The Impact of Media Messages on Racial and Political Tensions a Comprehensive Project

Hamad Altisan[*]

ABSTRACT

One of the core principles of providing balanced news to the public is providing unbiased information to the public. Over time, media houses have gone between objective and biased report. Most of the time, the media houses have been observed to serve biased interests, which do not account for the welfare of the citizens. This research sought to detect how to restore objective journalism, investigate how to end misleading information use in the media, find out the perceptions of the dividing line between journalism and public relations in practice, and investigate how misleading information contributes to political and racial tensions. The findings of the research indicated that the media abdicates the role of defender of the affairs of the public. The media acts at the whims of interested parties and disseminates biased information to the public. The media owners profit from the misleading, sensational news. The media houses with the most significant biased news, raising political and racial tensions, according to the research outcomes is Fox News, followed by CNN, then CNBC and the least biased was ABC News. The research used the survey method to document these findings through Twenty-two (N=22) students who responded and provided usable data. To stem the bias in media and to control the spread of misleading news, there is the need for retraining of the media personnel, self-regulation, and government intervention as well.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

In public relations, the media has a specific role. The most considerable role of the media in public relations is management, which establishes and maintains a mutually beneficial relationship between an organization and the people or the public, which the success of the media heavily relies on. Public relations also help in building the credibility of an organization among the public. Thanks to public relations, the reliability of an organization can dramatically increase because it allows organizations to

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[*] Master's of Public Relation, Department of Journalism & Mass Communication, Murray State University

operate via many trusted intermediaries, which communicate to specific target audiences that depend on them to filter out the critical information from a slew of unimportant details (Goodale, 2014).

According to Boukes and Vliegenthart (2017), public relations operate under some guiding principles, the first being honest communication, which should be ascertainment of credibility. The second guiding principle is consistent transparency demonstrated through various actions to build confidence in and among the public. The third and fourth guiding principles of public relations are impartiality of operations for reciprocity and goodwill. Considering these factors, people in public relation are aware that public relation is an important discipline, which plays a vital role of maintaining the image of the organization through communicating important messages to customers, the public, and investors. Public relations can, therefore, help a company create a favorable model, which will lead to a boost in sales and the generation of revenue.

This research sought to investigate the media's use of misleading information to promote political and racial tensions. Journalism and public relations are distinct subjects. However, from the point of view and tendency of the media, when fanning tensions by reporting lopsided stories, they are hijacking the role of public relations and disrupting the noble cause of public relations. When giving misleading reports, the media usurps the role of public relations by serving the interests of their clients and in the process causing political and racial tensions. Journalism ought to serve the best interests of the public, while public relations ought to serve organizations or clients. In the era of misleading information in the media, the distinction between the two disciplines has become increasingly blurred.

Statement of the Problem

One of the roles of media is to act as the societal watchdog. The media should focus on and investigate news items that promote the welfare of the masses. News should, therefore, be informative, educative, balanced, objective, and non-biased with a view to promoting good causes of the public. However, over time a phenomenon emerged in which there is a lack of objectivity in the media, opting instead to practice partiality when reporting. In the wake of prejudice in reporting, the media has been purposefully feeding consumers with one-sided or blatantly misleading information. When the media feeds the public one-sided information, the truth and the public's best interest suffer. Misinformation from the media serving political interests often creates divisions among the communities.

One of the significant problems of partial reporting by journalists is the creation and exacerbation of political and racial tensions, which stem from misleading information.

Objectives of the Study

General Objective

This study sought to champion the restoration or practice of real journalism, which is distinguishable from public relations. When the media offers misleading information, fueling racial tensions and serving a political purpose, they are acting on behalf of clients, whose interests they serve and who benefit from the tensions and chaos that result from it. The objective, therefore, was to campaign for the restoration of ethical journalism, whose aim is offering balanced coverage to champion for the cause of the public.

Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the study were:

i. To advocate for the restoration of objective journalism

ii. To investigate how to end misleading information use in the media

iii. To find out the perceptions of the dividing line between journalism and public relations in practice

iv. To investigate how misleading information contributes to political and racial tensions

Research Questions

The study attempted to answer the following questions

Q 1: What are the possible ways of restoring objective journalism?

Q 2: What are suitable methods of ending misleading information in the media?

Q 3: What is the perception among students of the difference between journalism and public relations?

Q 4: How does misleading information in the media contribute to political and racial tensions in society?

Importance of the Research

The research is significant because it will provide insights on two of the professions that are most often confused for one another, which are journalism and public relations. The research will explain how journalists venture into public relations when giving misleading information to the

public, thereby creating a distinction between the two disciplines. Most important, the research will reveal ways in which the media shapes tensions and divisions in society through dissemination of misleading information to the members of the public. Finally, the research will offer an excellent opportunity for understanding the cognitive ability of the target audience on the topic of the study and the two disciplines, which are journalism and public relations.

The scope of the Study

The research focused on the media using misleading information to promote racial and political tensions. The group the study utilized as respondents were students in the Murray State school of journalism. Most of these students are either practicing journalism or public relations or intend to practice one or the other and would be a good source of information for research on the role of the media in providing misleading information to the masses.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter consists mainly of the reviews of work done in the same area of study as literature review is a process that identifies, evaluates, synthesizes, and presents relevant information from publications, journals, books and, magazines pertinent to the topic of study. This literature review examined the way various studies discuss the concept of misleading information in the media.

Media Role in Fanning Propaganda

According to Bob (2012) "The point of modern propaganda is not only to misinform or push an agenda. It is to exhaust your critical thinking, to annihilate truth" (p. 23). Misleading publicity, therefore, is important to the users of this tactic to disable the thinking of the target audience and the misleading information pushes people into a state of hypnosis where they take in any information forwarded by the conveyors of the misleading information. Taking advantage of the freedom of speech where people can say whatever they deem fit, misleading reports are an invaluable tool for people seeking push a predetermined agenda to the public (Boles, Adams, Gredler, and Manhas, 2014).

According to Smith R. (2016), the media has the power to manipulate people because over time; they earn their trust. After gaining the people's

trust, they can slowly manipulate information or construe that the information is accurate. This way, they conveniently introduce half-truths and convenient news that has misleading information serving their predetermined agenda. Their loyal audiences having total trust in the biased media outlets take in every piece information as the absolute truth leading to the triumph of biased media. When people consume misleading information, they sometimes share it with friends and associates. Sharing of such information makes the agenda of the manipulative people using the media to achieve their primary goals a successful endeavor.

Media Role in Partisan/Partial Reporting

Sims & Wigley (2007) assert that partisan bias is the primary fuel of misleading information. Every party with a partisan agenda wants to make people take in their plan without questioning or suspecting their agenda will find disseminating misleading information invaluable in making their agenda to get to their target audience. People having certain leanings such as conservative leanings are more likely to take information, which favors their conservative leanings. An increase in partisanship of this nature gives rich fodder to the disseminators of misleading information.

Carolyn (2016) says that in the recent past, people have a high propensity for consuming misleading information. People have no time to sift through the information they get, to determine if it is true, false, or a mix of both. Now in an era of populism with populist agendas flying around, the spread of misleading information has been phenomenal. Sources of information with populist agendas mislead people by changing their perceptions and transforming people with independent minds into a robotic state where they seek information from populist sources and pass it on. Lack of critical analysis and inquisitiveness among the masses lays a fruitful ground for misleading information to spread all over.

The Role of Media in the Construction of Public Belief

According to Barlow (2011), media plays a central role in constructing public beliefs. The media can choose to shape the public understanding on matters that are important to the affairs of the public, or it might shape the belief of the public according to the interests of the highest bidders or the owners of the media houses. This phenomenon explains why the media is often an important tool for politicians and marketing companies, because of its essential role in shaping the opinions of the public. The media knows that the masses do not possess direct experience in or knowledge of many things. This lack of knowledge and experience

among the masses is rich fodder for the media to explore the vacuums and fill the voids with information that is desirable to the media owners or the agenda of the primary sponsors of the media. The media, therefore, shape public debates by setting agendas, instead of focusing on the public interest.

According to Mcllwain (2011), a little tweaking of information concerning the public interest often leads to the media greatly misleading the public. The media, for instance, can deliver negative stories on underprivileged people like the jobless and homeless thus hardening the attitudes of people on these subjects. The same agenda setting applies to racial and political issues. The media solidifies the opinions of people on politics and ethnicity leading to severe hardening of positions and opinions of people. The media tends to limit the information that people have through giving people superficial views and entrenching these views into the masses.

According to Happer & Philo (2013), in the United States, for example, there are two hardened political sides, which are the far- left and the far-right. These political wings identify with specific media houses to push their different agendas. Through media facilitation, it does not matter what comes from the far right or the far left. The focus is telling people about opposing sides and dividing them rather than have discussions. With the different media houses as the disseminators of information, the role of the media in "telling" is a suitable vehicle for the media to tell lopsided stories laden with half-truths and untruths to vilify opposing sides and harden the conflicts between opposing political parties. By playing partisan politics the media permanently removes the power from the masses of debating practical solutions to political and racial issues leading to unending conflicts within the public realm. The media also exacerbates political and racial tensions by convincing the public that there is no possibility of ever solving these problems amicably. Incessant issues within the public concerning political and racial matters give the media avenues for generating more profits through the resulting conflicts, and therefore the media keeps an active role in ensuring these conflicts go on through their continued practice of disseminating misleading information.

Uncertainty is the main tool the media uses to construct an environment ripe for conflict in society. Political and racial uncertainties and sensational rather than objective reporting are tools the media uses to exploit the differences in society for the benefit of a few people that profit from the ensuing tensions in society. With reporting that is not objective, the media succeeds in creating disengagement ensuring that there is no constructive engagement. What follows is that people cannot achieve

personal behavioral change and thus people with minds poisoned by the media keep pushing the media's agenda unknowingly (Bausch, 2013).

All in all, the work of public relations is mainly to offer a strategic process of communication which builds on relations that are mutually beneficial to the organization and the public. Therefore, the public could be defined as the stakeholders. Stakeholders can be customers, employees, prospects and community members. PR teams frequently use creative ways to tell their stories to portray the company's image to the public in the best possible light in addition to increasing people's awareness of them. There are some tactics that PR teams usually use to ensure this, such as the use of social media, special events, using the right message in a company's website as well as participation in social activities.

While Public relations may be beneficial for the media, overdoing it may lead to the watering down of the quality of the content given by the media as the actions of PR teams may cause the media to take a biased position on various matters.

Definition of an objective journalism

It is disputable whether there is an existence of "objective journalism" since objectivity is impossible for a field that is driven by the ideologies and subjective judgements from the journalists (Friedman, 1988). However, Durham (1998) argued that objective journalism shall not touch that extremity and stated that the news media could obtain the level of objectivity by retaining and respecting its transparency in communication. In other words, objective journalism respects the scientific inquiry into the news sources and ensures that the broadcasting process preserve the core values and integrity of such inquiry. The success of objective journalism or science relies on the honesty and the morality of practitioners and the standards to which they are committed. Objective journalists would not commit to any specific individual group's propaganda or support any political, social, economic, or cultural interests.

The practical guidelines embedded in the definitions of objective journalism include the following characteristics (Nanda, 1998; Parsons, 1951):

- accurate, complete, and transparently clear in information collection and dissemination.

- receptive and open-minded in the way new evidence and alternative explanations are introduced, yet critical and thoughtful about the influence from power and authority over the sources of the information.

- proactive towards challenging yet contemporary topics of public concerns.

- imaginative yet consistent in the way of strategic decisions is made to make sure that the narratives in socio-political agenda would not be distorted.

- honest about personal preferences and respectful of the information contributors.

- careful about the distribution of the news within a community to secure the verification process of news delivery.

Objective journalism offers valuable insights into journalism, "Objectivity in journalism or science does not mean that all decisions do not have underlying values, only that within the 'rules of the game' a systematic attempt is made to achieve an impartial report" (Dennis, 1984, p. 118). Arguments may circulate around the fact that if reporting or delivering news from objective perspectives, journalists could hardly contribute to raise an opinion in the world of information consumption to evaluate. However, the aim of objective journalism actually encourages the critical thinking procedures into utilizing the expertise of analytical and interpretative skills to collect and disseminate information in the "purest" and just way. The news through the scope of objectivity is filtered out all its bias and injustice, so it remains true to the standards of truthfulness. The objective sources of information denote the recognitions that "people and events are multifaceted and extremely complex. Simple descriptive 'tags' will not do; a person is far more than a 'liberal' or a 'conservative,' than a 'professor' or a 'legislator'" (Merrill & Lowenstein, 1979, p. 208).

Theoretical Framework

Media framing (which might be considered a contradictory with the ideology of objective journalism mentioned above) has a comparable impact to media priming in that it can influence how individuals perceive individuals from another racial group, especially concerning wrongdoing. For instance, media messages concerning wrongdoing can shape general feelings of both the wrongdoing itself and the suspect. An investigation found that messages confined in an accusatory way improve the probability that a viewer would see the suspect as blameworthy (Seate, Harwood &

Blecha, 2010). Framing is the practice of making only one aspect of a story look important while downplaying or omitting other features (Entman, 1993).

Since mass communications may deliver and repeat generalizations, "one-sided data unavoidably progresses toward becoming joined into 'basic learning' or schemata that viewers were thinking about a certain group" (Ramasubramanian, 2007, p. 251). Framing is a tool used to control or manipulate the public opinion or create an opinion on a certain issue, and political leaders use it in their favor.

After understanding the science behind the utilization of framing as a media tool and the way that through administrative deregulation, media could be purchased and converged between real enterprises, it is important to get a handle on the best way to consolidate these certainties. In the examination of its identity that claims the media and the impacts these proprietors may have in transit the news is depicted to its group of viewers. As per McChesney, the media framework is not just a monetary classification; it is capable of transmitting society, news coverage, and politically pertinent data. Satisfying those necessities is compulsory for self-administration (McChesney, 2000, p. 130).

Agenda setting theory argues that broad communications affect the masses in a roundabout way by picking certain issues and ignoring others. Individuals tend to give careful consideration to those issues as indicated by the request of need set by the media. In this manner, the media sets the motivation for the masses, which helps people in getting subjective change, i.e., it tells individuals what to think about. Media changes the perception of people about specific issues by highlighting only a few aspects (Brown,2002). Media messages directly influence and change people's thinking after exposure to media coverage, and many times peoples' belief in the media's portrayal of the issue (Lyengar,1991).

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research design that was used in this research was a survey. The study aimed to collect information from respondents in the Murray State University of Journalism and Mass Communications about their opinions relating to the media's use of misleading information in creating political and racial tensions in society at the expense of objectivity. Surveys not only restrict the researcher to fact-finding, but also facilitates formulating important knowledge principles, and solutions to significant problems.

A descriptive study was undertaken to ascertain and help to describe the characteristics of the variables that were under consideration for study. The research design acted as a plan to specify the procedures and methods for data collection and analysis for the required research information. The research design addressed the media use of misleading information to promote racial and political tensions and its effects on society.

Target Population

The target population refers to a group of objects, individuals, or items, from which a sample comes and represents. The population was graduate and undergraduate Journalism and Mass Communications' students at a four-year college located in the mid-west region of the United States. There were twenty-two (N =22) students that responded and provided usable data. The participants belong to Murray State University's Arthur J. Bauernfeind College of Business in Journalism and Mass Communications department.

Sampling Frame

The sampling method used in this research was a purposive sampling technique, where the researcher targeted specific respondents. In this case, respondents were drawn from the College of Business in Journalism and Mass Communications department.

Data Collection Methods and Instruments

A primary source of data collection was useful in this research. The main method was using questionnaires, which were designed and used as instruments for collecting data. The questionnaires were self-administered and assisted in gathering the primary information from the respondents in the research. The questionnaires which consisted of 20 questions were distributed to individual students in the targeted school of journalism. The questionnaire had nine 'yes' or 'no' answers, requiring the participants to pick one or more options from the choices provided; there were three questions requiring participants to pick one or more, and there were eight questions expecting them to pick one. The data collection was done online, and the process took three days. The survey was distributed on 29 March 2018 and closed on 4 April 2018 so that the survey could be analysed.

The main tool of data collection was a questionnaire made in the form of an online survey via the Survey Monkey Site and was emailed to the participants to save time and to ensure efficient responses and accountability for the responses, as it would yield accurate outcomes. The survey was conducted anonymously in the sense that the researcher did not have any personal interactions with the participants. The contact information of the participants was obtained from the students' records of the College of

Business in Journalism and Mass Communications department. The protocol was reviewed by the Institutional Review Board and received approval. Data was collected by sending solicitation messages to the target audience via email and data was collected between 29 March 2018 and 4 April 2018.

Data Analysis and Presentation

The data obtained from the respondents using the questionnaires was analysed through descriptive statistical methods like averages, ranking scales, and percentages. The results were then presented in the form of tables, graphs and charts from which conclusions were derived for the presentation of research results.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues refer to the branch of philosophy which addresses the conduct of individuals and helps in guiding the behaviors of people. It became clear that this study adhered to ethical standards for the protection of human subjects when it received approval from the Murray State University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The materials prepared and obtained were only subject to the objective of the research and the respondents' confidentiality, and privacy was observed. The researcher did not disclose any of the respondents' names.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results and Discussion

Rate of Response

The rate of response as indicated below shows the total number of the participants in the research conducted in the journalism department of the school, where the researcher drew the respondents, who understood the contextual nature of the research. A total of (N=22) respondents participated in the study. However, the number of respondents in each question fluctuates between 14 and 22.

Questionnaire

The main tool of data collection was a questionnaire made in the form of an online survey to save time and to ensure efficient responses and accountability for the responses, as it would yield accurate outcomes. The questionnaire was in two sections and had simple questions that the respondents needed to answer.

Fig 4.1: Media Role in the Deep Racial Conflicts

Do you think the media has a role in the deep racial conflicts?

Answered: 22   Skipped: 0
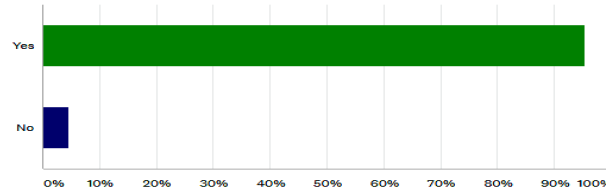
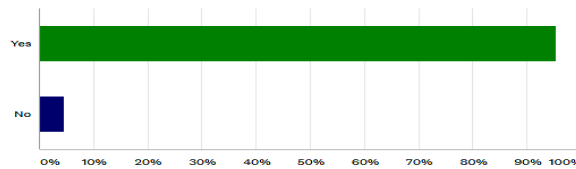| ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	95.45%	21
No	4.55%	1
TOTAL		22

Figure 4.1

Most of the respondents indicated they believe that the media has a role to play in curbing the deep racial conflicts among its viewers. Figure 4.1 shows that an overwhelming 95% of the respondents believe that media can be very instrumental in ensuring that the conflicts observed among its viewers, due to racial differences, are reduced.

Fig. 4.2: Media Usurping Public Relations Role

Do you think the media plays public relations role other than journalism?

Answered: 22   Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	95.45%	21
No	4.55%	1
TOTAL		22

Figure 4.2

Figure. 4.2 shows what the respondents believe about the role that the media plays in public relations. Over 95% of the respondents think that the media serves a public relations role rather than journalism and about 5% of the respondents believe the media does not serve a public relations role rather than journalism.

Fig. 4.3: Benefits the Media Owners Draw from the Racial and Political Tensions

Do you think the media owners benefit from the racial and political tensions in the media?

Answered: 22   Skipped: 0

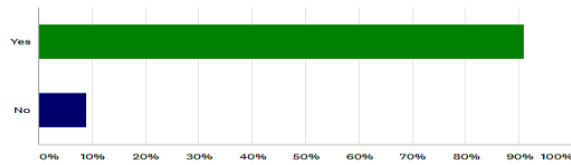| ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	90.91%	20
No	9.09%	2
TOTAL		22

Figure 4.3

Figure 4.3 shows that most of the respondents believe that the media owners benefit from the racial and political tensions presented in the media. Among the respondents, over 90% of them believe that media owners think there is some benefit that they receive from the racial and political tensions being observed in the media. This finding may be a form of higher viewership which prompts higher incomes from advertisements. Less than 10% of the respondents believe that there is no benefit that the media owners receive from the racial and political tensions being observed.

Fig. 4.4: Objective reporting Versus Biased Media Reporting

Do you think political tensions and racial tensions pay more than objective journalism?

Answered: 22   Skipped: 0

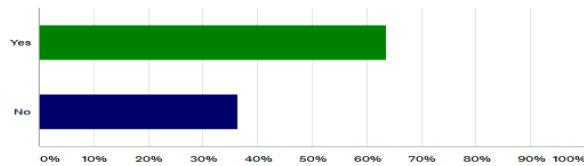| ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	63.64%	14
No	36.36%	8
TOTAL		22

Figure 4.4

Above, in figure. 4.4, the majority of the respondents indicated that political tensions are paying more attention to the media than objective journalism. Here the dissenting opinions were on a higher frequency that

had been in the preceding questions. Out of the 22 respondents of the interview, 14 were of the opinion that biased information with racial tensions had more returns than objective journalism. However, eight of the respondents did not agree with sentiments that information fueling political tensions pay more attention than objective reporting.

Fig. 4.5: Media Using Misleading Information to Increase Racial and Political Tensions

Do you believe the media is using misleading information to stoke political and racial tensions?

Answered: 22   Skipped: 0
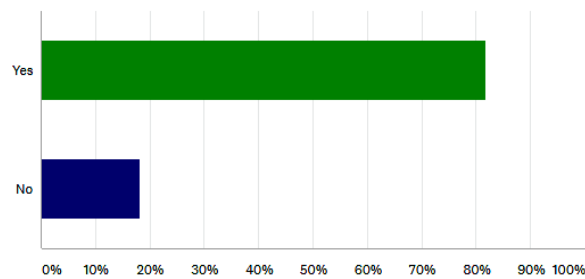
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	81.82%	18
No	18.18%	4
TOTAL		22

Out of the 22 respondents in figure 4.5 above, a majority of the respondents representing 18 out of 22 respondents indicated that the media uses misleading information to stoke political and racial tensions. Four of the respondents believed otherwise. This was the main question of the research. From these outcomes, the majority of the respondents thought that the media uses misleading information to create political and racial tensions in society.

Fig. 4.6: Encounters with Biased Media Information

Have you ever come across any case of any political media Bias?

Answered: 19   Skipped: 3
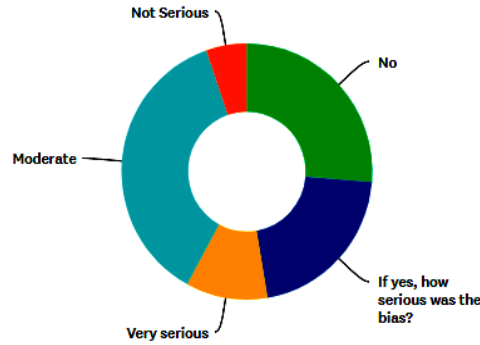
| ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
No	26.32%	5
If yes, how serious was the bias?	21.05%	4
Very serious	10.53%	2
Moderate	36.84%	7
Not Serious	5.26%	1
TOTAL		19

Figure 4.6

In figure. 4.6 above, the majority of the respondents indicated that they have come across media information with political bias.

Fig 4.7: Methods Explored by the Media to Disseminate Biased Information

How do the media mislead their political audience?

Answered: 20   Skipped: 2
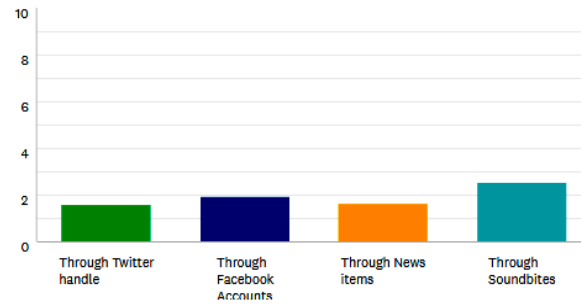
|	MOST EFFECTIVE	MODERATELY EFFECTIVE	LEAST EFFECTIVE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Through Twitter handle	47.37% 9	47.37% 9	5.26% 1	19	1.58
Through Facebook Accounts	21.05% 4	63.16% 12	15.79% 3	19	1.95
Through News items	45.00% 9	45.00% 9	10.00% 2	20	1.65
Through Soundbites	5.26% 1	36.84% 7	57.89% 11	19	2.53

Figure 4.7

In figure. 4.7 above, on average, the responses indicated that the leading method the media uses to mislead their audiences is through soundbites, followed by Facebook accounts, closely followed by news items and lastly through the media houses Twitter handles.

Fig. 4.8: People Bearing Responsibility for Misleading Information in the Media

Who do you think is responsible for perpetuating/doctoring misleading political news in the media?

Answered: 20   Skipped: 2
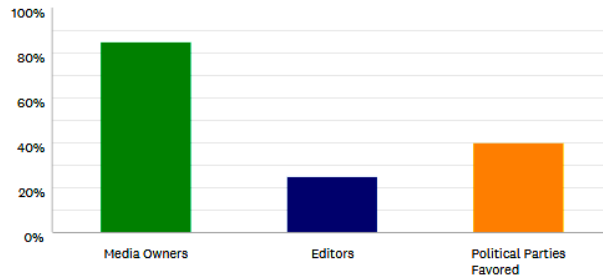
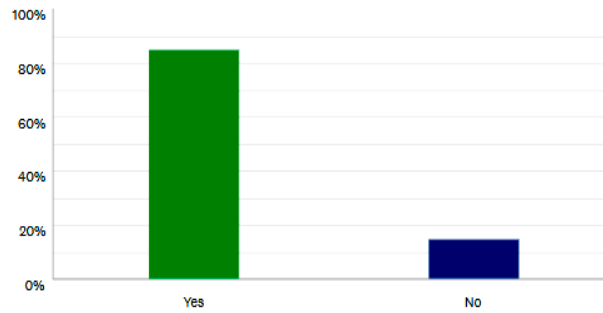| ANSWER CHOICES	▼	RESPONSES	▼
▼ Media Owners		85.00%	17
▼ Editors		25.00%	5
▼ Political Parties Favored		40.00%	8
Total Respondents: 20			

Figure 4.8

From the responses in figure. 4.8 above, 85% of the respondents indicated that the media owners are primarily responsible for the biased or doctored information in the media. Thirty- five percent of the respondents indicated that the editors take the greatest responsibility, while 40% of the respondents indicated that the parties favored by the misleading information bear the most significant responsibility for the biased information in the media.

Fig. 4.9: Monitoring the Media Against Bias

Do you think there is need to monitor the media content against bias?

Answered: 20   Skipped: 2

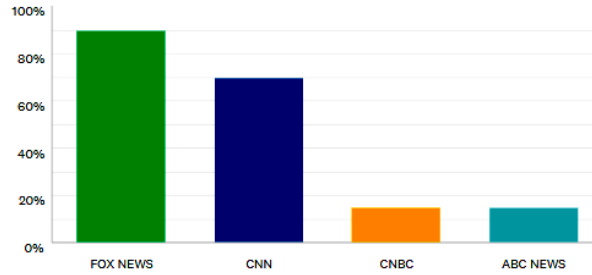| ANSWER CHOICES ▼	RESPONSES ▼	
▼ Yes	85.00%	17
▼ No	15.00%	3
TOTAL		**20**

Figure 4.9

The majority of the respondents believed that there is the need for monitoring the media against biased and misleading content disseminated to the public. In figure. 4.9 above, out of the 20 respondents, 17 were in favor of monitoring the media against bias, while three were against monitoring the media against biased and misleading information.

Fig. 4.1.1: Specific Media Houses Exemplifying Biased Reporting

What are some of the media houses you know to be politically misleading to their audiences? Select where appropriate.

Answered: 20   Skipped: 2

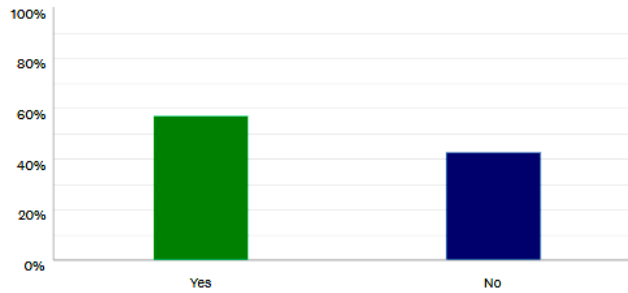| ANSWER CHOICES ▼	RESPONSES ▼	
▼ FOX NEWS	90.00%	18
▼ CNN	70.00%	14
▼ CNBC	15.00%	3
▼ ABC NEWS	15.00%	3
Total Respondents: 20		

Figure 4.1.1

Of those asked which media houses exemplify misleading information, the majority of the respondents mentioned Fox News at 90%, followed by CNN at 70%, while CNBC and ABC News were at parity, with a rating of 15% bias each on reporting standards.

Fig. 4.1.2: Concern of the Media to Shape Public Opinion on Political Matters

Should it be a concern of the media to shape public opinion on political matters?

Answered: 14   Skipped: 0

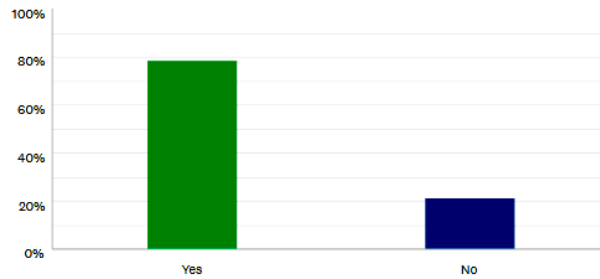| ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	57.14%	8
No	42.86%	6
TOTAL		14

Figure 4.1.2

From the responses in the Figure 4.1.2, 57% of the respondents indicated that they think that it should be a concern of the media to shape public opinion on political matters, while 42.86% of the respondents indicated that it should not be a concern of the media to shape public opinion on political matters.

Fig. 4.1.3: Media Plays a Critical Role in the Creation of Sharp Political Divisions

Do you believe the media has a critical role in the sharp political divisions?

Answered: 14   Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	78.57%	11
No	21.43%	3
TOTAL		14

Figure 4.1.3

According to the Figure 4.1.3, 78.57% of the respondents believe the media plays a critical role in the creation of sharp political divisions, while 21.43% of the respondents believe the media does not contribute to the creation of intense divisions.

Fig. 4.1.4: Shaping the Public Opinion in a Positive way

How can the media shape the public opinion in a positive way?

Answered: 14   Skipped: 0

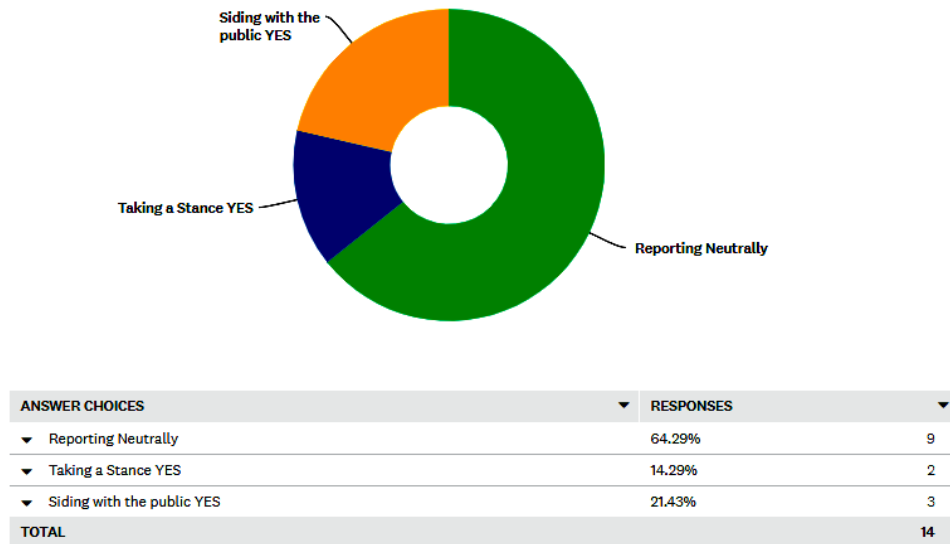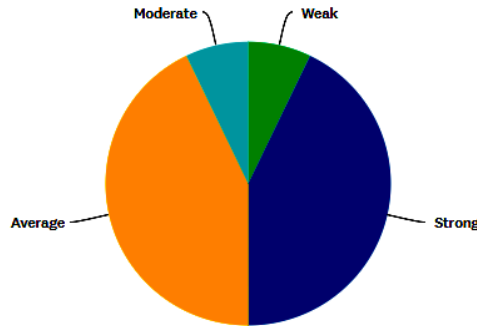| ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Reporting Neutrally	64.29%	9
Taking a Stance YES	14.29%	2
Siding with the public YES	21.43%	3
TOTAL		14

Figure 4.1.4

Figure 4.1.4 shows that 64% of the respondents agree that reporting neutrally is more effective in shaping the opinion of the public positively, while 14% believe that the media should be taking a stance on the issue at hand. Over 21% of the respondents believe that the media will positively shape public opinion if they sided with the public.

Fig. 4.1.5: Rating on the Role of the Media in Fanning Racial Tensions

What is your rating on the role of the media in fanning racial tensions?

Answered: 14   Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Weak	7.14%	1
Strong	42.86%	6
Average	42.86%	6
Moderate	7.14%	1
TOTAL		14

Figure 4.1.5

The respondents seemed to have contrasting views when it came to the influence that the media had in fanning racial tensions. However, Figure 4.1.5, shows that the respondents agreed that there was some influence that was being exerted by the media in fanning racial tensions. While over 42% believe their influence was strong, another 42% of the respondents believe their influence in fanning racial tensions was moderate. About 14% of the respondents are of the opinion that the impact of the media in fanning racial tensions is either moderate or weak.

Fig 4.1.6: The Media Has a Hand in Fanning Racial Tensions

Do you think there racial tensions would reduce if the media stopped playing partisanship?

Answered: 14   Skipped: 0
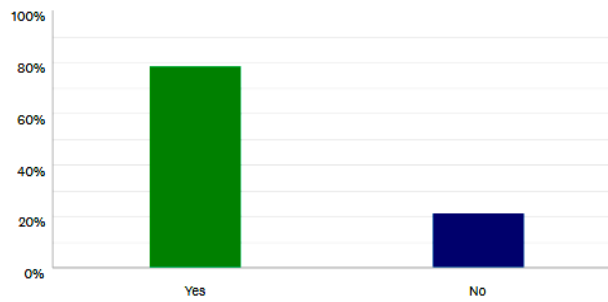
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	78.57%	11
No	21.43%	3
TOTAL		14

Figure 4.1.6

Considering that most of the respondents indicated that the media has a hand in fanning racial tensions, they believe that racial tensions would reduce if the media stopped being partisan in their approach. In Figure 4.1.6, it shows that of all the respondents, 78.57% of the respondents think that racial tensions would reduce if the media stopped playing partisanship, while 21.43% of the respondents believe that the tensions would not reduce if the media stopped playing partisanship.

Fig. 4.1.7: Leading Media House in Stoking Racial Differences

Which media houses do you think are the leading in racking up racial differences?

Answered: 13   Skipped: 1
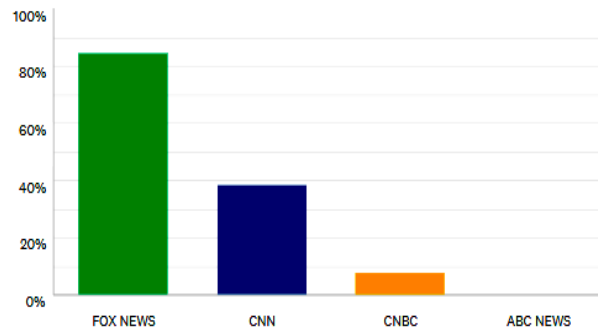
ANSWER CHOICES ▼	RESPONSES ▼	
▼ FOX NEWS	84.62%	11
▼ CNN	38.46%	5
▼ CNBC	7.69%	1
▼ ABC NEWS	0.00%	0
Total Respondents: 13		

Figure 4.1.7

Figure 4.1.7 shows that among three of the most extensive media houses in the country, most of the respondents viewed Fox News as the leading source in racking up racial differences, a view that was supported by 84.62 % of the respondents. 38.46% of the respondents were of the view that CNN is leading in racking up racial differences while 7.69% of the respondents viewed CNBC as the leading culprit. None of the respondents thought ABC news was leading in racking up racial differences.

Fig. 4.1.8: Restoring Objective Journalism

What are the possible ways of restoring objective journalism?

Answered: 13   Skipped: 1
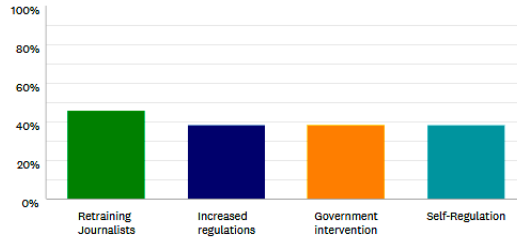
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Retraining Journalists	46.15%	6
Increased regulations	38.46%	5
Government intervention	38.46%	5
Self-Regulation	38.46%	5
Total Respondents: 13		

Figure 4.1.8

Figure 4.1.8 shows that 46.15% of respondents preferred the retraining of journalists which was the most appealing of the 4 options provided. The other options received equal support at 38.46%.

Fig. 4.1.9: Restoring Objective Journalism

What are the suitable methods of ending misleading information in the media?

Answered: 13   Skipped: 1
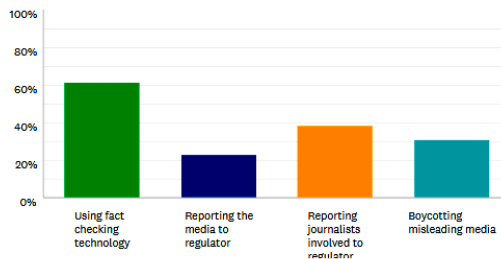
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Using fact checking technology	61.54%	8
Reporting the media to regulator	23.08%	3
Reporting journalists involved to regulator	38.46%	5
Boycotting misleading media	30.77%	4
Total Respondents: 13		

Figure 4.1.9

Four options were considered to stop the use of misleading information in the media. They include the use of fact checking, reporting the media to relevant authorities, reporting journalists to journalists and boycotting any misleading media. Figure 4.1.9 shows that the respondents favored the use of fact checking as the most appropriate way of ending the spread of misleading information in the media. While 61.54% of the respondents supported the use of fact checking technology, 38.46% of the respondents supported the act of reporting journalists to the involved regulator. Reporting the media to the regulator and boycotting any misleading media was supported by 23.08% and 30.77% of the respondents respectively.

Fig. 4.2.1: Public Relations and Journalism

What is the dividing line between journalism and public relations in practice?

Answered: 13   Skipped: 1
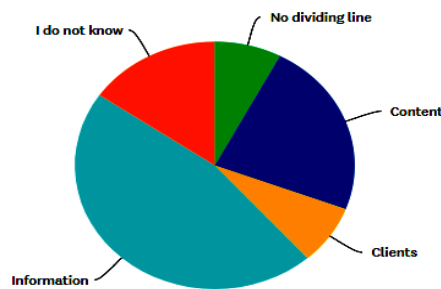
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
No dividing line	7.69%	1
Content	23.08%	3
Clients	7.69%	1
Information	46.15%	6
I do not know	15.38%	2
TOTAL		13

Figure 4.2.1

When comparing journalism and public relations practice, 46.15% of the respondents think that information is the dividing line between journalism and public relations. 23.08% of the respondents think it is content while 7.69% think it is the clients. 23% of the respondents either don't know or think that there is no dividing line between the two in practice.

Fig. 4.2.2: Misleading information in the Media

How does misleading information in the media contribute to political and racial tensions in the society?

Answered: 13   Skipped: 1

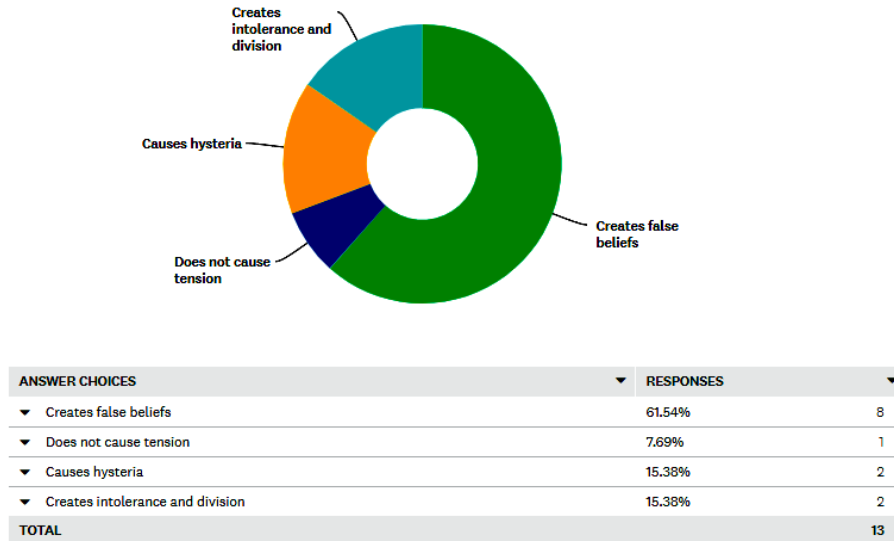| ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Creates false beliefs	61.54%	8
Does not cause tension	7.69%	1
Causes hysteria	15.38%	2
Creates intolerance and division	15.38%	2
TOTAL		13

Figure 4.2.2

Misleading information propagated by some of the media houses has led to political and racial tensions in society. Figure 4.2.2 shows that over 61% of the respondents believe that the main effect of misleading information is that it creates false beliefs which leads to political and racial tensions in society. 30% of the respondents either believe it causes hysteria, creating intolerance and division. 7.69% of the respondents are of the opinion that misleading information propagated by the media does not cause any tension whatsoever.

Analysis the Responses

Regarding the Objectives of the Study and Discussion

Q 1: What are the Possible Ways of Restoring Objective Journalism?

To presume the current practices of media framing back to the ideologies of objective journalism, the participants have expressed their proposals in many ways. Notably, there were four ways that have always been considered to be effective in restoring objective journalism which include retraining of journalists, increasing regulations, government intervention, and self-regulation. The most preferred option among the four

was the retraining of journalists with the support of 46.15% of the respondents. The other options received equal support at 38.46% as shown in figure 4.1.8.

It is, therefore, not surprising that majority of the respondents think that people pay more attention to news on political and racial tensions than objective journalism. 63.64% of the respondents believe it is true that political and racial tensions bring more financial benefits than objective journalism, as that is what attracts the eyes of the listeners and viewers, while 36.36% of the viewers believe otherwise.

These findings also illustrate Barlow (2011) found in his study that media plays a primary role in constructing the public belief. On the other hand, it also demonstrates the possibility of bringing positive changes into the issue of distorted media by singling out misinterpreted or misleading information and practice more fair judgement of received information. The public viewers could play as an essentially active role in this process of judgement.

Q 2: What are the Suitable Methods of Ending Misleading Information in the Media?

Four options were considered to stop the use of misleading information in the media which included the use of fact checking, reporting the media to relevant authorities, reporting journalists to journalists and boycotting any misleading media. The respondents favoured the use of fact checking as the most appropriate way of ending misleading information in the media. While 61.54% of the respondents supported the use of fact checking technology, 38.46% of the respondents supported the act of reporting journalists to other journalists. Reporting the media to relevant authorities and boycotting any misleading media was supported by 23.08% and 30.77% of the respondents respectively, as shown in figure 4.1.9.

On the methods that the media uses to mislead their audience, most of the respondents believe that soundbites are used to mislead audiences. Other methods commonly used are through news items, Facebook accounts, and twitter handles.

The respondents were of the opinion that there is a great need to monitor media content against bias. 85% of the respondents believe that measures have to be taken to monitor the content in the media against bias, while 15% of the respondents believed no action should be taken whatsoever. The media should be allowed to be independent to avoid any external influence to alter the way they air their news.

Q 3: What is the Perception Among Students of the Difference Between Journalism and Public Relations?

When comparing journalism and public relations practices, 46.15% of the respondents think that information is the dividing line between journalism and public relations in practice. 23.08% of the respondents think it is content, while 7.69% think it is the clients. 23% of the respondents either don't know or think that there is no dividing line between the two in practice.

The respondents also believe that the media serves as public relations rather than journalism. Over 95% of the respondents think that the media serves as public relations rather than journalism and about 5% of the respondents think the media does not serve as public relations rather than journalism.

Q 4: How Does Misleading Information in the Media Contribute to Political and Racial Tensions in the Society?

Misleading information propagated by some of the media houses has led to political and racial tensions in society. Over 61% of the respondents believe that the main effect of the misleading information is that it creates false beliefs which leads to political and racial tensions in society. 30% of the respondents either believe it causes hysteria and creates intolerance and division. 7.69% of the respondents believe misleading information propagated by the media does not cause any tension whatsoever.

Most of the respondents think that the media has a role to play in curbing the deep racial conflicts among its viewers. An overwhelming 95% of the respondents believe that media can be very instrumental in ensuring that the conflicts observed among its viewers due to racial differences are reduced.

Most of the respondents also believe that the media owners benefit from the racial and political tensions in the media. Among the respondents, over 90% of them believe that the media owners benefit from the racial and political tensions being observed in the media. This statistic may be in the form of higher viewership which prompts higher incomes from advertisements.

Less than 10% of the respondents believe that there is no benefit that the media owners receive from the racial and political tensions being observed. It is therefore not surprising that the majority of the respondents think that news on political and racial tensions receives more attention than

objective journalism. 63.64% of the respondents believe it is true that political and racial tensions bring more financial benefits than objective journalism as that is what attracts viewers, while 36.36% of respondents believe otherwise.

According to the findings, 81% of the respondents also believe that the media is using misleading information to stoke political and racial tensions, while only 19% believe that the media does not use any deceptive information whatsoever.

The respondents were however divided on whether they have seen cases of political bias in the media. While 21.05% of the respondents reported they had seen cases of political bias, 36.84% said that the show of political bias by media houses was moderate. 10.53% reported that the case was very serious while over 31.5% of the respondents reported that the show was either not serious or not evident at all. This tally does not correlate with the previous result showing that most respondents believe that political and racial tensions are stoked by the media.

Most of the respondents believe that the media owners are responsible for airing misleading news in the media. 85% of the respondents believe that the media owners are the one who makes decisions and therefore makes the final decision as to what will be aired from their stations. Their influence is so vast that no one can go against his or her orders. 40% of the respondents believe that the favored political parties are responsible for doctoring misleading political news in the media. 1 out of 4 of the respondents also believes that the editors of the media houses are responsible for perpetuating misleading political views to their audience.

The respondents believe that such bias usually creates negativity and unnecessary conflict that can negatively affect the economic growth of the country. It also creates superfluous hatred that is not beneficial to the political temperatures in the country. 85% of the respondents are of the idea that measures have to be taken to monitor the contents in the media against bias, while 15% of the respondents were of the opinion that no action should be taken whatsoever. The media should be allowed to be independent to avoid any external influence to alter the way they air their news.

The media houses known to spread misleading information include Fox News, CNN, CNBC and ABC News. 90% of the respondents believe that Fox News is misleading in the kind of information it gives, while 70% of the respondents believe that the information given in CNN is also sometimes misleading.

Discussion

Overall, this study's findings confirmed the theoretical framework raised in the Literature Review Section that to a certain extent, the practice of journalism and news broadcasting leans towards the subjective journalism instead of the objective journalism. Moreover, the findings are also in line with the findings in studies mentioned above that framing media exhibits several ways as a tool to manipulate the information consumers, especially under sensitive cases of racial and political conflicts. Also, taking the standards of objective journalism as a control norm to follow, the findings demonstrate that in real world contexts, news and mass media communication might pursue individual or profitable interests than preserving the fair dissemination of the information to the target population. It means that the way people approach or react to the racial and political tensions is highly affected by the way media is manipulating them towards to. This shall not give a fair chance for the involved parties to comprehend and solve the conflicts via communication effectively and fairly.

Specifically, this study has shown the influence that the media houses can have on the viewers and the impact that they can have on their mindset towards political matters. In the collected data and analysis given, it was evident that most of the respondents believe that newsrooms are not that impartial and therefore have a hand in influencing the mindset of their audiences. This result, therefore, means that depending on how the media houses package and air their content for the viewership of the people tends to affect the viewers and their behaviour, as well as their thought processes.

This finding, therefore, means that media houses should find ways through which they can be able to air their views without necessarily being the cause of their viewers change in emotions and actions. Instead of being influencers of emotions, they should be the reliable messengers that audiences can trust. The influence of the media houses on the masses is thought to have been diluted by the emergence and growth of social media, which has acted as an alternative source of valuable information.

Clearly, from the analysis of past studies, we have seen the adverse effect that taking sides and being biased in the media industry can lead to polarization which will lead to more harm than good. From the studies, Fox News has been labelled as the media house that violates concepts of fair media coverage the most. However, the results also show that their image can be redeemed if the media changes the way they make their presentation to show fairness in their work. Also, though it shows that framing could be

making only one aspect of a story look important while deemphasizing other feathers (Entman, 1993), the role of information consumers gives the promising picture of how information could be verified and be judged with critical thinking and careful analysis. The thing is there shall be more educational aspects added to raise the awareness of the viewers.

The online questionnaire was used to collect information from the respondents, collecting information about their perceptions about how some of the very well-known media houses and their opinion as to whether the media houses maintain their integrity in carrying out their work. Information was also collected as to the factors that prompt the media houses in compromising their integrity by showing biases and politically influencing the viewers towards a certain predetermined inclination. The questionnaire was organized in such a way that the respondents can pick among the various options given depending on their points of view depending on how they view the media.

Misleading information in the media is a severe problem for society. It has been proven by the empirical data in this study. The majority of the respondents were of the opinion that misleading and sensational news sells better than objective news. Additionally, Fox News and CNN were the leading media houses in offering their audience misleading news. Fox lead by very large margins, showing a notoriety pattern for Fox News to be the leader in reporting misleading news. The media uses sound bites, social media posts, and news items to pass on misleading information, causing heightened racial and political differences. The research also showed that the news consumers are most aware of receiving is sensational news, while a few have no knowledge of sensational news or have never come across it. The media owners allow the continued reporting of sensational news because they profited from the dissemination of the sensational news conveyed to the audiences of these media houses.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The general perception among the respondents is that the media houses show partiality in their political reporting. The media houses have also been misused to secretly serve the interests of friendly political camps at the expense of other camps and in the end fuelling animosity among the voters. The media is also responsible for exploiting the racial differences through sensational reporting, which serve selfish interests and agenda of various media houses or interests. The media is in this regard, a principal perpetrator of divisions in the society through abdication of their objective reporting role. The media thus contrary to be the watchman on the wall has been a puppet of selfish political and racial interests, as it plays the partisan reporting role, which is contrary to the spirit of the functions of the media reporting issues.

Conclusion

From the results shown above, it is evident that the public has lost confidence in the neutrality of the media. People now believe that the information being given by the media houses is biased and cannot be entirely trusted as independent. The content is profoundly influenced by political forces for vested interest. Additionally, it is also evident that the audience feels that much of the content is created to magnify racial disparities negatively. From the respondents' view, the most influential people, both inside and outside the media houses are responsible for the content being aired on the television screens. The respondents also agree that the racial tensions being observed can be reduced if the media take a more neutral approach when handling news with such issues. The media most of the time usurps the role of public relations and presents biased news for its clients that are interested parties in the fanning of political and racial sensationalism. Public relations serve mainly to work in fulfilling the needs of the client. The media crossing into public relations territory makes it difficult deciphering the difference between public relations and journalism. There is, therefore, the need for the media to stop, think and turn back into the real role of the media. In other words, the theoretical framework of framing media shall be applied to develop strategies to distinguish misleading news from the objective news. For instance, one of the cardinal roles of the media is acting in the best interests of the citizens or the public while at the same time, maintaining its moral and objective stance. The

media should be the advocate of the people in universal terms, and not be the client of interested parties with partial interests to explore in the societal thread.

Limitations of the Study

The research was conducted as a survey, which engaged the collection of primary data from respondents. The survey questionnaires were issued to respondents. This limitation proved a lengthy process involving preparation, dissemination, and collection of filled questionnaires, data analysis, and interpretation of the data collected. Some of the respondents did not complete the questionnaires, so there may be inaccuracies in the conclusions of the data. Another limitation of this study was that the surveys were only sent to individuals at Murray State University. In addition, the study has not look profoundly into demographic analysis of the studied population. Such demographic information could affect the results of the study as the confounding variables. As a result, the findings of this study cannot be generalized to a larger population. A more substantial sampling pool and the incorporation of demographical information should be considered in future research to increase the accuracy of the data collected.

Recommendations

There is dire need to boost the confidence of the audience on both the local and international media stations. The editors and media owners should ensure that they are not involved in enhancing bias in the content they air on the screens. Additionally, they should not show an inclination to a certain political outfit in any of their shows by always working to portray neutrality to the masses. Most importantly, there is the need for media self-censure and

Regulation geared at having the media report objectively on the matters most important to fulfill the interests of the public. In this spirit, there is the need for refocusing and retraining of journalists on media ethics and the basic role of the media. The media needs a rebranding to be the mouthpiece, the prefect of the political powers, and the advocate of the interests of the citizenry to protect the integrity of the media and draw a distinct line between journalism and public relations.

As most of the respondents would agree, racial tensions will reduce if the media showed impartiality in their reporting. The government should set regulations to prevent media houses from showing partiality.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Questionnaire

Section A:

1. Do you think the media has a role in the deep racial conflicts?

   Yes [ ]   No [ ]

2. Do you think the media plays public relations role other than journalism?

   Yes [ ]   No [ ]

3. Do you think the media owners benefit from the racial and political tensions in the media?

   Yes [ ]   No [ ]

4. Do you think political tensions and racial tensions pay more than objective journalism?

5. Do you believe the media is using misleading information to stoke political and racial tensions?

   Yes [ ]   No [ ]

Section B: Media and Politics

1. Have you ever come across any case of any political media Bias?

   Yes [ ]   No [ ]

   If yes, how serious was the bias?

   Very serious [ ]   Moderate [ ]   Not Serious [ ]

2. How do the media mislead their political audience?

	Most effective	Moderately effective	Least effective
Through Twitter handle			
Through Facebook Accounts			
Through News items			
Through Soundbites			

3. Who do you think is responsible for perpetuating/doctoring misleading political news in the media?

   Media Owners [ ]   Editors [ ]   Political Parties Favored [ ]

4. Do you think there is need to monitor the media content against bias?

YES [ ]   NO [ ]

5. What are some of the media houses you know to be politically misleading to their audiences? Select where appropriate.

FOX NEWS   [ ]

CNN   [ ]

CNBC   [ ]

ABC NEWS   [ ]

6. Should it be a concern of the media to shape public opinion on political matters?

YES [ ] NO [ ]

7. Do you believe the media has a critical role in the sharp political divisions?

YES [ ] NO [ ]

8. How can the media shape the public opinion in a positive way?

Reporting Neutrally   [ ]

Taking a Stance YES   [ ]

Siding with the public YES   [ ]

Section C

1. What is your rating on the role of the media in fanning racial tensions?

Weak   [ ]

Strong   [ ]

Average   [ ]

Moderate   [ ]

2. Do you think there racial tensions would reduce if the media stopped playing partisanship?

YES [ ] NO [ ]

3. Which media houses do you think are the leading in racking up racial differences?

FOX NEWS   [ ]

CNN   [ ]

CNBC   [ ]

ABC NEWS   [ ]

Section D

1. What are the possible ways of restoring objective journalism?

Retraining Journalists   [ ]

Increased regulations   [ ]

Government intervention   [ ]

Self-Regulation   [ ]

2. What are the suitable methods of ending misleading information in the media?

Using fact checking technology   [ ]

Reporting the media to regulator   [ ]

Reporting journalists involved to regulator [ ]

Boycotting misleading media   [ ]

3. What is the dividing line between journalism and public relations in practice?

No dividing line   [ ]

Content   [ ]

Clients   [ ]

Information   [ ]

I do not know   [ ]

4. How does misleading information in the media contribute to political and racial tensions in the society?

Creates false beliefs   [ ]

Does not cause tension   [ ]

Causes hysteria   [ ]

Creates intolerance and division   [ ]

Appendix 2 approval IRB application

MURRAY STATE
UNIVERSITY

Institutional Review Board

328 Wells Hall
Murray, KY 42071-3318
270-809-2916 • msu.irb@murraystate.edu

TO:	Bellarmine Ezumah, Journalism and Mass Communication
FROM:	Jonathan Baskin, IRB Coordinator
DATE:	3/28/2018
RE:	Human Subjects Protocol I.D. – IRB # 18-129

The IRB has completed its review of your student's Level 1 protocol entitled *Media Using Misleading Information to Create Political and Racial Tensions*. After review and consideration, the IRB has determined that the research, as described in the protocol form, will be conducted in compliance with Murray State University guidelines for the protection of human participants.

The forms and materials that have been approved for use in this research study are attached to the email containing this letter. These are the forms and materials that must be presented to the subjects. Use of any process or forms other than those approved by the IRB will be considered misconduct in research as stated in the MSU IRB Procedures and Guidelines section 20.3.

Your stated data collection period is from 3/26/2018 to 7/1/2018.

If data collection extends beyond this period, please submit an Amendment to an Approved Protocol form detailing the new data collection period and the reason for the change.

This Level 1 approval is valid until 3/27/2019.

If data collection and analysis extends beyond this date, the research project must be reviewed as a continuation project by the IRB prior to the end of the approval period, 3/27/2019. You must reapply for IRB approval by submitting a Project Update and Closure form (available at murraystate.edu/irb). You must allow ample time for IRB processing and decision prior to your expiration date, or your research must stop until such time that IRB approval is received. If the research project is completed by the end of the approval period, then a Project Update and Closure form must be submitted for IRB review so that your protocol may be closed. It is your responsibility to submit the appropriate paperwork in a timely manner.

The protocol is approved. You may begin data collection now.

Opportunity
afforded

murraystate.edu

Appendix 3 Informed Consent for Research

INFORMED CONSENT FOR RESEARCH

Media Using Misleading Information to Create Political and Racial Tensions

Researcher: Hamad Salih Altisan, **Faculty Sponsor**: Dr. Bellarmine Ezumah, Graduate Program Director, Murray State University- bezumah@murraystate.edu or (270)-809-3171

You are being invited to participate in a research study conducted through Murray State University. If you choose to participate in this project, your signed agreement to participate is necessary. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate and must be an active user of social media. This document contains information about the conduct of this research, which is intended to help you make an informed decision regarding your participation. You may ask the researcher any questions you have about the study prior to the scheduling of the interview by emailing kguerra@murraystate.edu. If you then decide to participate in the project, please provide consent by signing the attached form.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY: The purpose of this study is to investigate Media Using Misleading Information to Promote Racial and Political Tensions

PROCEDURES AND DURATION: Upon agreeing to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview with the researcher, which will be recorded. Before interviews can be scheduled participants must read, sign, and send the inform consent to the researcher. Your participation will require one hour our less of your time to be interviewed by the researcher. Interviews will be conducted in person or over the telephone.

RISK AND/OR DISCOMFORT: There is no known risk for potential discomfort.

BENEFITS: There are no anticipated benefits for you as an individual, but your response will assist our research into the training methods for mass media programs at colleges and universities.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Participants names will not be used in reporting and analysis of this study. Any publications resulting from this study will not include names of the participants unless specifically allowed by the research participants. Research records will be stored securely for three years following the study on the researcher, Hamad Salih Altisan's computer. Only the researcher and faculty mentors will have access to these records.

WITHDRAWAL: Participation is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. Refusal to participate or withdraw from this research will involve no penalty or loss of benefits.

I acknowledge that the risks and benefits involved and the need for the research have been fully explained to me; that I have been informed that I may withdraw from participation at any time without prejudice or penalty; and I voluntarily consent to participate in this research project. By signing this form, I give the researcher consent to audio record my interview for the purpose of this study.

The dated approval stamp on this document indicated that this project has been reviewed and approved by the Murray State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of human subjects. Any questions about the conduct of this project should be brought to the attention of Dr. Bellarmine Ezumah, bezumah@murraystate.edu or (270)-809-3171. Any questions about your rights as a research participant should be brought to the attention of the IRB Coordinator at (270)-809-2916 or msu.irb@murraystate.edu.

_____

Printed Name of Participant

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   Date

Please also check one of the following options; if nothing is checked, your responses will not be quoted or attributed:

__ **You may quote my responses without attribution**

__ **You may quote my responses with attribution**

__ **You may not quote my responses.**

MURRAY STATE
UNIVERSITY
Institutional Review Board
Approved: 3/28/18 Expires: 3/27/19

Appendix 4 Approved Solicitation Message

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Hamad Salih Altisan, a student in the department of Journalism and Mass Communications at Murray State University, USA. I am conducting a study entitled Media Using Misleading Information to Promote Racial and Political Tensions. The results of this study are expected shed more light on the responsibility of the media in providing unbiased information regarding reporting of racial and political tensions.

Kindly take about 15 minutes of your time to go through on Survey Monkey and complete it accordingly. Before doing that, I will provide you with a cover letter which gives details that will shed more light on the study. The answers given will be of great benefit to the research.

Kindly let me know if interested.

CONTACT

STUDENT NAME: Hamad Salih Altisan

STUDENT E-MAIL: haltisan@murraystate.edu
STUDENT TELEPHONE NUMBER: 270-227-4706

Abstract

The study aimed to identify the Saudi public's motives and uses of sports websites and the gratifications achieved from these websites. This study belongs to the descriptive studies. The research relied on the descriptive analytical method. The researcher used the questionnaire as a main tool for collecting data from the Saudi public for a sample of 200 individuals who were chosen by the intentional sampling method.

The study concluded with several results, the most important of which are:

1- The results of the study revealed that the rate of the Saudi public's use of sports websites was (permanently) 34%, in the first place.

2- The results of the study showed that the most prominent motives for the Saudi public's exposure to sports websites is (seeing the latest sports news), The results showed that (sports club accounts on social networking sites) issued a list of the most prominent sports sites followed by the Saudi public.

3- followed by (following up on the news of the local club that I encourage).

4- The results of the study revealed that the most favorite content of the Saudi audience in sports sites is knowledge (match results), followed by (my favorite team news).

5- The results showed that (acquiring new information) topped the list of gratifications achieved by sports websites.