OBORO PRECIOUS ISIOMA

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MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION STUDIES

400 LEVEL

SOCIAL MEDIA AND PROLIFERATION OF FAKE NEWS, DODGY HEALTH ADVICE AND FAKE CURES FOR COVID 19.

WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA:

Social media are interactive computer-mediated technologies that facilitate the creation or sharing of information, ideas, career interests and other forms of expression via virtual communities and networks. Social media are web-based communication tools that enable people to interact with each other by sharing and consuming information.

Social media is a collective term for websites and applications which focus on communication, community-based input, interaction, content sharing and collaboration. Different types of social media are normally dedicated to forums, microblogging, social networking, social bookmarking, social curation, and wikis are among the.

Social media has become larger and more accessible thanks to access to mobile applications, with some examples of social media including Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp.

WHAT IS FAKE NEWS:

Fake news also known as junk news, pseudo-news or hoax news is a form of news consisting of deliberate disinformation or hoaxes spread via traditional news media {print or broadcast} or online social media. Digital news has brought back and increased the usage of fake news, or yellow journalism. The news is then often reverberated as misinformation in social media but occasionally finds its way to mainstream media as well.

Fake news is written and published usually with the intent to mislead in order to damage an agency, entity or person, and/or gain financially or politically, often using sensationalist, dishonest, or outright fabricated headlines to increase readership. Similarly, clickbait stories and headlines earn advertising revenue from this activity.

WHAT IS COVID 19?

Coronavirus disease is an infectious disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2. The disease was first identified in December 2019 in Wuhan, the capital of China’s Hubei province, and has since spread globally, resulting in the ongoing 2019-20 coronavirus pandemic. Common symptoms include fever, cough, and shortness of breath.

The disease has so far affected over 375,498 people and claimed over 16,362 lives globally. Since the outbreak of Covid19, a lot of rumors and fake news have been spread through social media platforms. The most popular are the ‘’cures and ‘’preventive measures’’ for the virus. Most of these articles are written by quack doctors or clout chasers who just want to trend thereby misleading people in the process.

Just like when the Ebola pandemic happened, fake news/cures were going viral on social media platforms especially on whatsapp and this lead to the death of some Africans. The misleading article on Ebola adviced people to mix their bathing water with salt and as a result, it led to their death and a similar situation is happening during the coronavirus pandemic. Through social media platforms, people have been told that

1. Dettol is effective against corona virus
2. Garlic prevents corona virus
3. Drinking alcohol is also a good substitute for hand sanitizer
4. Gargling with saline solution can eliminate the virus.
5. Used clothes can transmit the virus etc

All the above information and preventive measures are misleading as they did not come from the World health organization or any other professional medical body. But through social media platforms, this information has gone viral and has misled thousands of people. Social media postings are just difficult to control. This is generally due to weak legislation in some jurisdiction, poor quality control measures by social network providers, and sheer mischief by users. Misinformation and conspiracy theories spread on social media have been found to generate panic and mistrust among the general public by diverting attention away from the outbreak response, impeding health-care and workers activities.

Misinformation and fake news on social media during infectious disease outbreaks, including the ravaging coronavirus epidemic can seriously cost lives, and jeopardize efforts at curtailing the deadly virus.

When people see things like this on social media, they react as a result of fear and panic. Therefore when people see such information, they should not panic, rather they should confirm from a health professional, check the WHO website and following the correct preventive measures such as social distancing, using face mask, wearing gloves and washing your hands regularly.

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