



# **Role of Social Media Fake News in Directing Voting Behavior:**

## **A case study on the 2020 U.S Presidential Elections**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This Research explores the intricate relationship between social media, fake news, and their impact on voting behavior, focusing on the context of the 2020 U.S. Presidential Elections. The powerful influence of social media networks, especially platforms like Facebook and Twitter, in shaping voting behavior and the spreading of fake news has become an important part of democratic participation. However, the spread of misinformation through different social media channels has raised concerns about its potential impact on public opinion and voting behavior during the elections. The Research explores the challenges of detecting and addressing fake news on social media and recommends some models and tools to educate us not to be affected by fake news during the elections, emphasizing the need for media literacy education and strategic utilization by politicians. It evaluates the changing landscape of political communication and mobilization, highlighting the significant role played by social media in making political events widely known and raising awareness among users, And how there is impact of social media on political campaigns, parties, and discourse. An important aspect to consider in the research is the examination of former President Donald Trump's use of Twitter (X) during the 2020 elections and subsequent period.*

**Keywords:**

*Fake news on social media, Audience voting behavior, USA presidential elections, role of social media fake news, the 2020 U.S election*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Social media has transformed political discussion and debate, as it plays a critical role in participatory democracies by facilitating citizen participation in politics. Social media has also become a vital tool for many people to participate in politics, which has altered how people interact with one another, express their opinions, and engage in politics. Examining how social media platforms have changed political communication and mobilization.

There may be other, more important sources of misinformation, and social media may have other more important harmful effects on democracy, most of nations get the war on the real field in front all the other countries and some may be with or against it depends on each country with all the aspects to social and political life they are living in. political parties use social media and how that usage affects voters' perceptions. Through social media, political parties spread their messages and brands among their followers and the public. During the 2020 US presidential election and general election campaign, a notable feature was the heavy use of Twitter by the Republican candidate and then-candidate Donald Trump. An analysis of Trump's Twitter speech to highlight his accusations of fake news and how they function as a mass spreader of disinformation and misinformation is significant to apply. False data shows that Trump is using these accusations to prove his loyalty and as a cover for the spread of misinformation and it is presented as fact. Fake news poses a severe threat to democracy because it can erode community social cohesiveness. The 2020 US prime example of this threat is the

presidential election, where the spread of fake news on social media positively correlates with democracy; there is a positive correlation between the usage of fake news on social media and the decline of democracy and political participation. The relationship between “fake news” and social media is especially important when taking into consideration with the identity factors and political partisanship that govern many of our interactions on these platforms. In brief social media play a vital and important role in our life but we must think positively in how we can benefit from the usage of social media during political participation. Fake news might discourage voters from engaging in the political event taking place. Thus, I aim to study the relationship between being exposed to fake voter’s voice can be important and effective in changing all is what happening all around his\her only when he\she neglects fake news that affects his\her attitude and behavior formed falsely from the fake news on social media. The main aim is to study the relationship between the variables of how fake news plays a vital role in the democratization process and how the effective way of false news can direct the voting behavior of a certain candidate.

## 2. RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

2.1 will add to the research in political participation and voting behavior and increase our understanding of how fake news on social media can change voting behavior during the US presidential elections 2.2 Understanding the idea of media literacy among different educational institutes to raise awareness not to be affected by fake news on social media. And make use of media literacy and understand well how social media cannot affect our minds. 2.3 The title will support future

research in investigating different areas in the thesis as can be applied in different countries in the Arab world not USA only, Moreover, it can be applied in different political agendas and not presidential elections only. 2.4 the study will mainly offer many recommendations for political candidates and governmental responsible persons to specify the optimal of using social media as an authorized source of news to use and make use of new tools to detect different fake news content.

### **3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

3.1 To understand the role of fake news in shaping voting behavior during the presidential elections.

3.2 To describe the main effects of fake news on social media on the image of the American government among voters.

3.3 To Investigate how voters react to fake news spread on Facebook about the American government. 3.4 To detect the different tools on Facebook and Twitter used by the republican candidate Donald Trump in exporting fake news.

### **4. BACKGROUND**

#### ***4.1 Social media manipulation in the 2020 U.S. presidential election***

According to (Ferrara et al., 2020c), the foundation of democracies is their capacity to conduct free and fair elections devoid of outside influence or manipulation. It has been reported that social media is being used to sway public opinion in the run-up to elections in the US and abroad. In this study, maps the social media manipulation landscape in relation to the 3 November 2020 U.S. election, using data from over 240 million election-related tweets that were recorded between June 20, 2020, and September 9, 2020. S. election for president the primary objective is to delineate two prominent aspects of

manipulating social media) :i) automation (e. g. bot activity), and (ii) misrepresentation (e.g. g., story manipulation, and the introduction of rumors or conspiracies). Only a few thousand bots, outnumbered by several orders of magnitude, produced spikes in conversation volume about actual political events that were on par with human activity. study finds that bots worsen the problem of political echo chambers by increasing the consumption of content created by users who share their political beliefs .Another study for) Prochaska et al., 2023) Talks about Election fraud allegations that surfaced during the 2020 U.S .The important need to comprehend how people perceive and respond to misinformation has come to light during the presidential election and in the run-up to the January 6 ,2021 , uprising attempt findings show that Twitter users work together to create and spread purported evidence of fraud.. Current research reveals that the selective amplification of inaccurate or deceptive tweets by influential people, the way those claims are framed, and the reliability of the source all play a crucial role in mobilization .Audiences participate in the creation of a false picture of reality through these processes, which create a vicious cycle whereby actions taken offline serve to further reinforce the false narrative.

#### ***4.2 Fake news on social media and political campaigns***

- According to Ang B., Anwar N.D., Jayakumar S,2020) they determined what is fake news (Disinformation) is it's a false or misleading information that is spread deliberately to deceive; Fake News is a collection of "false or misleading content presented as news. And go viral by a group of not authorized people the fake news in general sprouts and spreads, which affects the social sphere thus make a problem to the political

background and elections also the organized (dis)information campaigns are conducted, and affects a great categories specially in how they believe of a voters can all of this lead to the failure of what they target, and what has been attempted by way of countermeasures—both in the digital and social spheres (

- According to (kaishu, silv.hang.ku, 2017) Social media for news consumption especially for the political participation is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, its low cost, easy access, and rapid dissemination of information lead people to seek out and consume news from social media. On the other hand, it enables the wide spread of \fake news detection on social media has recently become emerging research that is attracting tremendous attention. The issue of fake news detection on social media is both challenging and relevant, detecting fake news on social media, including fake news characterizations on psychology and social theories (kaishu,silv.hang.ku, 2017)

- A very important concern about How Fake News Affects U.S. Elections (insight on one of the threats to our democracy (Lee, marina, jenna, university of central Florida, 2020) added that Fake news is more likely to be believed by populations. According to study, those over the age of 65 are more open to trusting false news. And people from low-income families are more likely to believe it. Less educated people are more prone to believe it. In addition, the study focused on college students' difficulties in recognizing false news on social media. Students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are more exposed to fake news, according to research and are more likely to believe false information.

- Another Important Traditional explanations of political participation focused on socio-economic status, resources,

psychological engagement and recruitment, and researchers have found that participation is not a unidimensional construct, so they classified political behavior in multiple ways. Moreover, there are 4 distinct modes of participation: voting, campaign activism, communal activity, and particularized contacting. By time, other modes were added, which are non-electoral and individualized forms of participation, such as: protests, strikes, and demonstrations, consumer participation and online activism (Copeland, L., & Feezell, J. T., 2017), at which online activism is the focus of the paper.

#### **4.3 Social media & Voters**

(SET VAKFI, SETA VAKFI, 2020) stated that We have to say that virtual social networks affect socio-political life by all the means of how social networks such as Facebook and Twitter can direct voters' electoral preferences, especially during election time, through the presence of fake content and news. The use of social media, which was initially thought to have a positive effect on democratization, has been extensively changed recently to let the social media a tool to be used in exporting the fake news, thus political participation gets affected by Many Examples can be seen from the 2020 U.S. presidential elections.

- Another authors (Panagiotis T. Metaxas, Eni Mustafaraj , 2012)stated that according to Their study that is based on a real field topic about how social media affects people during elections In the United States, social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are currently being used by two out of three people as a real percentage and search engines are used daily Monitoring what users share or search for in social media and on the Web has led to greater insights into what people care about or pay attention to at any moment in time



during the political elections For example, altering the number of followers can affect a viewer's conclusion about candidate popularity. Recently, it was noted that the number of followers for a presidential candidate in the United States surged by over 110 thousand within one single day, and analysis showed that most of these followers are unlikely to be real people A propagandist is trying to make us make connections and values in the trust network, trying to influence our perception about the candidates for the coming elections, and thus “help us” decide on candidates of their choice.(Panagiotis T. Metaxas, Eni Mustafaraj , 2012)

- According to (Murdani et al., 2022) U.S. voting process. The way that people view democracy could change because of this social media presence. The purpose of this paper is to examine how social media is used in American democracy, particularly considering the 2020 election. According to this paper, social media plays a big part in American democracy, including the 2020 U.S. s. election of the president. With all its drawbacks and benefits, social media played a significant role in the election outcomes by raising voter turnout and political participation. However, public polarization in the U.S. was also brought about by social media. s. and provided opportunities for foreign intervention. Still, by the 2020 U.S. s. election, there was not a significant amount of foreign interference, meaning the results were not significantly impacted. As candidates, Trump and Biden recognized the power of social media and made efforts to draw support in their own unique ways. Through repeated social media interactions, Biden was able to attain deeper engagement with the help of an organized and appropriate strategy. Consequently, Biden was able to win the election with the help

of social media and Trump was functioned as a mass spreader of disinformation and lost the elections.

#### **4.4 Trump usage of twitter and Facebook**

The author (Van Rickstal, C. , 2021 ) describes American Democracy Under Threat and how Misinformation and Disinformation on social media. A case study of Donald Trump's mis- and disinformation tweets in the context of the 2021 Capitol siege, The discussion surrounding the negative effects of false and misleading content on social media has intensified since Donald Trump took office in 2017. With the aid of a case study of Donald Trump's tweets from election's day, November 3, 2020, to Capitol storming day, January 6, 2021, this thesis seeks to address the effects of online misinformation and disinformation on American democracy. This thesis outlines four mechanisms by which Trump's misinformation and deceptive tweets aided in the attack on the U.S Capitol. First, public polarization on the internet, second, misinformation spreading on Twitter. Third, the news ecosystem of Donald Trump's core supporters; and, last, Trump's statements on Twitter. The results add to the body of knowledge supporting the theory that misinformation and deception pose a threat to democracy.

- (Flamino et al., 2023) added that for more than ten years, social media has been changing the nature of political communication. The study examines how Twitter's news media landscape changed between the US presidential elections of 2016 and 2020 using data from almost a billion tweets. quantifying the amount of politically biased content and the number of users who spread it using fact-checking and political bias tools, determining who among the Twitter users has the greatest capacity to disseminate news is an influencer. the study

found that between 2016 and 2020, the percentage of phony and blatantly biased content decreased. Nevertheless, across the course of the two elections, the user and influencer levels exhibit rising echo chamber behaviors and latent ideological polarization, according to the results there is a positive correlation between direct exposure to fake news and not participating in the elections.

- According to the author (Matatov et al., 2022) he flagged the concern about stopping the [Image] Steal: The Role and Dynamics of Visual Content in the 2020 U.S. Election Misinformation Campaign the author this study suggests that Pictures have great power. Stronger emotions can be evoked, persuaded more effectively, and shared and distributed more easily when visual information is presented. The analysis of the traits of the widely circulated photos shared on Twitter as a part of "Stop the Steal," the massive disinformation effort during the 2020 U.S. election. By examining the distribution of the top forty images shared during this campaign on Twitter. Classification and labeling the images based on their type, content, origin, and role using a coding process, and then by conducting a mixed-method analysis of how these images spread on Twitter. The findings show that photographs and text rendered as images are both common types of images. None of the widely shared photos had been altered, and only a very small percentage of them contained purported photographic proof of fraud. Within a few hours of their initial release, most images had spread significantly, and accounts with varying levels of popularity contributed to their dissemination and affects the public opinion.

## 5. RESEARCH DESIGN

### 5.1 Theoretical Framework

#### 5.1.1 The Agenda-setting theory: Maxwell McCombs and Donald L. Shaw

The importance of this theory mainly determined by the news reports make it in a way that when a particular news report is given importance and attention than other news the audience will automatically perceive it as the most important news and information are given to them.

The priorities of which news comes first and then the next are set by the media according to how people think and how much influence will it have among the audience.

What issues are important to you? Why are these issues of importance? Media coverage not only directs what we think but also shapes how we think. This influence provides the media with a powerful tool to influence the government and the way people view it.

(Harrington, Sean, 2018)

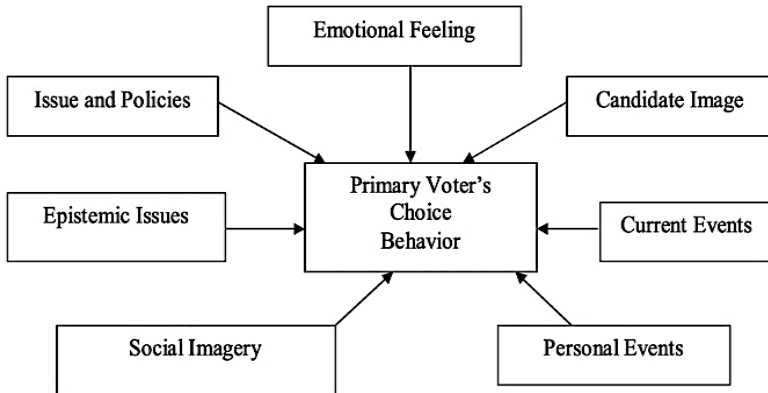
Role of agenda-setting becomes really important in the situation of the presidential elections when voters focus on the issues which are not only important for them but also promoted as significant by the mass media the opinion basing on the example of the US presidential elections in 2020, citizens always know what social, economic or political issues are important for them and what issues require their further discussion.(For example, fox news fake accounts started to show fake news about PSA Presidential elections during the corona virus lockdown)Everything that we see in the media affect our opinion also what to think)The first is that the media filters and shapes what we see rather than just reflecting stories to the audience.

### 5.1.2 Model of Primary Voting Behavior

According to (Newman and Sheth, 1985) they created a model that explains how voters behave during a primary election. The model incorporates a number of theoretical frameworks that have attempted to explain voting behavior. According to (Newman and Sheth, 1985), a person's decision to vote is significantly influenced by the groups they choose to join. Multiple sources of knowledge and beliefs combine to create an effective behavior predictor.

One of the main tenets of the voter behavior model proposed by Newman and Sheth is that voters' behavior is driven by seven different and distinct cognitive domains.

The following figure shows the model. It consists of the seven elements listed below



**Figure 1: Model of Primary Voter Behavior**

**Why people participate in elections in democratic societies by voting?**

They answered the question by the following equation as follows:

$$R = (B) (P) - C + D$$

- R = Total rewards obtained by the individual from elections.
- B = Benefits that the individual believes that he will get the support of a particular candidate
- P = Individual's perception of the possibility that is/her voting will change the outcome of the election.
- C = Costs that would be borne by the individual as a result of his/her going to vote such as: time, money, and other sources.
- D = The psychological satisfaction which individual would gain from voting.

If R is positive, it is assumed that voting benefits the citizen and that voting leads to participation in the election. An individual is more likely to vote if R is positive. Consequently, the satisfaction that comes from voting (D) needs to offset any shortfall brought on by the expense and offer enough motivation for a citizen to take part (Harder and Krosink, 2008). Harder and Krosink developed an alternative formula that deviates from (Downs, 1957), which suggested that:

Voting behavior among citizens is determined by factors such as: motivation to vote, ability to vote, and difficulty of voting.

This formula can be expressed as follows: possibility (difficulty of voting (voting behavior) = (voting motivation vote X voting ability) / of voting.

(Harder and Krosink, 2008) stated that the greater an individual's motivation or ability to vote, the greater the

likelihood that they will turn out on an election day. Additionally, a person is less likely to vote the more difficult voting is for them.

(Harder and Krosink, 2008) noted that a candidate's strong preference over their opponent is the source of motivation. Yet, motivation can also originate from the conviction (e.g. g., self-efficacy) that voting is a necessary part of being a responsible citizen, from external pressure to cast a ballot to pressure from friends and family. The ability to make sense of information about political events and candidates in order to form an opinion is referred to as the ability to vote.

Aspects of circumstances outside the voter's control, such as the stringency of registration procedures, the ease of registration procedures, the level of publicizing polling places, the proximity of a voter's polling place to their home, and the accessibility of candidate information, are referred to as difficult.

Talking about The (B) (P) and D terms of Downs (1957) are elements of motivation, while his C term represents a portion of difficulty.

## **5.2 Methodology**

### **5.2.1 Research Sampling**

The researchers used purposive sample, which is a type of non-probability sampling, as there are specific characteristics for the participants.

The Researcher aims to examine empirically the role of fake news in directing the voting behavior about certain candidate when the voter is being exposed to certain fake news on social media. The methodology of the study discusses materials and methods of data collection focusing on a survey Research of quantitative method approach to determine my agenda setting theoretical frame work and the model of voting behavior to find

the relationship between my different variables and its importance mainly is understanding the idea of fake news effects on demonetization from different people and different genders and age categories in addition to gathering a large amount of data and using a wide range of statistics in the survey process

Justification As my respondents or subjects will be a collection of chosen people, which is a type of non-probability sampling, as my research purpose doesn't revolve around generalizing results, but rather to investigate the relationship between my variables. The sample will be chosen according to some criteria: American people, Arab American, African American-Have the right to vote.-Social media users the classes that I will target are all social classes also with all age categories (18-55). **The size of the sample Will be on +400** Respondents. The Data Collection Tool: Survey Quantitative method technique)

### 5.2.2 Research Questions

**Research Question 1:** what's the relation between USA Security and frequent exposure to fake news on social media?

**Research Question 2:** Do fake news affect the way of the trust relation between the government and the USA nation?

**Research Question 3: Does** the American government have an upgraded system in preventing the cyber-attacks of the electronic commissions in preventing the fake news to penetrate THE interior security?

**Research Question 4:** what's the relation between opinion and frequent exposure to social media fake news?

**Research Question 5:** Do social media fake news affect the way of expressing opinion in elections?



**Research Question 6:** Do fake news affect political participation?

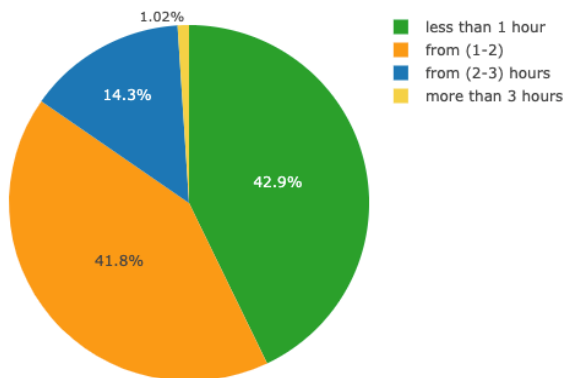
### 5.2.3 Data Collecting Method

Based on the previous studies reviewing, the researchers use a quantitative method for the investigation of the research problem, which is a web-based questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed on Google form, and its link was distributed via different social media platforms: Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram.

### 5.3 Data Analysis

The web-based questionnaire results are analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software, which is the most popular software used in social sciences studies to recalculate the results after excluding the error sampling and to test the validity and the reliability of the variables, in addition to showing the results significance to the research objectives.

## 6. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS



**Figure 2:** shows the percentages of the use of social media to get the news the variations between the respondents vary accordingly.

In The first question of the survey asked the sample of the duration of the usage of social media as we can see the different variations of the sample vary as follows, a very small number of people use the social media more than 3 hours 3 people only out of 412 which is the sample size.

Also, having a high percentage of more than 41% usage from 1-2 hours, another high percentage more than 42% also usage of 176 respondents less than 1 hour\day.

At last, a variation of 14% of 61 respondents use of social media from 2-3 hours.

This question is related to the topic but only a lead to the questions to identify the heavy use of social media and how it can be a perspective to determine the sample criteria of the usage of social media that will link the next questions accordingly

The Second question of the survey investigated the sample of their usage of social media to get the news as we can see the different variations of the sample vary as follows, a very small number of Respondents said No which determined this sample as a minimum of 2%.

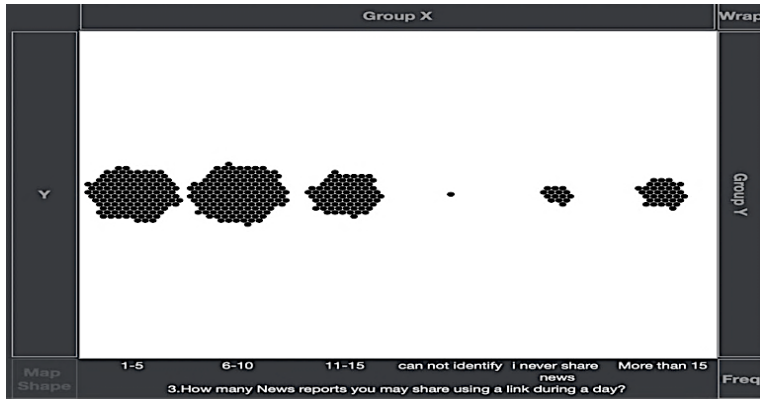
Furthermore, more than 400 respondents with a percentage of 97% answered yes they get the news from different social media accounts they identified this as a different social media accounts they identified this as a trend of what is happening on Twitter or Facebook during the 2020 U.S presidential elections determined this high percentage of the high usage of social media to get the news as we can see nowadays how social media is used by many people to spread the news of what happening even if we have many news organizations and authorized candidates and spokes men make use of social media and is a trusted medium to spread the news.

	2. Do you use social media to get the news?	N Rows	% of Total
1	No	10	2.43%
2	Yes	402	97.57%
3		412	100.00%

**Table 2.1:** Table 2 shows the percentages of the use of social media to get the news the variations between the respondents vary accordingly.

The third question mainly investigated about the number of news reports that can be shared during a day the highest percentage is from (6-10) news report with a percentage of 35%, furthermore 129 out of 400 respondents said that they can share from (1-5) news reports also a high percentage of 9% respondents identify that they can share more than 15 news link per day ,moreover a very low percentage answered that they cannot identify or never share a news of a 16 out of 412 respondents.

Accordingly as we can see the high percentage of the usage of social media and sharing the news reports play a significant role in identifying the first variable which is the usage of social media as a trusted platform for news which affected the variables in the next questions, according to the researcher He saw that social media play a significant role in providing the audience as trusted source of news and how they can share a huge number of news reports throughout the whole day.

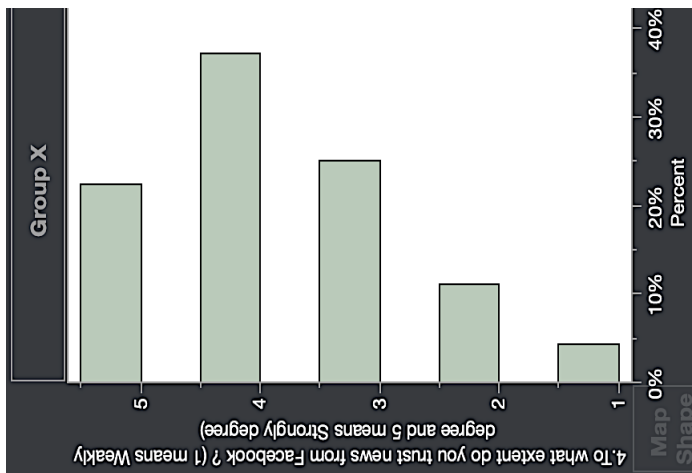


**Table 3.1:** A pointed Graphed diagram shows the number of Respondents for sharing news per day according to SPSS program JPM (Statistical Discovery)

The Fourth question focused on identifying the trust relation of the respondents of getting the news from Facebook platform as determined there is a high percentage of more than 37% of a total of 153 respondents answered of a range of 4 out of 5 that they trust Facebook platform ,furthermore more than 22 % of 92 respondents agree that they trust Facebook as a source of news with a range of 5 out of 5 ,a huge amount of 103 respondents agree that they trust news from Facebook with a range of 3 out of 5,moreover a very small amount of 4% and 11% trust Facebook as a source for news with a scale 1,2 accordingly. By this Results the researcher examined that the respondents trust Facebook as a platform for news with a high range from a scale of 3, 4, 5 that's means that social media platform (Facebook) is a trusted place for news that American people make use of it, and this takes us of how Facebook is a trusted place of news and how there is a positive co relation identified through the variables

that the fake news on social media affects the voting behavior during the U.S PE.

There is a total contrast from the trust relation of Facebook news and how this news could be fake news that's affects the voting behavior without being aware that Facebook is a trusted place for news.

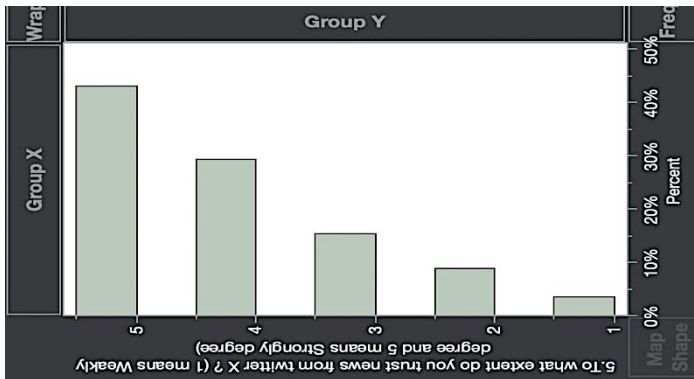


**Table 4.1:** A Graphed column diagram shows the trust relation of the respondents to get their news from Facebook from 1 to 5 accordingly according to SPSS program JPM (Statistical Discovery)

The Fifth question explored the trust relation of the respondents of getting the news from Twitter(X) platform as determined there is a high percentage of more than 43% of a total of 178 respondents answered of a range of 5 out of 5 that they trust Twitter (X) platform ,furthermore more than 29 % of 122 respondents agree that they trust Twitter (X) as a source of news with a range of 4 out of 5 ,an amount of 63 respondents agree that they trust news from twitter (X) with a range of 3 out of 5,moreover a very small amount of 8% and 3% trust Twitter(X)

as a source for news with a scale 1,2 accordingly. By this Results the researcher examined that the respondents trust Twitter(X) as a platform for news with a high range from a scale of 3,4,5 that's means that social media platform (Twitter X)is a trusted place for news that American people make use of it, and this takes us of how Twitter is a trusted place of news and how there is a positive co relation identified through the variables that the fake news on social media affects the voting behavior during the U.S PE.

There is a total contrast from the trust relation of (Twitter X) news and how this news could be fake news that's affects the voting behavior without being aware that Twitter (X) is a trusted place for news.

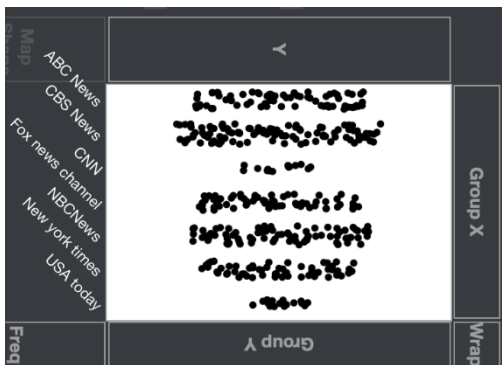


**Table 5.1: A Graphed column diagram shows the trust relation of the respondents to get their news from (Twitter-X) from 1 to 5 accordingly according to SPSS program JPM (Statistical Discovery)**

The Sixth question explored the trust relation of the U.S citizens of different news organizations on Facebook and Twitter(X) as we can see different numbers and ranges of

trusting the news organizations during the 2020 U.S presidential elections CBS News is trusted by more than 25% of 105 respondents also for more than 19% with a total of 82 respondents out of 412 then New York times Of 14% of 60 respondents, ABC news organization with a percentage of 17%,then we have CNN, and USA Today is with a minimum amount of trust of respondents with 3 and 4% accordingly

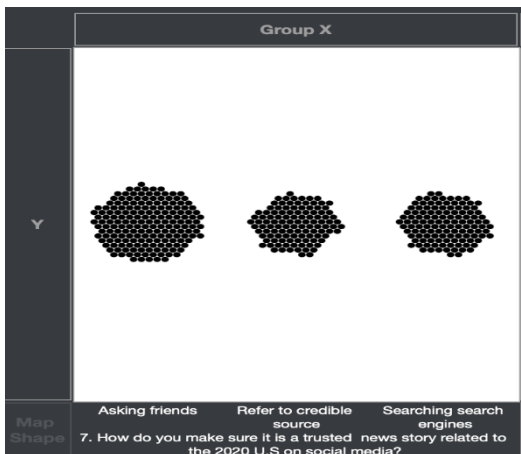
This took us to Research Question 2: Does fake news affect the way of trust relations between the government? The answer is Yes fake news affects the way of the trust relation between the Government and the USA nation: as the most trusted news platforms that respondents trust are (CBS news-NBC news-ABC and Fox News) these platforms were subjected to the governmental platforms of trump president in defending his loyalty to be the official president during the 2020 U.S elections and he was functioned as a mass spreader during that time (he is the image of the Government) then when he was accused of this this made people lose the trust of his words even on this platforms (Government image)



*Table 6.1: A Graphed Dotted diagram shows the trust relation of the respondents to get their news from Facebook(Twitter-X) news organizations platforms from 1 to 5 accordingly according to SPSS program JPM (Statistical Discovery)*

The seventh question identified the trust relation of the respondents of getting the news from social media platforms during the 2020 U.S Presidential elections as determined there is a high percentage of more than 43% of a total of 179 respondents answered that they can ask their friends to make sure of the news ,another point of view explored the relation of searching the search engines to make sure the trusted piece of news from the social media with a total of 121 respondent out of 412 with more than 29% of the total answers, at last we have a total of 112 respondent out of 412 with a percentage of 28% that can refer to a credible source .

By all of these means, the researcher can reveal that from the three responses that there has been fake news detection during the 2020 elections and people where varied to different sources to get the news.



**Table 7.1: A Graphed Dotted diagram shows the trust relation of the respondents to get their news from (Twitter-X) criteria in referring to different ways to make sure about the trustful news story during the 2020 U.S presidential elections accordingly according to SPSS program JPM (Statistical Discovery)**

The eighth question identified the trust relation of the respondents of getting the news from an American source or



Donald Trump during the 2020 U.S Presidential elections as determined there is a high percentage of more than 44% of a total of 230 respondents answered that they can Trust Donald Trump as an official news source during the 2020 U.S elections, and 182 respondents of 44% answered that they can trust The American sources. Thus, we can conclude this answer to answer 2 of our Research questions.

Research Question 1: what's the relation between USA Security and frequent exposure to fake news on social media?

If it is said that Donald Trump was functioned as a mass spreader of disinformation so how can people trust the news getting from his own source there is a positive co- relation between frequent exposure to fake news on social media and the security of U.S.A and what happened during the identification of the results of the 2020U.S presidential elections when Donald Trump ordered his supporters to invade the U.S capitol to save America, make America Great again.

Question nine Explored the way how American citizen can express their political opinion publicly during the 2020 U.S presidential elections, as identified America is the mother of freedom and citizenship, every American citizen can express his/her opinion with the freedom of rights as identified.

More than 91% of 378 respondents agree that they can express their political opinion publicly during the 2020 U.S presidential elections.

Only a very small amount of 34 respondent of a total of 8 % can't say their opinion to the public during the elections



Yes, America is a country that has a free of rights and the democracy and the freedom of votes and expressions can be easily identified through this question

Question Ten focused on the political conflict between the 2 candidate Joe Biden and Donald Trump and how many people have background information about this conflict.

More than 96% of a total of 398 respondents have a background of the political conflict between Joe Biden and Donald Trump in contrast to only 3% that have no background about this problem that happened during the 2020 U.S presidential elections.

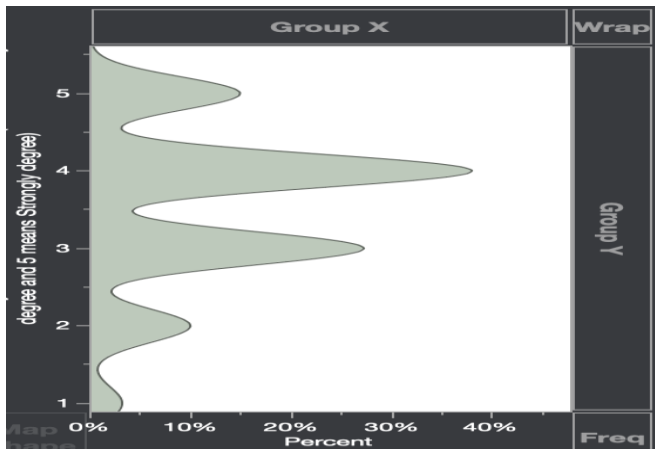
It is clear and true to have a conflict between candidates during the elections but with respect to not having a case of affecting the voting behavior of the whole elections.

Question eleven explored the relation between frequent exposure to fake news and getting affected by opinion in the 2020 U. S elections (1 means weakly degree and 5 means strongly degree)

As its seen there is more than 40 %of a total of 168 respondent agree that fake news affects the opinion by 4 out of 5,120 respondent with a percentage of 29% agree also that they get their opinion changed by 3out of 5 on a linear scale, moreover 66 respondent of 16% of the total answers agree that the frequent exposure to fake news can dramatically affect the opinion, at last a range from (10-13)% weekly agree with a total of 50 respondent with a range from 1-2 out of 5 on a linear sale.

This takes us to answer the Research Question 4: what's the relation between opinion and frequent exposure to social media fake news?

Yes, there is a positive co relation to the frequent exposure to social media fake news and changing the opinion of the voter.



Question 12 identified the expression of opinion in an American radio or TV program about the fake news portrayed by twitter -Facebook social media platforms during the 2020 U.S Presidential elections.

A very high percentage of more than 97% of more than 400 votes can say their opinion in American radio or TV and this if we can comment on we can say that this is due to the freedom of voter right and freedom of democracy and human right during the elections time, a very small amount of respondents don't agree with this question around 2% only and they skipped the next question of which medium



Table 12.1: A Graphed Dotted diagram shows the identified expression of opinion in an American radio or TV program about the fake news portrayed by twitter -Facebook social media platforms during the 2020 U.S Presidential elections accordingly according to SPSS program JPM (Statistical Discovery)

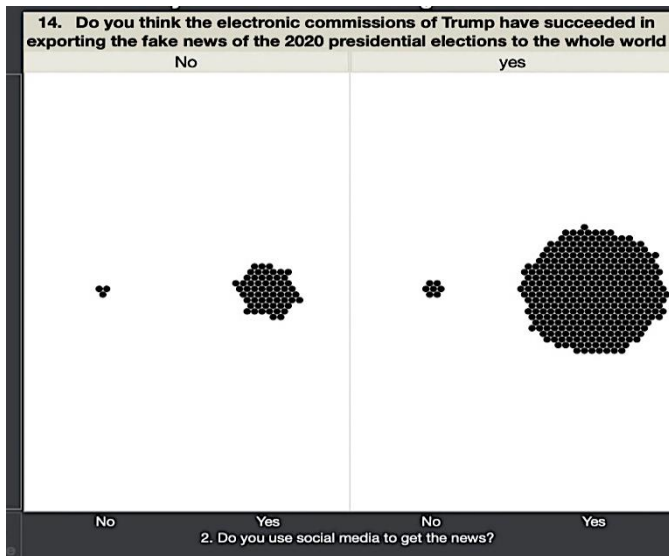
Question 13 explored the expression of the opinion in an American radio or TV program about the fake news portrayed by twitter -Facebook social media platforms during the 2020

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(1443)

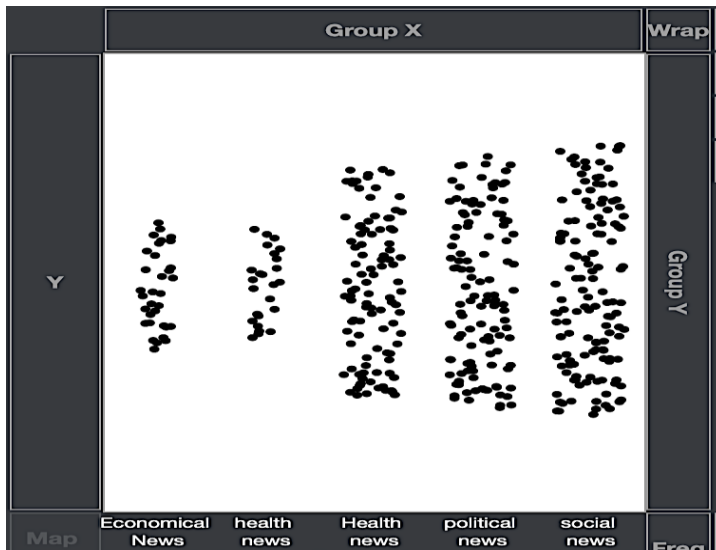
presidential elections to the whole world which affects its social and political background as its seen that more than 348 respondents out of 412 with a percentage of 85% said the electronic commissions of Trump succeeded in exporting fake news and affect the social and political sector with a small number of respondent's 15% of a total of 64 answered with no.

This answered Research Question 3: Does the American government have an upgraded system in preventing the cyber-attacks of the electronic commissions in preventing the fake news to penetrate THE interior security? The answer is no the system failure is internally of Trump campaign in exporting fake news during the 2020 elections to let their candidate win the elections illegally and it yes succeeded in exporting fake news as we see the number of respondent's more than 84% agree with



Question 15 identified What is the most effective fake news sector that could affect the American national security the answers vary with highest variations of more than 31% for Health news which happened and affected the American national security (Covid 19 ) also people saw that social news affects the security with a percentage of more than 33% of a total respondents of 137 out of 412,furthermore the political fake news affect the way people get the news and can affect the American national security with more than 28% answered with yes with a total of 117 respondent's out of 412

American citizens understand well what can affect the security of their country the Covid 19 play significant role in affecting all the world on this time not only during the 2020 U.S presidential elections.



Question 16 explored the incident of Using Trump's Private Email by Trump's Voter Fraud Commission is Legal or not, a high percentage of more than 90 % said its legal to have the private email to the public if this incident is going to affect the American national security with 371 respondent out of 412 and only a 3% of 16 respondent don't agree with this and around 25% a total of 25%respondant knew nothing about this incident

We can conclude from this answer despite its illegal to have the private email of the former president to the public but once this can affect the American national security people saw it is legal and accepted to spread the news to the whole people.

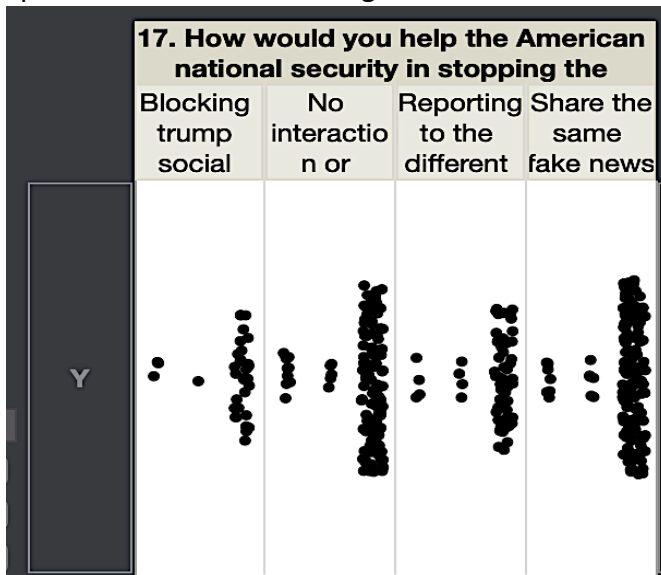
The 2020 U.S elections undergoes a very dangerous time in exporting fake news on social media and this affects the way American citizens get the news which mainly affects their voting behavior.



(1446)



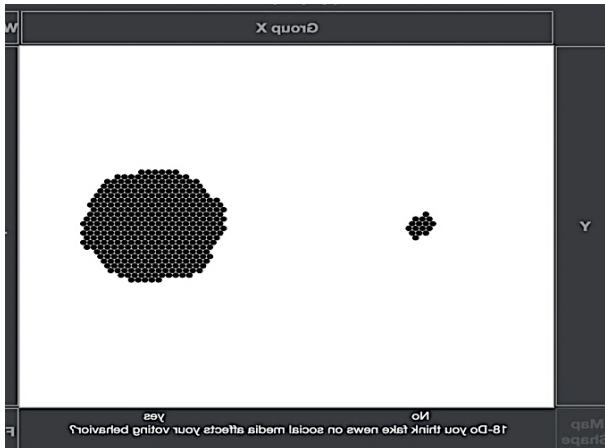
Question 17 identified of how can an American citizens stop the rumors on social media the highest percentage was sharing the same fake news with the opinion only which is of a total of 40 % form the voters of a total of 167 out of 412 respondent ,another respondents are not going to share or interact in the news with a percentage of 141 respondent out of 412 with a total percentage of 34%,furthermore another percentage of 16%of a total of 70 respondents suggests that they can report to different news agencies what is the true information is, at last the minimum amount of respondents was blocking trump social media with a total of 34 respondents out of 412. American citizens from this sample can determine their efficiency in democracy and how they can defend their rights in order to protect their voting behavior and their right to vote and not to spread the fake news during the elections.



(1447)

Question 18 explored of how can American people get affected by their voting behavior when they are subjected to fake news on social media, and this answers the Research Question 5: Do social media fake news affect the way of expressing opinion in elections?

The answer is yes with more than 96% confirmed that when they are subjected to fake news on social media their opinion and their voting behavior is changed and gets affected with only 3% that said no they are not affected by social media fake news.



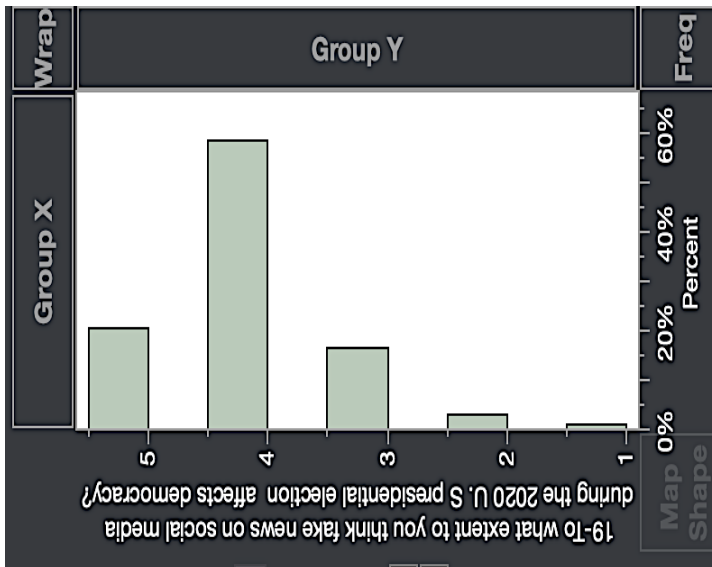
**Table 18.1:** A Graphed Dotted diagram explored how American citizens can get affected by their voting behavior according to SPSS program JPM (Statistical Discovery)

Question 19 identified how fake news on social media during the 2020 U.S elections affects democracy as from the results with a scale from 1-5 a high percentage of 241 respondents with a total of 58% answered with a scale of 4 out of 5, another high result also with an answer of the full scale of 5 think that democracy was being affected with a total of respondents of

20% , a different ranges from(3,2,1) our of 5 with percentages of (16%,2%,1%) think that democracy is not highly affected

By these answers it can answer Research Question 6: Do fake news affect political participation?

As political participation and Democracy are 2 unseparated states, and they complete each other in the democratic field the answer from the results of 412 respondents is yes fake news affects the political participation and the Democratic field in general.



## 7. DISCUSSION

7.1 The Researcher aim is to examine empirically the role of fake news in directing the voting behavior of certain candidate when the voter is being exposed to certain fake news on social

media. The methodology of the study discusses materials and methods of data collection focusing on a survey Research of quantitative method approach to determine my agenda setting theoretical framework and the model of voting behavior to find the relationship between my different variables and its importance mainly is understanding the idea of fake news effects on demonetization from different people and different genders and age categories in addition to gathering a large amount of data and using a wide range of statistics in the survey process.

I have conducted this research to explore the 'Role of social media fake news in directing the voting behavior during the 2020 U.S presidential elections. This has led me to raise the following research questions:

**Research Question 1: what's the relation between USA Security and frequent exposure to fake news on social media?**

The eighth question identified the trust relation of the respondents of getting the news from an American source or Donald Trump during the 2020 U.S Presidential elections as determined there is a high percentage of more than 44% of a total of 230 respondents answered that they can Trust Donald Trump as an official news source during the 2020 U.S elections, and 182 respondents of 44% answered that they can trust the American sources. Thus, we can conclude this answer to answer 2 of our Research questions.

**Research Question 1: what's the relation between USA Security and frequent exposure to fake news on social media?**

If it is said that Donald Trump functioned as a mass spreader of disinformation so how can people trust the news getting from his own source there is a positive co- relation between frequent exposure to fake news on social media and the security of U.S.A and what happened during the identification of the results of the 2020U.S presidential elections when Donald Trump ordered his supporters to invade the U.S capitol to save America, make America Great again.

**Research Question 2: Do fake news affect the way of the trust relation between the government and the USA nation?**

The Sixth question explored the trust relation of the U.S citizens of different news organizations on Facebook and Twitter(X) as we can see different numbers and ranges of trusting the news organizations during the 2020 U.S presidential elections CBS News is trusted by more than 25% of 105 respondents also for more than 19% with a total of 82 respondents out of 412 then New York times Of 14% of 60 respondents ,ABC news organization with a percentage of 17%,then we have CNN, and USA today is with a minimum amount of trust of respondents with 3 and 4% accordingly

the Answer is Yes fake news affect the way of the trust relation between the Government and USA nation : as the most trusted news platforms that respondents trust are (CBS news-NBC news-ABC and fox news) these platforms was subjected to be the governmental platforms of trump president in defending his loyalty to be the official president during the 2020 U.S

elections and he was functioned as a mass spreader during that time (he is the image of the Government) then when he was accused of this this made people lose the trust of his words even on this platforms (Government image)

**Research Question 3: Does the American government have an upgraded system in preventing the cyber-attacks of the electronic commissions in preventing fake news to penetrate THE interior security?**

Question 14 showed the electronic commissions of Trump have succeeded or not in exporting the fake news of the 2020 presidential elections to the whole world which affects its social and political background as its seen that more than 348 respondents out of 412 with a percentage of 85% said the electronic commissions of Trump succeeded in exporting fake news and affect the social and political sector with a small number of respondent's 15% of a total of 64 answered with no. This took us to answer Research Question 3: Does the American government have an upgraded system in preventing the cyber-attacks of the electronic commissions in preventing the fake news to penetrate THE interior security? The answer is no the system failure is internally of Trump campaign in exporting fake news during the 2020 elections to let their candidate win the elections illegally and it yes succeeded in exporting fake news as we see the number of respondent's more than 84% agree with.

**Research Question 4: what's the relation between opinion and frequent exposure to social media fake news?**

Question eleven explored the relation between frequent exposure to fake news and getting affected by opinion in the 2020 U. S elections (1 means weakly degree and 5 means strongly degree)

As its seen there is more than 40 %of a total of 168 respondent agree that fake news affects the opinion by 4 out of 5,120 respondent with a percentage of 29% agree also that they get their opinion changed by 3out of 5 on a linear scale, moreover 66 respondent of 16% of the total answers agree that the frequent exposure to fake news can dramatically affect the opinion, at last a range from (10-13)% weekly agree with a total of 50 respondent with a range from 1-2 out of 5 on a linear sale.

This takes us to answer the Research Question 4: what's the relation between opinion and frequent exposure to social media fake news?

Yes, there is a positive co relation to the frequent exposure to social media fake news and changing the opinion of the voter.

**Research Question 5: Do social media fake news affect the way of expressing opinion in elections?**

Question 18 explored of how can American people get affected by their voting behavior when they are subjected to fake news on social media, and this answers the Research Question 5: Do social media fake news affect the way of expressing opinion in elections?

The answer is yes with more than 96% confirmed that when they are subjected to fake news on social media their opinion and their voting behavior is changed and gets affected with only 3% that said no they are not affected by social media fake news.

#### **Research Question 6: Do fake news affect political participation?**

Question 19 identified how fake news on social media during the 2020 U.S elections affects democracy as from the results with a scale from 1-5 a high percentage of 241 respondents with a total of 58% answered with a scale of 4 out of 5, another high result also with an answer of the full scale of 5 think that democracy was being affected with a total of respondents of 20% , a different ranges from (3,2,1) out of 5 with percentages of (16%,2%,1%) think that democracy is not highly affected By these answers it can answer Research Question 6: Do fake news affect political participation?

As political participation and Democracy are 2 unseparated states, and they complete each other in the democratic field the answer from the results of 412 respondents is yes fake news affects the political participation and the Democratic field in general.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

This Research investigates the role of social media Fake News in Directing Voting Behavior: A case study on the 2020 U.S. presidential Elections After reviewing many previous studies in the study focused on some aspects that the other scholars did not investigate in-depth. To Understand the role of fake news in shaping voting behaviour during the presidential elections, To



Describe the main effects of fake news on social media on the image of the American government among voters, To Investigate how voters react to fake news spread on Facebook about the American government, To Detect the different tools on Facebook and Twitter used by the republican candidate Donald Trump in exporting fake news.

in summary, the thesis has discussed the multifaceted association between social media, political participation and democratic processes with a specific examination of Twitter's contribution to political discourse before and after the 2020 US Presidential elections through such actions as those of former President Donald Trump.

Social media offers politicians an opportunity to distribute their manifesto and policies in the internet for a larger part of the population at a cheap cost as compared to traditional media. However, this also opens avenues for the spread of misinformation and propaganda evidenced by Trump's tweets which have constantly criticized mainstream press and propagated misinformation.

Social media affects political behaviour and voter perceptions more than you would think. While platforms like Facebook and Twitter facilitate the spread of news and foster political engagement, they are also susceptible to abuse by powerful actors who exploit them to disseminate unverified information, potentially undermining the integrity of democratic processes.

The influence that fake news has had on voting behaviour and political participation is particularly worrisome. By politicizing terms like "fake news," political actors aim to discredit

mainstream media while influencing public opinion in their own favour.

The thesis title **on the academic part** will add to the research in political participation and voting behavior and increase our understanding of how fake news on social media can change voting behavior during the USA presidential elections

Understanding the idea of media literacy among different educational institutes and how it is used to raise awareness not to be affected by fake news on social media. And make use of media literacy and understand well how social media cannot affect our minds.

Also, my title will support future research in investigating different areas in the thesis as can be applied in different countries in the Arab world not USA only. Moreover, it can be applied in different political agendas and not presidential elections only.

**On the professional level, the** study will mainly offer many recommendations for political candidates and governmental responsible persons to specify the optimal of using social media as an authorized source of news and make use of new tools to detect different fake news content.

The findings the research will benefit social media and the Future of Politics. There are sure to be many political changes that come about due to social media. There are now proposals for internet voting, which could lead to more people participating in elections and make a good tool used for democratization (benefit from social media as a tool) for a

positive effect in biasing the voting behavior of a certain candidate and help in the process of the political participation.

## 9. RECOMMENDATIONS

### 9.1 Media & News Literacy

Talking about news literacy the capacity to evaluate news sources is a crucial facet of modern citizenship. Indeed, some contend that democracy depends on individuals' capacity to distinguish truth from fiction and identify persuasive tactics masquerading as facts.

However, the number of false news stories in circulation and people's ability to identify "fake news" are concerns raised by the increasingly divisive political environment. People no longer seem to feel confident in the information they get from the news, as evidenced by the growing public mistrust of the media and the lack of agreement on what defines a trustworthy news source.

A shift away from traditional news outlets like radio, television, and newspapers is contributing to this atmosphere of doubt about the accuracy and dependability of the news. Instead, more people now get their news from the Internet, particularly social media; especially young adults. While it is helpful in quickly disseminating information, these websites also contribute to the spread of unverified or, worse, inaccurate information.

What can we understand from the research point of view and what should we develop in order to benefit from the research study Media literacy is the understanding of how mass media

work, how they construct reality and create meaning, and how they are organized, and how to use them wisely It means knowing how.

This means that people can become both critical thinkers and creative producers of a wider range of messages than ever before, using images, sounds, and language.

The mediated and symbolic environments in which we live today profoundly shape the decisions, values, and knowledge that determine our daily lives.

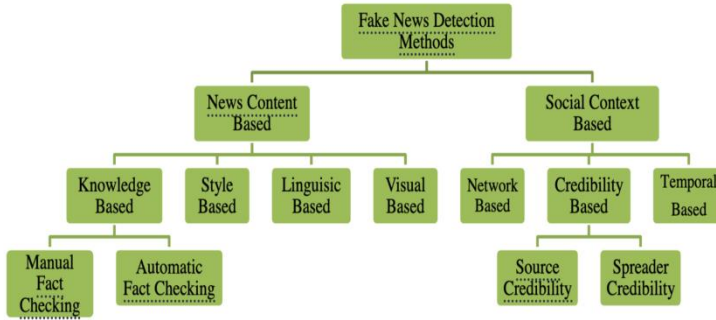
Therefore, media literacy helps strengthen the critical skills and communication skills that give meaning to human existence and enables individuals to use communication for change.

Fake news detection methods

The extensive global use of social media platforms has created an environment that is ideal for the unprecedented spread of online fake news. Mass, varied, and heterogeneous information—both genuine and false—is abundant on social media and spreads quickly, having a detrimental effect on society.

To identify fake news on online media, a large team of researchers and technological titans is collaborating. The development of big data and a vast user-generated database has led to a shift away from handcrafted features, which formed the foundation of traditional automatic rumor detection methods, towards deep-level features. Within the larger context of the news article's content and social context, there is several

cutting-edge studies on the identification of fake news in this section.



(fig. 4 describing the fake news detection methods)

## Content-based

Fake news detection method aims to detect fake news by analyzing the content of the article, either the text or image or both within the news article.

### Knowledge-based

Knowledge-based techniques make use of the fact-checking process, which compares a claim with outside sources to confirm its veracity. The two types of fact-checking techniques now in use are automated and manual.

### Manual fact-checking

The manual fact-checking can be broadly divided into:

- (I) Expert-based and (II) crowd-sourced fact-checking.

### Expert Based

Expert-oriented techniques are employed in expert-based procedures, which depend on human specialists in certain fields to make decisions. This method is employed by fact-checking websites such as Snopes, PolitiFact, and Gossip Cop. Although time-consuming and not well suited to the vast amount of material available on social media, these approaches are dependable. These websites are frequently used by researchers to create their own datasets.

### Crowd sourced.

The "wisdom of the crowd" is useful in crowdsourcing ways to verify the veracity of the news reports. Fiskkit employs a similar strategy by giving users a forum to debate significant news stories and determine their veracity. Compared to expert-based fact-checking, crowdsourced fact-checking is more scalable but also more biased, prone to contradicting annotations, and more complex to administer.

### Automatic fact-checking

Automatic fact-checking strategies have been implemented to solve the issue of manual fact-checking approaches not scaling well with the massive number of data, particularly created with the usage of social media. These strategies largely rely on Natural Language Processing (NLP), Data Mining, and Machine Learning (ML) techniques rather than human intellect .

### Style-based

False news identification employs the same content analysis methodology as knowledge-based fake news detection.

However, this approach evaluates the writer's desire to deceive the audience rather than the veracity of the news material.

### Visual based

Since startling visual information is frequently seen as proof that may boost the trustworthiness of news, fake news producers frequently use it to draw in viewers and deceive them. For news authentication, a variety of statistical and visual picture attributes are retrieved.

### Limitations

The difficulty in achieving external validity of in-depth interviews of a qualitative research method is to explore in depth a respondent's point of view, experiences, feelings, and perspectives.

However, due to a medium sample and time limitations, the findings cannot be generalized. To strengthen the findings even more, it would have been optimal to create in-depth interviews. Hence, it is not possible to state that the results are applied to the whole population of the U.S American citizens project is limited in several ways.

The first limitation is the lack of diversity in terms of the sample. It does however make the generalizability narrower due to the relatively smaller subgroups on social media that is involved in the research. The diversity of the sample in this research is quite unbalanced in terms of gender and political affiliation, Since the current study relies on a quantitative research methodology, through the use of a survey, the main limitation is not the low number of participants as the researcher

gathered more than 400 response but the main limitation is in-depth interviews qualitative in order to gather more details about the 2020 U.S presidential elections , and interview with different people that have their voting behaviour changed when they are subjected to the fake news on social media This means that it is difficult to generalize the findings to the majority of the population. As for further research, it may be beneficial to include a larger sample size to be able to draw a stronger conclusion. Another limitation of the study is the use of an electronic survey technique. It will support future scholars to investigate different aspects related to this particular area. For example, this research can be conducted on another social media platform rather than WhatsApp and email It can also be replicated in other many states not 2-3 states only (Sandiago-los angles, California). In this thesis, I utilized the survey data collection tool, I selected a purposive sample based on predefined criteria and particular characteristics to better meet the goals of this study. As they must be Americans and have the right to vote from the age of (18-55)

- 1- This study focused on Facebook and Twitter only. Future studies may investigate other social media platforms, such as Threads, TikTok ,and Instagram to examine the impact of social media fake news on voting behavior during the elections
- 2- The sample is not a whole representative of the American population. This study depended on a purposive sample, a type of non-probability sample. Moreover, the sample size is medium not small or big



(only 412 respondents) Therefore, we cannot generalize the findings on the whole population. Future research should include a larger sample as well as a type of probability samples and work on a focus groups criteria that will add to my research on the future.

- 3- This study was conducted in the U.S, while COVID-19 is a global crisis during timing of the elections Therefore, future scholars can investigate the research problem in different Arab countries and compare the results.

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