The Impact Of Fake News On International News Sites On Iraqi Public Opinion

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Abstract

The research deals with the topic of "The Impact of Fake News on International News Sites on Iraqi Public Opinion", a research extracted from a PhD thesis.

The research dealt with the fake news published on international news sites to which the Iraqi public is exposed, and the search for the possibility of this news replacing the real news, and then the possibility of influencing the process of public opinion-making and formation, which casts a shadow on the decision-making process as a result of exposure to this news. counterfeit and the potential to result in certain reactions.

The research also aims to know the most prevalent fake news on international news sites, and to indicate the strategy of addressing this news by the Iraqi public, and to prevent its impact on other groups of society, using the descriptive approach and using the electronic questionnaire tool to know the opinions of respondents from the Iraqi public about the fake news that they are exposed to. It was conducted through international news websites using axes prepared for this purpose, which were prepared after the researcher used a number of refereed media professors known for their expertise and specialization in media research methods, to determine the appropriateness of the paragraphs of the standard used in the form.

After extracting the results, the researcher has identified a number of results related to the types of exposure by the Iraqi public to fake news and the extent to which public opinion is affected by these news on decision-making and trends.

Keywords: Trends; fake news; false; international; Iraqi public opinion; audience.

Introduction:

After the media in recent years turned into the so-called "Post-Truth era", in which the public was not satisfied with relying on information and facts that reached it, but rather turned to relying on false and misleading information in its media follow-up, and there has become a clear change In the nature of the public's reception of news contents, the recipient tends to quickly obtain and transmit information as a result of explosive developments in technical means, and means of communication in particular, and this naturally leads to a certain result of uncertainty about the information or its sources.

this research came to study the relationship between "fake news" published in the content of "international news sites" and its spread among the components of Iraqi society, to form a "certain public opinion" whether it was directly to its followers or through mediated channels, and then its impact In creating "public opinion" for that society, and trying to explain the nature of the relationship between them and its reflection on the process of information flow in Iraq during crises and important events, and how to deal with the most important Iraqi events and issues.

The research relied on the descriptive study and using the questionnaire tool for a sample

of the Iraqi public, which amounted to (515) respondents to know the fake news in international news sites, the nature and types of this news, and how to verify them, as well as the most important topics that it contained. The research also contained a number of results that I made a number of conclusions.

The research methodology:

• **Research problem:**

Most of the statistics today indicate that electronic press media and social media are the most powerful tools in communicating important news and events, and in return, they are also the strongest in spreading fake news among the groups of society at the present time, including the Iraqi society, which may affect the formation of public opinion, and it may even have an impact beyond that when that impact is reflected on the individual and his behavior in society, after the fake news in its general context creates a defect in the communication process between the recipient and the news sources, it can push towards the adoption of alternative, unreliable sources To get the news on the one hand, and on the other hand, it may lead to the public losing the trust that is accustomed to the media and its various means.

Hence, this research came to try to study the impact of fake news on international news sites on the trends of the Iraqi public, and proceed from it to identify its ability to influence this audience, using different methodological methods and tools to achieve this goal, and from here the problem of the study crystallizes with the following questions:

• What is the nature of fake news that the Iraqi public is exposed to when viewing international news sites?

• What are the strategies and methods used in falsifying the news from the Iraqi public's point of view?

• What are the methods used by the Iraqi public to identify and confront fake news?

• What is the nature of the impact of fake news on those sites on the attitudes of the Iraqi public and its relationship with the state and its various institutions?

• The importance of the research:

The importance of the research can be summarized as follows:

1. The release of fake news in the traditional press media, and international news in particular, coupled with the absence of professionalism and the search for fame and breadth, which are at the expense of the audience, may negatively affect the building of public opinion in its correct form, and the absence of credibility in the media is achieved. The receiving public can lose confidence in it.

2. The process of absenting information can unleash fake news to take its place in the process of influencing and forming public opinion, and this process can lead to crises that require decision-makers to take decisions to confront them, avoid their effects and address them, and decision-making may be affected by this news. counterfeit in the process of its preparation.

3. The Arab and Iraqi studies are very scarce in dealing with fake news and its correlations despite its scientific importance, after which it is one of the most important influences in the formation of public opinion and its impact on the general trend of the public, despite the importance of the subject, and hence it was necessary to address this issue .

4. This study can be a prelude to taking a step or a set of measures aimed at adopting appropriate preventive measures, one of which lies in confronting the propaganda campaigns that accompany the news spread on the Internet - especially on international news sites - using scientific methods that are genuinely deterrent and effective in lived reality.

• **Research Objectives:**

The research aims at the following:

1. Attempting to identify the categories of public opinion in Iraqi society most

affected by fake news published on international news sites, and how they interact and are receptive to their content.

2. Determining the impact of fake news on trends and its reflection on the decision-making process of the receiving Iraqi public, using specific mechanisms.

- **Research Methodology:**

What is meant by the scientific method is a set of mental procedures that the researcher represents in advance to access the knowledge that he will obtain in order to reach the truth of the research material (Najm, 2015, page 22), and it is a set of methods, tools and procedures that can be used in scientific research for the phenomenon in question. Research, by the researcher, with the aim of exploration, description, interpretation or prediction (Al-Aziz, 2013, pages 33-34). The Minute (Bouhush and Al-Thneibat, 2007, p. 139).

Descriptive research also helps to identify the nature of the relationship between the study variables that can be subject to monitoring and analysis, by using the Survey Method, to answer the research questions, and by using the public opinion survey tool, which aims to identify opinions, ideas, trends, concepts, values, motives and beliefs. And the different impressions and influences of readers of news published on international news sites.

- **Research fields:**

The research fields were represented by a number of fields, as shown in the following:

1. The human field: This field is defined by the Iraqi public who follows international news sites.

2. Time domain: It is the temporal domain of the research that lasted for one month and from 10/1/2021 to 10/31/2021.

3. The study community is represented by all users of international news websites in Iraq who were over 18 years old and above, for both sexes, for different educational levels, and different economic and social levels.

3. Determining the role of international news sites in shaping the trends of the recipients of the incoming news.

4. Attempting to measure the effects resulting from the Iraqi public's reliance on news content produced by international news sites and to know the nature of the issues raised.

- **Research sample:**

The sample is defined as a category that represents the research community or its audience, and it is the vocabulary of the phenomenon that the researcher will study or a group of individuals, people or things who constitute the research problem (Dowidri, 2008), and the research sample was (515) respondents, males and females whose ages begin From (18) years and over, and from most of the Iraqi governorates.

The researcher has adopted the method of intentional sampling in selecting the study sample, which is intended for the researcher to specify certain vocabulary for the sample to be studied, so that his research field is (Atiya, 2008). International news sites feature access to these news as sources to obtain their information on Iraqi affairs.

The questionnaire sheet was used as a tool for collecting field study data. The questionnaire is one of the effective means in collecting information from a large number of respondents in a standard way (Patriarche, 2014). The researcher used the questionnaire sheet as a tool for collecting data from the field study sample.

Definition of fake news: According to the Macmillan dictionary definition of fake news, it is "a trick that someone does by telling the public that something bad is going to happen and it will be false" (Abd Allah Al-Jalabneh, 2020, p. 7 Bournemouth University defines it as the "deliberate spread of disinformation, whether through traditional media or through social media" (Lesari, 2017, p. Propaganda that consists of intentional disinformation, or hoaxes spread through traditional print and radio media, or social media on the Internet, and in some cases, what appears to be fake news that may be used by real people to tell the truth. Entertainment, rather than deception"

(Khaira, The Corona Crisis in the Light of the Spread of Fake News, 2020, pp. 34-56).

The researcher follows the definition used before Laser and others in a research published in 2018 entitled (Fear News), which indicates that the provisions of the provisions are "fabricated information that simulates the content of the news in the form, but not in the organizational process or intention information and its credibility. (Lazer, et al., 2018, pp. 1094-1096**)**

❖ Objectivity can be assessed by being factual and impartial by checking facts and quoting.

❖ It includes the principle of realism as an important element for evaluating objectivity, in addition to impartiality, which is expressed as the use of tools to achieve objectivity, including the inclusion of sources, attributes, and balanced coverage.

❖ You use reliable sources and attribute them through a news story, as the characteristics of the source can help determine the reliability and validity of real news.

❖ It includes stylistic indicators such as adhering to the journalistic writing style, the use of an inverted hierarchical style in writing, the absence of storytelling characteristics, as well as the lexicon and structural structures that characterize the content of real news.

❖ They are often controversial in nature and involve conflict and human interests.

The fake news has the following advantages:

❖ Fake news stories are not realistic and have no basis in reality, and therefore cannot be verified.

❖ It differs from polarized content in its structural components, as fake news often originates from ephemeral sites created for advertising revenue purposes.

❖ Messages and source properties are often overlooked.

Real news and fake news: Although it is difficult to define true news from fake news, the last term can be understood through the journalistic practices that surround the creation of news, for example, the news service is able to provide good news, Reliable and objective information during the twentieth century (Lazer, et al., 2018, p. 1094), and accordingly it is possible to identify a number of features of real news that distinguish it from other categories of information (Lee Molin, Lee, Sundar, Lee, etc.). , 2021, pp. 187-191):

❖ It is not uncommon for a fake news article to contain unverified quotes, emotionally charged language tags, spelling and grammatical errors, and inaccurate images.

❖ Network features are particularly prominent for fabricated websites, since these websites deliberately publish deceptive and incorrect information to achieve financial gain**.**

The difference between fake news and rumors: The rumor differs from the fake news at first sight in terms of the use of the English term, the rumor is called rumor, while the English term for fake news is Fake News, and this difference leads to a series of discrepancies in the two terms, the most important of which is the possibility of use between the two teams. During research and scientific use of each of them**.**

False news is fabricated information that mimics the content of the news media in the form but not in the process or organizational intent. quickly or at all, and it is uncertain information transmitted from one person to another, has negative connotations, and is often ignored as empty talk or gossip, but rumors are neither good nor bad, they can be true, false or partially true (Iacucci, 2021**)**

The main essence of fake news is fabrication, while the origin of rumors is the rumors themselves. For this reason, the source of the rumor is always mysterious and ambiguous, while the fake news is attributed to a specific party. (Azadi, Saei, & Davati, 2021)

Validity and reliability: The validity of the scales was reached by presenting the scales within the questionnaire to the arbitrators whose names were previously mentioned, who

arbitrated the questionnaire form for the field study, and made adjustments in the light of their observations, and to measure its stability, the test was re-tested on 10% of the original sample size. The correlation coefficient between the answers of the respondents in both times to determine the reliability coefficient through the following equation:

Reliability percentage = number of matching answers from the total number of questions in the form ÷ total questions

The stability percentage was high (89%), which is statistically significant at the significance level of 0.05, which confirms the accuracy and stability of the data**.**

- **Concepts and Terminology :**

Fake news: fabricated information that mimics the content of the news media in form but not in the regulatory process or intent, and lacks the rules and editorial processes to ensure the accuracy and credibility of the information. (Lazer, et al., 2018).

Public opinion: The sum total of individual attitudes or beliefs about a particular topic or issue held by a significant proportion of the total population. (Longley, 2021, p. 2)

- **The results of the field study**:

- First: Demographic factors (personal data)

- The research found that the personal data of the respondents was distributed as the

percentage of males from the total sample amounted to 76.9% with a number of (396), while the percentage of females was 23.1% with a number of (119) respondents**.**

The percentage of respondents who were 18-less than 25 years old reached 13.6%, and their number was (70) respondents, and the percentage of the age group 25-less than 33 years amounted to 27.2%, and their number was (140) respondents, and the percentage of the age group 33-less than 41 years amounted to 25.4 Their number is (131) respondents, and the percentage of the age group 41 - less than 49 years reached 18.1%, and their number is (93) respondents. The age of more than 57 years is 3.9%, and the number of respondents is (20**.(**

As for the number of students whose level of education was university, it reached (283) respondents, and their percentage was 55%. As for the postgraduate studies, the number was (181) respondents, and their percentage was 35.1%. As for the number of secondary education, it was (42) respondents and their percentage was 8.2%, while the number of education was Primary (9) respondents, and their percentage of 1.7%, and the number of those whose type of work was a government employee is (336), and their percentage is 65.2%, and the number of respondents is self-employed (96) and their percentage is 18.6%, while the number of students surveyed is (83) and their percentage is 16.1**.%**

As for the marital status, the number of married people was 398, with a rate of 77.3%, and the number of single people was (115) with a rate of 22.3%, while the number of divorced and widowed (1) surveyed for each category and their percentage was 0.2%, as shown in Table No. (1) in the below:

Table (1) characterization of the study sample according to their demographic variables

Second: The degree of respondents' follow-up to news through international news sites:

variable	Categories	Repetition	%
Type	Mention	396	% 76.9
	feminine	119	% 23.1
the age	25- Less than 33 years old	140	% 27.2
	33- Less than 41 years old	131	% 25.4
	41- Less than 49 years old	93	% 18.1
	18- Less than 25 years old	70	% 13.6
	49- Less than 57 years old	61	% 11.8
	Over 57 years old	20	% 3.9
Educational level	university	283	% 55
	Postgraduate	181	% 35.1
	secondary	42	% 8.2
	primary	9	% 1.7
type of employment	employee	336	% 65.2
	free businees	96	% 18.6
	Student	83	% 16.1
Social Situation	married	398	% 77.3
	single/ single	115	% 22.3
	absolute	1	% 0.2
	Widower	1	% 0.2
Total		515	%100

Table (2) shows the distribution of the sample according to news follow-up through international news sites

Follow-up degree	Repetition	%
Sometimes	293	% 56.9

Always	195	% 37.9
I don't follow	27	% 5.2
the total	515	%100

The data of Table (2) indicates that those who follow international news websites at times came first with a percentage of 56.9%, and they are the majority of the sample members, then the respondents who follow these websites permanently with a percentage of 37.9%, while the percentage of those who do not follow these websites is 5.2% came last,

which indicates that the majority of respondents follow international electronic news sites, whether sometimes or permanently, with a percentage of 94.8%.

Third: The degree of respondents' confidence in the information of international news sites:

Table (3) shows the degree of confidence of the respondents in the news information of international news sites

degree of confidence / international news site	I trust a little		I trust		I do not follow		I do not trust	
	T	%	T	%	T	%	T	%
BBC website	266	51.65	137	26.60	54	10.48	58	11.26
CNN website	248	48.15	115	22.33	83	16.12	69	13.40
France 24	221	42.91	69	13.40	142	27.57	83	16.12
Doge villa site	195	37.86	55	10.68	149	28.93	116	22.52

n = 515, note: the respondents were allowed to choose (more than one alternative.(

Table (3) shows that the degree of confidence of the respondents in the information of news websites Globally, it was (somewhat confident) in the first place with a rate of (51.65%) to the BBC website, then CNN in the second place with a rate of (48.15%), followed by the third place with a rate of (42.91%) for France 24, and in the rank The fourth and last for the Doge Villa site, with a percentage of (37.86%)

While (Trusted) ranked first with a rate of (26.60%) for the BBC website, then CNN with a rate of (22.33%), and in third place was France 24 with a rate of (13.40%), and then came in the fourth and final position with the

Doge Villa website, with a percentage of (10.68%).

While (I do not follow) and (I do not trust) topped the Doge Villa website with a percentage of (28.93%) and (22.52%), respectively, followed by France 24 in second place with successive percentages of (27.57%) and (16.12%), and then came CNN ranked third with a rate of (16.12%) and (13.40%), respectively, and in the last and fourth rank came the BBC website, with successive percentages of (10.48%) and (11.26%).

Fourth: The motives of the respondents to follow the news of international news sites:

Table (4) shows the motives of the respondents to follow the news of international news sites

The Motivation of the follow	Repetition	%
Follow up on local and international issues from different points of view	**271**	**52.6**
Increase my level of understanding of the events and issues raised	**260**	**50.5**
Increase my knowledge of various political, economic, social and other issues	**234**	**45.4**
Knowing additional information that the Iraqi media does not cover	**208**	**40.4**
Form opinions about events and issues raised	**162**	**31.5**
Identifying the opposition's attitudes and opinions that are not reported by the Iraqi media	**115**	**22.3**

n = 515, note: the respondents were allowed to choose (more than one alternative).

The data in Table (4) indicate that the motive (following up on local and international issues from different points of view) ranked first as the most important motive for the respondents to follow the news of international news sites by (52.6%), then the motive (increasing my level of understanding of the events and issues raised) by (50.5). %), then a motive (increasing my knowledge of various political, economic, social and other issues) by (45.4%), followed by a motive (knowing additional information that the Iraqi media does not address) by (40.4%), then a motive (forming opinions about the events and issues raised) with a percentage (31.5%), then in the last place the motive (recognition of the opposition's trends and opinions that are not reported by the Iraqi media) with a percentage of (22.3%), which indicates the predominance of the motives of knowledge of the news of the Iraqi reality over other motives in the respondents' reading of the news of international websites, due to The fact that the Iraqi issues and events have dimensions and content that affect the interests of citizens and affect their daily lives and the concerns and problems they bear and solutions to these concerns and issues.

Fifth: The most popular topics in the news of international news sites:

Table (5) shows the distribution of respondents according to the most informed topics

Topics	Repetition	%
political topics	**387**	**75.1**
Scientific topics	**272**	**52.8**
miscellaneous topics	**260**	**50.5**
Economic Topics	**223**	**43.3**
Social topics	**193**	**37.5**
Sports topics	**164**	**31.8**
Technical Topics	**103**	**20**
literary topics	**86**	**16.7**

n = 515, note: the respondents were allowed to choose (more than one alternative.(

The data in Table (5) above indicate that political topics came in first order as the topics most informed by the respondents by 75.1%, then scientific topics by 52.8%, then by miscellaneous topics by 50.5%, then by economic topics by 43.3%, then social topics by 37.5% Then sports subjects by 31.8%, then

technical subjects by 20%, then literary subjects by 16.7%, which is in the last rank.

Sixth: Changing the respondents' attitudes as a result of exposure to the news of international news sites:

Table (6) shows the change in respondents' attitudes as a result of exposure to fake news

change of opinion	T	%
I agree a little	222	43.1
I agree	160	31.1
disagree	133	25.8
the total	515	%100

The results of the data in Table (6) indicate that the vast majority of respondents have changed their attitudes as a result of exposure to fake news published on international electronic news websites. (31.1%), while (I do not agree) ranked third and last with a rate of (25.8%.(

Seventh: The contribution of fake news to mobilizing respondents' opinions against governments:

Table (7) shows the degree to which fake news contributes to mobilizing respondents' opinion against governments

Contribution degree	T	%
constribte	262	50.9
contribute a little	218	42.3
does not contribute	35	6.8
the total	515	%100

The results in Table (7) show that the fake news has contributed to a very large degree in mobilizing the opinion of the respondents against the ruling regime, as it ranked first (contributes) with a percentage of (50.9%), followed by (contributes to some extent) and

at a rate of (42.3%). While it came in the third and last place (does not contribute), with a small percentage of (6.8%.(

Eighth: The degree of influence of fake news on respondents' attitudes:

Table (8) shows the degree of influence of fake news on the respondents' attitudes towards state policies

Impact degree	T	%

It raised doubts about the credibility of the state in addressing the issues raised	**260**	**50.5**
I had mixed impressions	**168**	**32.6**
Support the pre-existing negative image	**168**	**32.8**
Did not affect at all	**134**	**26**
I changed my attitude from positive to negative	**131**	**25.4**

n = 515, note: the respondents were allowed to choose (more than one alternative.(

Table (8) data indicates that the degree of influence of fake news on the respondents' attitudes towards state policies was mostly about (raising doubts about the credibility of the state in addressing the issues raised) in the first place at a rate of (50.5%), while it came in the second place (forming conflicting impressions about it). by (32.6%), while it (supported the pre-existing negative image) ranked third with a rate of (32.8%), and ranked fourth (it did not affect at all towards state policies) with a rate of (26%), while the fifth and final rank was for (changed trend from positive to negative) at a rate of (25.4%.(

- **Results and conclusions**:

    First: Results: The most important results reached by the researcher can be identified as follows**:**

    1- The percentage of males out of the total sample amounted to 76.9% with a number of (396), while the percentage of females was 23.1% and with a number of (119) respondents. As for the number of those whose educational level was university, it reached (283) researchers, or 55%, while the number of postgraduate studies was (181) researchers, or 35.1%, and the number of secondary education was (42) researchers and their percentage was 8.2%, while the number of secondary education was (42) researchers and their percentage was 8.2%, while the number of students was 8.2%. Primary (9) researchers, their percentage is 1.7%, the number of those whose type of work is a government employee is (336), and their percentage is 65.2%,

and the number of researchers is self-employment (96) and their percentage is 18.6%, while the number of students is (83) and their percentage is 16.1 %. As for the marital status, the number of married people was (398) respondents, with a rate of 77.3%, and the number of single people (115) respondents, and their percentage was 22.3%**.**

2- Those who follow international news websites sometimes came first with a rate of 56.9%, and they are the majority of the sample members, then the researchers who follow these websites permanently came in first place with a percentage of 56.9%, while this percentage was 37% who did not follow these websites at 5.9%**.**

3- Those who trust international news websites at a rate (to some extent) came in first place with a rate of 76.3%, which is approximately three-quarters of the sample members, then those who (do not trust) the rate of 12.6% (12.6 percent), and those who (do not trust) the rate of 12.6% (12.6 percent**.(**

4- The motive (following up on local and international issues from different points of view) ranked first as the most important motive for the respondents, with the researchers following up on the news of international news sites with a percentage of (52.6%), then the motive (events and raising the level of my understanding with 5%). (Increasing my knowledge of various political, economic, social and other issues) by (45.4%), followed by motive (knowing additional information that the Iraqi media does not address) by (40.4%), then motive

(forming opinions about events and issues) by (31.5%) issues Then, in the last place, the motivation (recognition of the opposition's tendencies and opinions that are not reported by the Iraqi media) with a rate of (22.3%).

5- Political topics came in first place as the most informed topics by the respondents with a rate of 75.1% , Then scientific subjects with 52.8%, Then the miscellaneous topics with a rate of 50.5%. Then economic issues with a rate of 43.3% ,Then social issues with a rate of 37.5%, Then sports topics with a rate of 31.8%, Then technical subjects with a percentage of 20% .Then literary subjects with a rate of 16.7%, which is the last rank.

6- The majority of the researchers have changed their stances as a result of exposure to the well -published news in the international identity reality, as it came (I agree to some extent) with the first arrangement (43.1%) (43.1%), It was (I do not agree) in the third and last place with a rate of (25.8%.(

7- The fake news has contributed to a very large degree in mobilizing the opinion of the researchers against the ruling regime, as it came in first place (contributes) and at a rate of (50.9%), followed by (contributes to some extent), and came in the first place (contributes) with a percentage of (50.9%), followed by (contributes to a certain extent) and came in at (42.3%). (Does not contribute), with a small percentage of (6.8%.(

Second: Conclusions: The most important conclusions that appeared in this research were as follows:

1- The majority of respondents follow international news websites, whether sometimes or permanently, at a rate of 94.8%, and the level of confidence in what these websites publish is very high, reaching (87.4%), which indicates the possibility of fake news affecting the trends This large percentage of followers of the news received by international news sites,

which increases the chances of being affected by the news produced by these sites during the follow-up period

2- There is a large percentage of respondents who support the ability of fake news to influence the respondents' convictions, and this matter has a great danger in the future for Iraqi public opinion, if the process of falsifying the news turns to advanced stages or what is called "deep falsification".

3- The fake news has contributed to a large extent in mobilizing the opinion of the respondents against the ruling regime, and this matter indicates the seriousness of the great fake news in mobilizing the opinion of the respondents against the government, which in the future could destabilize the relationship of the Iraqi public with successive governments.

4- The fake news has raised doubts about the credibility of the state in dealing with the issues raised in these news at a high rate, in addition to it forming conflicting impressions towards it, and supporting the negative image that already exists, and even changing the positive direction to the negative one.

5- The majority of the sample confirms that the characteristics of fake news in the news published on international websites focus on it (seeking to destabilize society), and there is a clear intentionality in appreciating the respondents from international news sites in destabilizing the state through fake news that publish it on its

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Names of the arbitrators:

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2. Professor Dictator. Basem Waheed Johny/ College of Media/ University of Baghdad.

3. Prof. Siham Hassan Ali Al-Shujairi/ College of Media/ University of Baghdad.

4. Prof. Shukria Cokes Khader Al-Sarraj/ College of Media/ University of Baghdad.

Mr. Dr. Mohsen Abboud Kashkool/ College of Media/ Iraqiya University.