data via online platform is limiting the researcher to collect data from the field. Since the data is collected on online platform wherein the respondent is not known, the original opinion of the respondent it is not found, The researcher could only come to a approximate conclusion of what the respondent is feeling to convey.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

Fake news is, and has since long been, an increasingly common part of the media ecosystem. This study has shown that users need to be aware that news consumption should be an active process. Fake news is often created and circulated for gaining electoral currency and political gains. Often the government's own party and agencies (through the undisclosed purchase of political ads and IT cells) may be involved. It is a rising trend seen in many countries led by China and Russia where internet manipulation and control is very high. Any future legislation to curb fake news should

take the whole picture into account and not blame the media and go for knee-jerk reactions; in this age of new media anyone can create and circulate new for undisclosed benefits. Apart from the well-informed and educated users, capable of spotting fake news and curbing its spread on social media, quality in journalism is also required in order to counter the spread of misleading information. The objective is to create awareness about fake news menace among common public. The findings are that people are even unaware if the informations are real or fake and are often fooled .The suggestions are that there must be proper regulations of the Media ecosystem and the news that are shared. The future scope is that technology and social medias can dangerously increase the amount of fake news menace. The author concludes that Quality in journalism in combination with media literacy and the well-educated audience might be the solution to the spread of fake news, by developing a new online media ecosystem where there will not be a place for disinformation, misleading facts, and fake news. (Winston and Winston 2020)

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