COUNTERING ELECTORAL DISINFORMATION: LESSONS FROM GHANA'S 2024 ELECTIONS

Ghana Fact-Checking Coalition

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List of Abbreviations

AU	-	African Union
CDD-Ghana	-	Ghana Center for Democratic Development
ECONEC	-	ECOWAS Network of Electoral Commissions
ECOWAS	-	Economic Community of West African States
ESR	-	Election Situation Room
GFC	-	Ghana fact-checking coalition
IFCN	-	International Fact-Checking Network
MFWA	-	Media Foundation for West Africa
MSR	-	Media Situation Room
SMS	-	Short Messaging Service
WANEP	-	West Africa Network for Peacebuilding
WISEGUARD	-	WhatsApp Initiative for Strengthening Expertise & Guarding Against Disinformation

Executive Summary

Fact-checking is indispensable in the fight against misinformation and disinformation during elections. Ahead of the 2024 general elections in Ghana, GhanaFact (FactSpace West Africa), Fact-Check Ghana (Media Foundation for West Africa), and DUBAWA Ghana (Centre for Journalism, Innovation and Development) formed the Ghana Fact-checking Coalition to monitor and verify election-related claims to promote information hygiene during the elections. The Ghana Fact-checking Coalition worked from Media Situation Rooms in Accra and Tamale. It collaborated with local and international partners to deploy technology and an on-the-ground network of journalists to monitor live narratives about the elections and produce in real-time reports to debunk them. In doing its work, the Coalition adhered to the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN) standards, ensuring fairness, transparency, and non-partisanship.

During the project period (December 4th to December 11th), the Coalition received and analysed one-hundred and forty-two (142) claims. Eight of every ten claims received were spotted on social media, mainly X (Twitter). Close to two-thirds of the fact-checked claims turned out to be false or misleading, with the potential to obfuscate public discourse. Bad actors employed various tactics like using generative AI to produce disinformation, smear campaigns and recycling old images and videos to mislead the public. The fact-check reports were published or broadcast on a network of over one hundred media outlets in English and forty-five (45) Ghanaian languages. The coalition also used bulk Short Messaging Service (SMS) to make fact-checking reports more accessible.

The Ghana Fact-Checking Coalition played a pivotal role in safeguarding the integrity of the 2024 general elections by effectively countering misinformation and disinformation. The coalition's efforts enhanced transparency and trust in Ghana's electoral process. Despite its contribution, the coalition faced challenges, including attacks on a member in Tamale. Moving forward, there is a need for increased support for independent fact-checkers and civil society groups to contribute to the fight against disinformation. Public education on media literacy and regulatory frameworks for digital platforms could further strengthen efforts to combat election-related misinformation.

1.0 Introduction

T he proliferation of misinformation and disinformation during elections can obfuscate public debate and deepen divisions in society. In the lead-up to the 2024 Presidential and Parliamentary elections in Ghana, major stakeholders such as the Electoral Commission[1] and the security services[2] warned of the dangers that misinformation and disinformation posed to the 2024 election process. The threats of disinformation and misinformation are not unique to Ghana; they constitute the most severe global risk, according to the World Economic Forum's Global Risk Report 2024[3]. It was, therefore, imperative to combat misinformation and disinformation to protect the integrity of the 2024 election and to maintain public trust in democratic processes and institutions.

Fighting misinformation and disinformation during elections is an arduous challenge for which there is no single solution, but fact-checking can help. Fact-checking organisations are indispensable in the fight against misinformation and disinformation. Their work involves real-time monitoring and verifying of claims circulating in the mass media and other public spaces. Forming a coalition of fact-checking organisations to combat the spread of false information during the 2024 elections was a timely and substantial contribution to addressing a clear and present danger to the integrity of the 2024 elections and Ghana's democracy.

This report details the activities of the Ghana Fact-Checking Coalition (GFC) and their contribution to the fairness and transparency of the 2024 presidential and parliamentary elections in Ghana. It explains the coalition's operations and methodology for conducting fact-checking during the elections. The findings of the coalition and the challenges they faced are also presented in this report.

2.0 The Election Fact-checking Coalition

A group photo of the leaders of the Ghana Fact checking Coalition

The Ghana Fact-Checking Coalition is a collaboration between fact-checking organisations, civil society organisations (CSOs) and the media to counter the threat of election disinformation and promote electoral information hygiene before, during and after the 2024 elections in Ghana. The core of the fact-checking coalition comprised three fact-checking organisations - GhanaFact (FactSpace West Africa), Fact-Check Ghana (Media Foundation for West Africa), and DUBAWA Ghana (Centre for Journalism, Innovation and Development). These fact-checking organisations are members of the IFCN.

Launched on 4th December 2024, this first-of-its-kind coalition worked closely with media partners and civil society Organisations (CSOs), including West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP,) Africa Check, Digital Africa Research Lab and Ghana Centre for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana). The coalition presented a formidable front to protect Ghana's peace, stability and democratic consolidation from

the insidious threat of misinformation and disinformation through fact-checking. The fact-checking coalition also sought to provide timely, accurate and independent analysis of contentious public statements to contribute to knowledge and understanding of issues surrounding the 2024 elections.

3.0 The Coalition's work

Fact-checking can be laborious and slow, especially during elections when the stakes are high. Before the elections coalition members and partners trained journalists on fact-checking across the country. For instance, GhanaFact teamed up with the Center for Democratic Development Ghana (CDD-Ghana) and others to train journalists across the northern, middle, and southern zones of the country. DUBAWA Ghana, through the support of the German Embassy also did a similar training for fact-checkers and first time voters across the country. The focus of the training was how to combat misinformation for free, fair, and transparent elections.

Ghana Fact-Checking Coalition

During the elections, the coalition established two Media Situation Rooms (MSR) in Tamale and Accra to verify reported incidents and produce real-time fact-check reports. Each situation room was equipped with media monitoring equipment and staffed with coordinators, editors, researchers, videographers/graphic designers and audio analysts from GhanaFact, Fact-Check Ghana and DUBAWA Ghana.

3.1 The Accra Media Situation Room

The Accra Media Situation Room (MSR) of the Ghana Fact-Checking Coalition was hosted at the conference room of the MFWA in Ogbojo, Accra. The Accra MSR opened from 4th to 11th December. The Situation Room was staffed with coordinators, editors, researchers, fact-checkers, analysts and videographers who worked around the clock. The situation room was equipped with multiple display screens for monitoring television broadcasts and a dedicated video corner for recording explainer videos in both English and different local languages. The team monitored selected broadcast and digital

media to pick on the incidence of misinformation and disinformation which were passed on to designated fact-checkers and analysts for thorough investigation and fact-checking. Personnel from the three coalition partners constituted the workforce in the Accra Media Situation room, but representatives of GhanaWeb and the Department of Communication, University of Ghana joined at different points in time.

International and local election observer groups visited the situation room to familiarise themselves with the coalition's work. The election observers that visited included the UN Secretary General of the Office of the Sahel, the ECOWAS National Elections Network (ECONEC), the German Ambassador, the Electoral Commission of Ghana, the Election Taskforce of the Ghana Police, and US Embassy Press Attaché.

3.2 The Tamale Media Situation Room

The Tamale Media Situation Room (MSR) was headquartered at the Mariam Hotel, Tamale. It opened on the 5th of December 2024. The workforce in the Tamale Situation Room also consisted of staff from the three coalition partners. Working closely with Tamale-based journalists, the Tamale MSR monitored selected radio, television and digital media platforms and flagged suspicious claims for fact-checking.

The media monitoring work in the Tamale MSR was boosted with the three-day (December 6 - 8) visit of media monitors from the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP). The WANEP representatives contributed immensely to the verifying and fact-checking of security-related issues. The Tamale situation room received several observer groups who wished to understand the work of the fact-checking coalition. They include representatives of the Commonwealth observer group, the National Peace Council, ECOWAS, the European Union, the US Embassy, and the WANEP National Network Coordinator.

3.3 The WANEP Media Situation Room

In addition to the two main media situation rooms, the fact-checking coalition was represented in WANEP's Election Situation Room in Accra.

WANEP, a key partner of the GFC convened a situation room at Mövenpick Ambassador Hotel, Accra from 6th to 8th December. The Election Situation Room (ESR) comprised five teams/rooms: the Data Gathering Room, the Analysis Room, the Decision Room, the Fact-Checking Room, and the Communication Room. Fact-checkers and analysts from GhanaFact and DUBAWA Ghana worked in the Fact-Checking Room. The Fact-checking room worked closely with the media situation rooms in Accra and Tamale to find and fact-check various claims, especially the ones that border on security given WANEP's focus. The fact-checking room received several observer missions and groups. This includes the AU Election Observation Mission, the ECOWAS Network of Electoral Commissions (ECONEC) and the International Republican Institute.

The MSRs working in Tamale and Accra collaborated seamlessly using common worksheets and shared a dashboard which was regularly updated with fact-check reports from all situation rooms. Beyond the situation rooms, the coalition worked with about fifty (50) journalists and over one hundred (100) media outlets across the country to broadcast or publish fact-check reports in forty-five (45) Ghanaian languages. Many of the journalists who verified claims in their communities on behalf of the coalition were trained by coalition members on fact-checking before December 2024.

Accra/WANEP MSR Observers

Tamale MSR Observers

4.0 Methodology: The Election Fact-checking Process

All three fact-checking organisations that formed the fact-checking coalition are signatories to the Poynter International Fact-Checking Network's code of principles[4]. Signatories to the IFCN code of principles all over the world use the same standard for fact-checking, and they are required to be fair, non-partisan and transparent. The Ghana Election fact-checking coalition, therefore, applied very high standards to the election fact-checking project.

For example, for a claim to be approved, it must be rigorously fact-checked by the assigned fact-checker or analyst. The fact checker or analyst must present the fact-check report to the first editor who scrutinizes the report and fact-checking process and when satisfied forwards the same to the second line editor for final approval.

Approved claims are forwarded to the design and publication team who publish the report on the three dedicated websites- such as ghanafact.com ghana.dubawa.org, factcheckghana.com- and create visuals for social media updates. The process is documented at every stage on a shared worksheet and subsequently a dashboard which is a summary display of the status of all fact-checks.

In the selection of claims, the Coalition worked with trained media monitors who observed 30 traditional media outlets throughout the period of the Media Situation Room. The media monitors, trained under the MFWA's indecent campaign language monitoring project, presented claims to the Coalition to be fact-checked.

The Coalition settled on the specific traditional media outlets for monitoring by relying on the MFWA's language monitoring data on media outlets noted to produce false and polarising narratives.

The Coalition adopted social media listening and tech-facilitated tools to monitor and select claims from digital and social media platforms while relying on data from member fact-checking organisations on bad actors whose activities on the platforms needed to be observed.
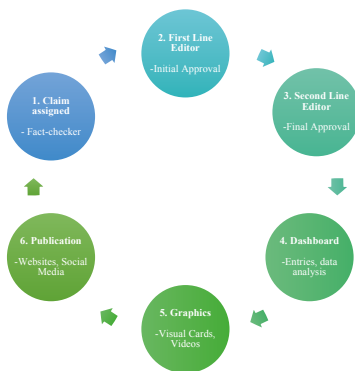

Fig. 1: The Election Fact-checking Process

[4]https://ifcncodeofprinciples.poynter.org/the-commitments

In addition to its elaborate fact-checking methodology the GFC leveraged technology to enhance its work. The Coalition collaborated with international fact-checking bodies like Full Fact AI to surface claims. This collaboration was particularly significant in fact-checking suspected AI-generated content.

Again, two coalition members, DUBAWA Ghana and FactSpace West Africa, deployed a WhatsApp chatbots for users to submit doubtful information for quick and automatic verification. The DUBAWA chatbot launched in May 2024 was part of the initiative of the Centre for Journalism Innovation and Development to facilitate the process of fact checking and it came in handy during the period of the coalition's work.

The FactSpace West Africa WhatsApp chatbot is part of the WhatsApp initiative for Strengthening Expertise & Guarding Against Disinformation (WISEGUARD). Launched a few months before the elections, the 2024 elections were the first time WISEGUARD was used to fight disinformation during elections. The WISEGUARD chatbot was deployed to help surface claims and respond to them speedily. FactSpace West Africa also used Bulk Short Messaging Service (SMS) to disseminate highlights of fact-checking reports. This helped to increase the reach of the reports, particularly in areas with poor or no internet access. A total of seventy-two thousand, six-hundred and twenty-seven (72627) messages were delivered using the bulk SMS service.

5.0 Findings/Fact-checks

This section presents results or findings of the fact-checking coalition's activities from when the first situation room opened in Accra on December 4, 2024, to when the coalition officially closed all situation rooms on December 11, 2024.

5.1 Claim status

A claim is a factu al statement made in a nonfiction context[5]. To qualify for fact-checking, a claim must be a declarative statement with the potential to influence public perception and understanding of critical issues. The fact-checking coalition monitored both traditional (Television and radio) and new media (websites and social media media) for claims. Given the scope of the project, the coalition focused on elections-related claims mainly from political actors. Statements from media personalities and social media users were also flagged as relevant based on their potential to influence public discourse and electoral decisions.

Over the eight (8) days of the project (December 4th to 11th), a total of 142 claims were recorded, 101 (72%) were fact-checked, approved and published, 11 (8%) were disapproved and 29 (20%) were pending at the time the media situation rooms officially closed on December 11, 2024. A summary of the claim status is presented in Figure 2.
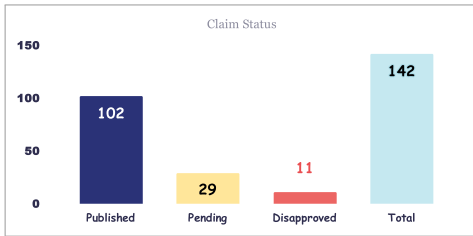
Fig. 2

The results show that most (72%) of the claims were fact-checked and approved for publication; 8% of the fact-checked claims were not approved for publication whilst 21% of claims could not be conclusively fact-checked mainly due to insufficient evidence

5.2   Claims Format/type
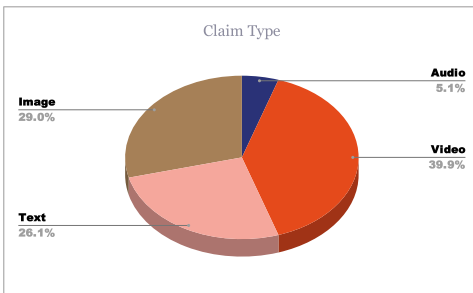
Figure 3 below shows the types (format) of

Fig. 3

claims that were recorded during the project. It is evident from Figure 3 that most (40.15%) of the claims were in video format and 29.2% were images. Also, 25.55% were text and 5.11% were in audio format. The results show the preference for videos and images to proliferate potentially false and misleading information.

5.3   Claims frequency

The number of claims received in the media situations rooms varied each day. The frequency of claims recorded each day is presented as illustrated in Figure 3.
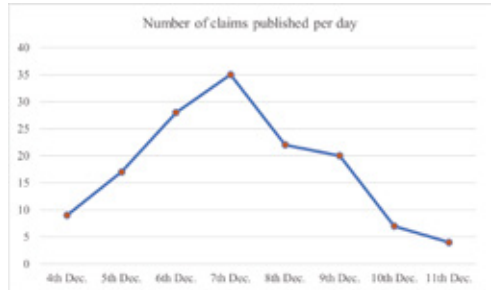

Fig. 4

It is evident from Figure 4 that the claims recorded increased steadily from the 4th of December, peaked on the 7th of December and declined towards the 4th of December. The highest number of claims for a day is 35 (24.65%); this was recorded on the day of the election (7th December). The lowest number of claims (4; 2.8%) was recorded on the 11th of December, 4 days after the elections. On average the coalition received about 8 claims a day.

5.4   Claim Sources

Claims that surfaced before, during and immediately after the 2024 elections emanated from different media sources. The sources of claims are presented in Figure 5.
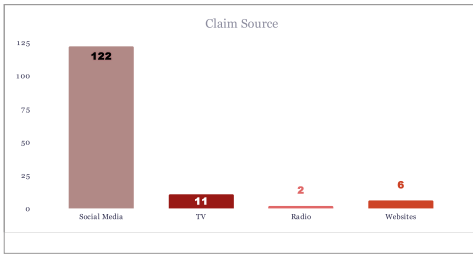
Fig. 5

It is evident from Figure 5 that most of the claims, 122 (86.52%) emanated from social media, 11 (7.8%) were from Television (TV) and 6 (4.26%) came from websites (news portals).

5.5 Geographical Location of Claims

Figure 5 presents the geographical distribution of claims based on the sixteen (16) administrative regions of Ghana. The location of a claim is the area (region) mentioned in the claim. For example, on the 4th of December, a claim surfaced that an NDC supporter had cut off the thumb of a member of the NPP in Bolgatanga. This claim, which turned out to be false, was put in the Upper-East Region category because of the location mentioned in the claim – Bolgatanga is in the Upper-East Region. The regional distribution of claims is presented in Figure 6.
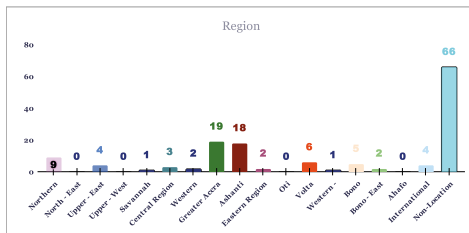

Fig. 6

It can be observed from Figure 6 that the Greater Accra region and the Ashanti recorded the highest incidence of claims. The Greater Accra region recorded 19 (13.4%) claims, the Ashanti region recorded 18 (12.7%). The following regions: Northeast, Oti, Upper West, and Ahafo regions recorded no claim. Nearly half (66; 46.5%) of all claims were not associated with any geographical location, hence they were tagged as non-location-based.

5.6 Verdict

In fact-checking, a verdict is the conclusion of the fact-check. Verdicts are reached after systematic analysis and verification, and they are designed to be clear and simple. For example, after checking the facts of a claim, analysts may conclude that the claim is TRUE, FALSE or MISLEADING based on their findings during the fact-checking process. Figure 7 shows the verdict of the claims fact-checked by the coalition.
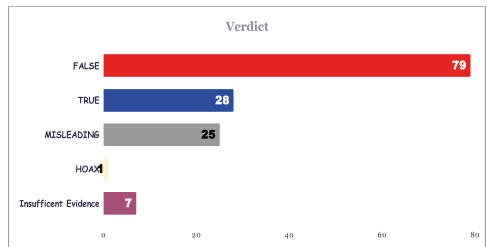

Fig. 7

Figure 7 above shows that more than half (56.4%) of the claims investigated turned out to be false and 17.9% were misleading. However, 20% of the claims were true, but

there was not enough evidence for the fact-checking coalition to pronounce a verdict on 5% of the claims recorded.

5.7 Themes emerging from the data

Disinformation and misinformation around the election can be categorized under five major thematic areas that emerged from the claims recorded. The emergent dominant themes are 1) Election Integrity, 2) Security Related, 3) Candidate Image, 4) Political Party issues, and 5) Economic and social issues. Another category 'others' was developed to cater for claims that did not fit into any of the five categories. Figure 8 shows the distribution of claims based on themes.
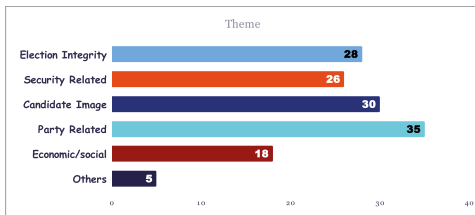

Fig. 8

It would be observed from Figure 8 that, most (24.6%) of the claims centred on 'Party related issues' and 'candidate's image' (21.1%). This suggests that political parties and their front runners were the main targets of the disinformation misinformation during the elections. Election integrity (19.7%) and security related issues (18.3%) were also prominent.

5.8 Targets and perpetrators of misinformation and disinformation

The analysis of fact-checked claims showed that bad actors targeted politicians, political parties and state institutions. Figure 9 below shows the extent to which key institutions and individuals were targeted.

A total of 123 claims targeted individuals and institutions. The two leading Political Parties in Ghana; the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC) were the most targeted entities. It can be seen from Figure 8 that 24.40% and 28.50% of claims targeted the NDC and NPP. The presidential candidates of both parties were also targeted, 21.10% of claims targeted John Dramani Mahama and 5.7% targeted Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia. Besides, the two leading contenders, the Chairperson of the electoral commission was also a target (0.08%) of misinformation and disinformation. In addition, 17.9% of claims targeted the Electoral Commission. The running mates of the NPP and the NDC were also targeted but not as significantly.

The coalition identified that the major perpetrators from who claims were taken were predominantly politically aligned social media users. Our analysis of data collected showed that pro-NPP (ruling party) accounts were the dominant perpetrators with 22 claims while pro-NDC (main opposition party) accounted for 15 claims. Non-aligned media and news media accounted for 9 and 8 claims

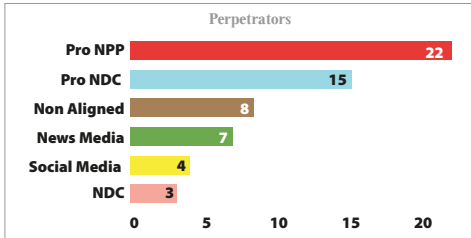respectively. Another significant perpetrator were social media influencers.

Fig. 9

Another key finding in the line of the coalition's work was an Open-Source Intelligence report that exposed the work of a coordinated network of bad actors engaged in inauthentic behaviour.

On December 6, a day before the elections, the Coalition observed a network of handles disseminating harmful disinformation targeting John Dramani Mahama, the presidential candidate of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) with the hashtags #IncompetentMahama and #FailedMahama on X. These same network of handles were noted to be behind trends #BawumiaForPresident #1TouchForBawumia.

The coalition also took the initiative to call out some of the major perpetrators who had serially been identified as leading peddlers of disinformation. This led to the production and publication of flyers that identified them and cautioned the public against consuming content they published.
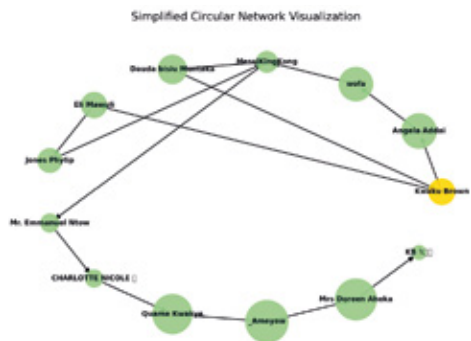

Fig. 10

Ghana Fact-Checking Coalition

DISINFORMATION ALERT

The Ghana Fact-Checking Coalition has observed several disinformation content from this handle. The public is cautioned against consuming content from the account.

PRESIDENT 2024

Fiifi Sage ✔
@_Fiifi_Sage

Suave 🎶

⬚ Social Media Influencer   ⬚ Achimota
⬚ Born 16 February   ⬚ Joined May 2019

5.6K Following   **11K** Followers

𝕏 @dubawaGH   @ghana_fact   @factcheck_ghana

Ghana Fact-Checking Coalition

DISINFORMATION ALERT

The Ghana Fact-Checking Coalition has observed several disinformation content from this handle. The public is cautioned against consuming content from the account.

Follow

Gen. Buhari ✔
@Gen_Buhari_

FACT CHECKER || YOUTH ACTIVIST PUBLIC RELATIONS || CEO OF BUHARI FARMS || PATRIOT|| INFLUENCER || BLOGGER || RESEARCHER || DIR OF COMMS FOR @LetsTalkPts ||

⬚ Ashanti, Ghana   ⬚ Joined October 2019

2.3K Following   **23K** Followers

𝕏 @dubawaGH   @ghana_fact   @factcheck_ghana

Ghana Fact-Checking Coalition

DISINFORMATION ALERT

The Ghana Fact-Checking Coalition has observed several disinformation content from this handle. The public is cautioned against consuming content from the account.

Follow

Kevin Taylor ✔
@KevinEkowTaylor

host of #withallduerespect and producer and ceo of loudsilence media

⬚ Washington, DC   ⬚ loudsilencenews.com
⬚ Joined August 2010

1 Following   **68.6K** Followers

𝕏 @dubawaGH   @ghana_fact   @factcheck_ghana

5.9 Notable trends and tactics of bad actors

A few trends and tactics emerge from the analysis of election misinformation and disinformation that are worth highlighting for further investigation and decisive policy action.

a. AI-generated disinformation

Generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) has changed the dynamics of information disorder. Gen AI's accessibility and largely unregulated use enhance the development and spread of disinformation at scale by malicious actors[6]. The coalition identified some instances in which bad actors deployed generative artificial intelligence to create and spread disinformation. Examples of detected AI disinformation are presented in Table 1.

Ghana Fact-Checking Coalition

Table 1: Examples of AI Disinformation

Description	Date	Verdict
Audio claiming John Mahama aims at rigging the elections	Dec. 6, 2024	False
Audio of Vice President Bawumia calling Ghanaians weak minds and	Dec. 5, 2024	False
Audio of John Mahama allegedly asking his supporters to keep lying to Ghanaians until the elections are over.	Dec. 5, 2024	False

b. Smear campaigns

Smear campaigns refer to the use of false or sometimes exaggerated claims to attack and damage the credibility and reputation of political opponents. This is a negative campaign tactic that has been given new impetus by social media's wide availability and the anonymity it affords bad actors[7]. Smear campaigns have become 'effective' disinformation tactics with the advent of digital media[8]. Cumulatively, 26.80% or all disinformation with clear targets aimed at either Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia or John Mahama, indicating that disinformation was weaponized as a campaign tactic in the 2024 elections.

c. Recycling of old images and videos to portray current happenings

Presenting previous pictures and videos out of context is a major visual disinformation technique used to deceive unsuspecting information users. This tactic is common because it is a simpler form of deception requiring basic or in some cases no technology. The recycling of legitimate old photographs and videos and presenting them as evidence of recent events is one example of this form of visual deception. During the 2024 elections old photographs of celebrities and politicians were presented as recent happenings and used to mislead the public.

d. Politicization of homophobia

Homosexuality is a highly sensitive issue in Ghana due to the traditional nature of Ghanaian society. However, it was realized that some politicians sought to politicize homosexuality by condemning homosexuals on campaign platforms ostensibly to whip up public sentiment against homosexuals. For example, on the 6th of December 2024, a claim surfaced that the MP for Madina Hon Francis Xavier Sosu led a charged crowd at ND's final rally to make homophobic chants. The verdict was true. Such behaviour polarizes society further and increases political tension.

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[7] Lees, C. (2019). Global leaders smear their critics: Dissenters beware - these made-up charges are being used across borders to distract and destroy. Index on Censorship, 48(4), 30-32.

[8] Arce, D. (2024). Disinformation Strategies. Defence and Peace Economics 35 (6), 659-672
https://doi.org/10.1080/10242694.2024.2302236

6.0 Challenges

Despite its positive impact, the coalition faced challenges, including attacks on its members. For instance, a journalist associated with the fact-checking coalition, Yahaya Masahudu, was assaulted while performing his duties in Tamale[9]. This incident drew condemnation from organizations such as the MFWA and the Ghana Journalists Association, underscoring the risks faced by fact-checkers in the field.

Also, the coalition could not conclusively fact-check some of the claims due to insufficient evidence. Security-related claims were particularly difficult to fact-check because actors in the space traditionally like to withhold information.

There's also the challenge of the spontaneity of the issues happening and the Coalition not having enough or sufficient correspondents in the regions. In many instances, correspondents arrived at the scene of critical events after the happenings had ended.

The coalition also highlights a major challenge concerning the difficulty in getting timely information from major stakeholders including the National Election Taskforce and the Electoral Commission. This gravely impacted turnaround time for a number of claims the coalition was working on.

7.0 Recommendations

The Ghana Fact-checking Coalition makes the following recommendations based on its findings:

Electoral Commission

a. The EC should have a dedicated communication system with representatives or spokespersons across the regions. The regional component of this communication system would immediately verify electoral incidents and infractions and readily provide information to the media and the general public.

b. The EC must intensify its engagement on social media. The Commission must improve its response rate on issues of misinformation and disinformation as such issues spread quickly due to the interest and activities of bad actors.

c. The EC must improve its collation process, particularly with the tabulation and presentation of figures from counted votes.

d. The EC can contribute immensely to quality and accurate public discussions by making available on its website historical data on electoral outcomes. The Coalition observed that the EC currently does not have detailed results of previous elections on its website.

The Election Security Task Force

a. The Task Force, perhaps the second most crucial stakeholder in the organisational

[9]https://ghanafact.com/2024/12/election-2024-ghana-fact-checking-coalition-team-member-attacked-in-tamale/

hierarchy, must also demonstrate a lot more openness and willingness to engage with the media.

b. The Task Force must improve its social media presence by timely putting out information and responding to disinformation claims as soon as they are able to gather evidence.

The Media

a. The media must always take conscious steps to verify every electoral information before publishing and not ditch its accuracy standards to speed.

b. The media must also continually hold capacity building training workshops for staff on basic fact-checking as this is sometimes the first step to combating misinformation.

c. Media houses must inculcate fact-checking components in their election coverage workflow. Persons with expertise in fact-checking must be included in the team for the coverage of elections to ensure the first-hand verification of information before publication.

d. Media houses as a matter of ethical standards must have fact-checking desks as part of the general editorial processes in their newsrooms.

Civil Society

a. Civil society organisations (CSOs) are encouraged to support and partner with fact-checking outlets to build the capacities of newsrooms on fact-checking and producing accurate news reports. The intervention is particularly encouraged for the local language broadcasting platforms.

b. CSOs are also encouraged to contribute to efforts at improving digital media and information literacy among citizens, especially during elections

Government

The government must urgently review and advance engagements on the national framework for misinformation and disinformation. The government must make a commitment to initiating and executing digital media and information literacy

8.0 Conclusion

The Ghana Fact-Checking Coalition contributed significantly to combating misinformation and disinformation during the 2024 electoral process. The coalition, comprising GhanaFact, Fact-Check Ghana, and DUBAWA Ghana, convened to monitor and verify election-related claims. It operated Media Situation Rooms in Accra and Tamale and collaborated with local and international partners to ensure factual reporting and mitigate the spread of false information.

In doing its work, the coalition adhered to the highest standards of the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN), ensuring fairness, transparency, and non-partisanship. The coalition identified tactics such as using generative AI to produce false claims, smear campaigns, and recycling old images and videos to mislead the public. The Ghana Fact-Checking Coalition played a pivotal role in safeguarding the integrity of the 2024 general elections by effectively countering misinformation and disinformation. The coalition's efforts enhanced transparency and trust in Ghana's electoral process. Moving forward, there is a need for increased support for independent fact-checkers and civil society groups to contribute to the fight against disinformation. In addition, public education on media literacy and regulatory frameworks for digital platforms could further strengthen efforts to combat election-related disinformation.

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