

Countering Digital Misinformation through Community-Based Multilingual Fact-Checking Networks

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Abstract- The unchecked proliferation of digital misinformation poses significant threats to democratic governance, public health, and social cohesion, particularly within linguistically diverse communities that remain underserved by mainstream, institution-led fact-checking initiatives. This study investigates the capacity of community-based multilingual fact-checking networks to counter misinformation more effectively than conventional, centralised models by leveraging local linguistic knowledge, cultural trust, and participatory engagement. Employing a mixed-methods approach — incorporating comparative case studies, semi-structured interviews with network practitioners, and discourse analysis of fact-checked content across ten multilingual communities — the research examines operational structures, effectiveness, and sustainability factors across selected networks in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia. Findings indicate that community-embedded networks demonstrate superior reach within low-resource language environments and engender higher levels of community trust compared to top-down counterparts, though they face persistent challenges related to funding, training, and editorial independence. The study contributes an evidence-based conceptual framework for designing scalable, inclusive fact-checking ecosystems that are responsive to linguistic and cultural diversity. Practically, the findings offer actionable guidance for civil society organisations, media development agencies, and policymakers committed to building more equitable and resilient information environments.

Index Terms Digital Misinformation; Multilingual Fact-Checking; Community-Based Networks; Information Disorder; Participatory Media

I. INTRODUCTION

The proliferation of digital technologies in the twenty-first century has fundamentally transformed the manner in which information is produced, disseminated, and consumed across the globe. Whilst

the internet and social media platforms have democratised access to knowledge and facilitated unprecedented levels of civic participation, they have simultaneously engendered a pervasive and deeply troubling phenomenon: the rapid and largely unchecked spread of digital misinformation (Terren 2022). False narratives, fabricated news articles, and manipulated media content now circulate with extraordinary velocity across online platforms, transcending linguistic, cultural, and geographical boundaries (Warf 2026). The consequences of this information disorder are far-reaching, undermining public trust in democratic institutions, distorting electoral processes, fuelling ethnic and religious tensions, and, as witnessed during the COVID-19 pandemic, posing grave risks to public health.

Within this context, fact-checking has emerged as a critical mechanism for combating the deleterious effects of misinformation. However, existing fact-checking initiatives have been criticised for their limited linguistic reach, their predominantly top-down institutional structures, and their tendency to privilege dominant languages — particularly English — at the expense of the world's linguistic diversity. In multilingual and multicultural societies, including those across sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia, misinformation frequently thrives in vernacular languages that mainstream fact-checkers are ill-equipped to monitor and address. This linguistic gap not only renders large segments of the global population vulnerable to manipulative content but also reflects deeper structural inequalities in the global information ecosystem.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the exponential growth of professional fact-checking organisations worldwide, the majority of misinformation that circulates in localised languages and community-specific digital spaces remains largely unaddressed. Centralised, institution-led approaches to fact-checking are constrained by limited resources, inadequate local knowledge, and insufficient community trust. Furthermore, algorithmic content moderation — as practised by major technology platforms — has proven ineffective and, in some instances, harmful, particularly in low-resource language environments. There exists, therefore, a critical and demonstrable gap between the scale and linguistic diversity of digital misinformation and the capacity of current fact-checking models to respond effectively. Community-based multilingual fact-checking networks represent a potentially transformative yet underexplored response to this challenge.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study seeks to investigate the role of community-based multilingual fact-checking networks in countering digital misinformation. Specifically, the study aims to:

- i. examine the structural and operational characteristics of successful community-led fact-checking initiatives across diverse linguistic contexts;
- ii. assess the effectiveness of multilingual fact-checking networks in reducing the spread and impact of misinformation within target communities;
- iii. identify the organisational, technological, and socio-cultural enablers and barriers to the sustainability of such networks

1.4 Research Questions

In pursuit of the foregoing objectives, this study is guided by the following research questions:

1. In what ways do community-based multilingual fact-checking networks differ from conventional, institutionally-led fact-checking models in terms of reach, accuracy, and community trust?
2. How effective are multilingual fact-checking networks in mitigating the diffusion of

misinformation in linguistically diverse digital communities?

3. What socio-technical, organisational, and linguistic factors determine the sustainability and scalability of community-based fact-checking networks?

Scope of the Study

This study focuses on community-based fact-checking initiatives operating in multilingual environments across the Global South and linguistically diverse regions of the Global North. The research draws on case studies, interviews, and documentary analysis of networks active between 2015 and 2024 — a period that encompasses the proliferation of social media-driven misinformation and the emergence of community-centred counter-misinformation strategies. Whilst the study acknowledges the broader ecosystem of digital misinformation, its scope is delimited to fact-checking as a communicative and community practice, and does not extend to legislative or platform-level regulatory interventions.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its potential to address a critical lacuna in both scholarly research and policy practice. Academically, it contributes to the growing interdisciplinary literature at the intersection of communication studies, computational linguistics, and community informatics by offering empirical insights into the efficacy of decentralised, multilingual approaches to misinformation mitigation. Practically, the findings are of direct relevance to civil society organisations, media development agencies, and technology companies seeking to build more inclusive and effective counter-misinformation infrastructures. At a broader societal level, this study affirms the principle that sustainable solutions to digital misinformation must be grounded in the linguistic realities, cultural knowledge, and participatory energies of the communities most affected by its harms.

Literature Review

Community-Based versus Institutional Fact-Checking: Reach, Accuracy, and Trust

The dominant paradigm in organised fact-checking has historically been institutionally led, characterised by professional journalists and researchers operating within structured editorial frameworks (Moreno Gil et al., 2022). Scholars have documented how organisations such as PolitiFact, Africa Check, and Full Fact have made significant contributions to public discourse by systematically debunking false claims and holding powerful actors accountable. However, a growing body of literature has identified critical limitations in this model, particularly with respect to reach, linguistic inclusivity, and community trust.

Institutional fact-checking organisations are frequently constrained by resource scarcity, which limits the volume and geographic breadth of claims they can address. Research has consistently noted that these organisations tend to concentrate their verification efforts on high-visibility political claims circulating in dominant languages, leaving vast swathes of vernacular digital content unaddressed (Jiménez-Martínez & Edwards 2023). This is particularly consequential in multilingual societies across sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia, where misinformation thrives precisely in the local languages that institutional fact-checkers are least equipped to monitor.

Community-based fact-checking networks, by contrast, are theorised as possessing an inherent proximity advantage. By drawing on locally embedded knowledge, linguistic competence, and social relationships, community fact-checkers can access and interrogate content that eludes institutional radars (Friedhoff & Pérez-Verdía 2026). Studies examining grassroots verification initiatives in India, Nigeria, and Indonesia have demonstrated that community-led models achieve significantly broader reach within target linguistic communities, owing to their embeddedness in the very social networks through which misinformation spreads. Crucially, research also suggests that community-based fact-checkers benefit from heightened trust among their audiences, as the perceived cultural and linguistic alignment between checker and audience confers a form of epistemic authority that institutional actors struggle to replicate. This trust dividend is particularly salient in contexts where

mainstream media and formal institutions carry legacies of political bias or colonial association.

Nevertheless, the literature is not uncritical of community-based models. Concerns around accuracy and consistency are recurrent, with scholars noting that the absence of formalised editorial standards and professional training can introduce variability in verification quality. The tension between accessibility and rigour remains a defining challenge in the theoretical framing of community fact-checking, and several researchers have proposed hybrid models that seek to combine the credibility of institutional oversight with the linguistic reach and community trust of grassroots networks.

Effectiveness of Multilingual Fact-Checking Networks in Mitigating Misinformation Diffusion

The question of effectiveness occupies a central position in the literature on digital misinformation countermeasures (Ojo et al., 2025). Scholars have approached this question through multiple methodological lenses, including experimental studies, network analyses, and ethnographic fieldwork, yielding a nuanced and at times contradictory body of evidence.

A foundational insight from the literature is that the speed and emotional valence of misinformation confer significant advantages over corrective content (Ecker et al., 2022). False narratives travel faster and further than corrections, and corrections often reach audiences already predisposed to accept the false claim. In this context, multilingual fact-checking networks hold a distinctive potential advantage: by operating within the linguistic and cultural registers of target communities, they can deliver corrections in forms that are cognitively accessible and culturally resonant, potentially increasing uptake and persuasive efficacy (Quelle et al., 2025).

Empirical studies of multilingual fact-checking interventions in linguistically diverse settings have produced encouraging, if qualified, findings. Research conducted in the context of the COVID-19 infodemic demonstrated that health misinformation circulating in regional languages was most effectively countered by trusted community communicators operating in those same languages, rather than by translated versions of centrally

produced fact-checks (Krystallidou & Braun 2022). Similarly, studies of electoral misinformation in multilingual democracies such as India and South Africa found that vernacular fact-checking reduced the diffusion of false claims within specific linguistic communities, though effects varied considerably depending on platform dynamics and community engagement levels.

The literature also foregrounds the structural role of digital platforms in shaping the effectiveness of fact-checking interventions. Algorithmic amplification, echo chambers, and the affordances of encrypted messaging applications such as WhatsApp present particular challenges for multilingual fact-checking, as misinformation in these environments circulates within closed social networks that are difficult to penetrate (Kehinde-Awoyele & Oyewole 2024). Scholars have called for closer integration between community fact-checking networks and platform-level interventions, whilst acknowledging the tensions inherent in such collaborations, particularly with respect to editorial independence and data sovereignty.

Socio-Technical, Organisational, and Linguistic Determinants of Sustainability and Scalability

The question of sustainability is increasingly recognised as the defining challenge facing community-based fact-checking initiatives. The literature identifies a complex interplay of socio-technical, organisational, and linguistic factors that collectively determine whether such networks can endure and expand beyond their initial pilot phases. Organisationally, studies have highlighted the vulnerability of community fact-checking networks to funding precarity, volunteer burnout, and the loss of key personnel. Research on civil society media organisations in the Global South has emphasised that sustainability requires not only adequate financial resourcing but also the development of robust internal governance structures, mentorship pipelines, and institutional partnerships (van Wessel et al., (Eds.). (2023). Networks that have successfully scaled, such as those affiliated with the International Fact-Checking Network, tend to demonstrate clear organisational mandates, transparent verification methodologies, and active engagement with both

local communities and international knowledge-sharing ecosystems.

From a socio-technical perspective, the literature underscores the importance of appropriate and accessible technology infrastructure (Bakchan et al., 2026). Community fact-checkers operating in low-resource environments face significant barriers related to digital connectivity, device access, and platform literacy. Scholars have advocated for the co-design of verification tools that are adapted to the technological realities of target communities, rather than the wholesale importation of tools developed in high-resource contexts (Babugura et al., 2026). The integration of artificial intelligence and natural language processing into multilingual fact-checking workflows has attracted considerable scholarly attention, though researchers caution that the underrepresentation of low-resource languages in training datasets risks perpetuating existing inequalities.

Linguistically, the literature draws attention to the profound complexity of multilingual fact-checking environments. Languages are not homogeneous systems; they encompass dialects, registers, and code-switching practices that pose considerable challenges for both human and automated verification. Research has emphasised that effective multilingual fact-checking requires not merely translation but deep cultural and contextual competence, a capacity that demands sustained investment in community language expertise.

IV. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative research design, grounded in an interpretive paradigm. This approach was deemed appropriate given the study's focus on understanding lived experiences, organisational practices, and socio-linguistic dynamics surrounding community-based multilingual fact-checking networks. A qualitative framework allowed for the generation of contextually rich, nuanced data that quantitative methods would have been insufficient to capture.

The study was conducted over a period of three months, from January to March 2024, across selected

communities in Southwest Nigeria. This region was purposively selected owing to its rich multilingual character, predominantly Yoruba-speaking population alongside significant linguistic minorities, and its documented vulnerability to digital misinformation across platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter/X.

The study targeted active participants and coordinators of community-based fact-checking initiatives operating within Southwest Nigeria. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, prioritising individuals with direct involvement in multilingual fact-checking activities. A total of twenty participants were recruited, comprising community fact-checkers, network coordinators, and civil society media practitioners operating across Lagos, Ibadan, and Abeokuta.

Data collection proceeded in three phases. The first phase involved documentary review of publicly available materials from active fact-checking networks. The second phase comprised semi-structured interviews conducted with selected participants. The third phase involved focus group discussions to triangulate individual responses and explore collective perspectives on network effectiveness and sustainability.

Data were collected using semi-structured interview guides and focus group discussion protocols, both developed in alignment with the three research questions. Interviews were audio-recorded with participant consent and subsequently transcribed verbatim. NVivo 14 software was used to manage and organise the dataset. Instrument validity was established through expert review by two communication studies scholars, whilst reliability was ensured through pilot testing with three participants outside the main sample.

Data were analysed thematically using Braun and Clarke's six-phase thematic analysis framework within NVivo 14. Codes were generated inductively from transcripts and subsequently organised into themes corresponding to the research questions. Member checking was employed to validate emerging findings, and thick description was used to

ensure the transferability of results to comparable multilingual community contexts.

V. RESULTS

This section presents the findings generated from semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and documentary analysis conducted across Lagos, Ibadan, and Abeokuta over the three-month study period. The findings are organised thematically in correspondence with the three research questions, and are supported by quantitative summary data derived from participant responses and network documentation. Twenty participants contributed data across the three phases of data collection.

The first research question sought to establish how community-based multilingual fact-checking networks differed from conventional, institutionally-led models. Findings consistently revealed that community-based networks demonstrated markedly superior reach within target linguistic communities, particularly in Yoruba-language digital spaces, whilst institutional models were perceived as more accurate but less accessible and less trusted by ordinary community members.

Participants overwhelmingly noted that institutional fact-checking organisations, whilst respected for their editorial standards, operated predominantly in English, rendering their outputs inaccessible to significant portions of the population in Southwest Nigeria. One network coordinator in Ibadan observed that misinformation in Yoruba dialects circulated for days before any institutional fact-checker acknowledged it, by which time the false narrative had already achieved broad penetration. Community-based checkers, by contrast, were able to respond rapidly in the same linguistic register as the misinformation itself.

Table 1 below presents participant assessments of community-based versus institutional models across three dimensions: reach, accuracy, and community trust, rated on a five-point scale aggregated from interview and focus group responses.

Table 1: Participant Ratings of Community-Based versus Institutional Fact-Checking Models (n=20)

Dimension	Community-Based Model (Mean Score /5)	Institutional Model (Mean Score /5)	Community-Based (%)	Institutional (%)
Reach within local communities	4.6	2.3	92%	46%
Accuracy of fact-checks	3.4	4.5	68%	90%
Community trust and credibility	4.7	2.8	94%	56%

The data in Table 1 illustrates a clear divergence between the two models. Community-based networks scored substantially higher on reach and community trust, achieving ratings of 92% and 94% respectively, whilst institutional models held a significant advantage on accuracy at 90% compared to 68% for community-based networks. These findings corroborate the literature's suggestion that a trust-accuracy tension characterises the relationship between the two models. Several participants attributed the relatively lower accuracy scores of community-based checkers to inconsistent training and the absence of standardised verification protocols, rather than to any deliberate disregard for factual rigour. Focus group discussions in Lagos further revealed that community trust in local fact-checkers was deeply rooted in perceived shared identity, with participants expressing greater willingness to accept corrections delivered in Yoruba by community members than those issued in English by institutional bodies they associated with elite or foreign interests.

The second research question examined the effectiveness of multilingual fact-checking networks in reducing the spread and impact of misinformation within linguistically diverse digital communities in Southwest Nigeria. Findings revealed a generally positive assessment of effectiveness, though with notable variation across platforms and types of misinformation.

Participants identified WhatsApp as the primary vector for Yoruba-language misinformation, followed by Facebook and, to a lesser extent, Twitter/X. Community fact-checkers reported that their interventions were most effective when delivered within the same WhatsApp groups or Facebook communities in which misinformation originally circulated, as opposed to being posted on separate verification platforms. The immediacy and linguistic familiarity of these interventions were cited as the principal drivers of their impact.

Table 2 presents participant assessments of the effectiveness of multilingual fact-checking interventions across different misinformation categories, expressed as percentage of participants who reported observing a reduction in misinformation diffusion following community-based intervention.

Table 2: Perceived Effectiveness of Multilingual Fact-Checking by Misinformation Category (n=20)

Misinformation Category	Number of Participants Reporting Effectiveness	Percentage (%)
Health misinformation	18	90%
Electoral and political misinformation	14	70%
Religious and ethnic misinformation	12	60%
Economic and financial misinformation	15	75%
General viral false	16	80%

narratives		
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The findings in Table 2 indicate that multilingual fact-checking interventions were perceived as most effective against health misinformation, with 90% of participants observing reduced diffusion following community-based correction. This finding aligns with patterns documented during the COVID-19 infodemic, in which trusted community communicators proved particularly influential in countering health-related falsehoods. Effectiveness was comparatively lower for religious and ethnic misinformation at 60%, a finding that participants attributed to the deeply emotive and identity-laden nature of such content, which rendered audiences less receptive to correction regardless of linguistic accessibility. Focus group participants in Abeokuta specifically noted that certain forms of religious misinformation functioned less as factual claims and more as identity affirmations, making conventional fact-checking approaches structurally ill-suited to address them.

The third research question investigated the factors that determined the sustainability and scalability of community-based fact-checking networks in Southwest Nigeria. Documentary analysis and interview data identified a tripartite cluster of determinants operating across socio-technical, organisational, and linguistic dimensions.

Organisationally, funding instability emerged as the most frequently cited threat to sustainability, reported by 85% of participants. Volunteer fatigue, cited by 75% of participants, represented a closely related concern, with several coordinators describing high turnover rates among community checkers who received little or no financial compensation. Networks that demonstrated greater longevity were those that had established formal partnerships with civil society organisations or media development bodies, and that had instituted structured onboarding and mentorship programmes for new members.

From a socio-technical perspective, limited digital infrastructure was identified as a significant constraint, particularly in peri-urban communities on the outskirts of Ibadan and Abeokuta. Participants noted that the absence of reliable internet connectivity and low smartphone penetration in these

areas impeded both the monitoring of misinformation and the dissemination of corrections. The use of NVivo 14 during data analysis facilitated the identification of recurring infrastructure-related codes across transcripts, which clustered consistently around themes of connectivity, device access, and platform literacy.

Table 3 presents the frequency and percentage of participants identifying specific sustainability barriers across the three determinant categories.

Table 3: Reported Barriers to Sustainability and Scalability of Community Fact-Checking Networks (n=20)

Barrier Category	Specific Barrier	Number of Participants	Percentage (%)
Organisational	Funding instability	17	85%
Organisational	Volunteer burnout and turnover	15	75%
Socio-technical	Poor digital connectivity	14	70%
Socio-technical	Low platform literacy among checkers	11	55%
Linguistic	Dialect variation within Yoruba	16	80%
Linguistic	Absence of standardised multilingual verification tools	13	65%

Linguistically, dialect variation within Yoruba emerged as a particularly salient challenge, cited by

80% of participants. Participants described significant differences between standard Yoruba as used in formal media and the dialectal variants spoken in specific communities across Ogun, Oyo, and Lagos States. These variations affected both the comprehension of misinformation content and the reception of corrective fact-checks, as checkers operating in one dialectal register were sometimes perceived as outsiders by communities accustomed to a different variety. The absence of standardised multilingual verification tools adapted to Yoruba and its dialects was cited by 65% of participants as a compounding structural barrier. These findings collectively underscore the argument, advanced in the literature, that sustainable multilingual fact-checking demands not merely translation competence but deep, community-specific linguistic and cultural expertise.

VI. DISCUSSION

This discussion interprets the findings of the study in relation to the three research questions, situates them within the existing body of literature, addresses unexpected outcomes, acknowledges the limitations of the study, and outlines directions for future inquiry. Collectively, the findings advance a compelling argument that community-based multilingual fact-checking networks represent a structurally distinctive and contextually indispensable response to digital misinformation in linguistically diverse environments such as Southwest Nigeria, whilst simultaneously revealing the organisational and technical fragilities that constrain their long-term viability.

The study's findings on the first research question revealed a clear and consistent divergence between community-based and institutional fact-checking models across the dimensions of reach, accuracy, and community trust. Community-based networks achieved substantially higher ratings on reach and trust, whilst institutional models retained an advantage on perceived accuracy. These findings are directly consonant with the arguments advanced by Friedhoff and Pérez-Verdía (2026), who contend that community-led approaches possess a distinctive capacity to strengthen trust and resilience in fractured information ecosystems, precisely because they operate from within the social and linguistic worlds

of their target audiences. The study's participants articulated this dynamic with particular clarity, describing their reluctance to accept corrections issued in English by organisations they associated with elite or foreign interests, and their comparatively greater receptiveness to Yoruba-language corrections delivered by trusted community members.

At the same time, the accuracy gap identified in Table 1 cannot be dismissed. Moreno Gil, Ramon Vegas, and Mauri (2022) have documented how even professional fact-checking organisations operating within structured editorial frameworks face significant methodological challenges in maintaining verification consistency. For community-based checkers operating without standardised protocols, equivalent or greater variability is unsurprising. This finding reinforces the argument, present in the literature, that hybrid models combining institutional rigour with community reach represent a strategically promising direction. The promotional dynamics of visibility and credibility discussed by Jiménez-Martínez and Edwards (2023) are also relevant here, as community fact-checkers must navigate complex social hierarchies in which their authority to correct misinformation is not automatically conferred but must be continuously negotiated within their communities.

The second research question yielded findings that were broadly affirmative of the effectiveness of multilingual fact-checking, though with meaningful variation across misinformation categories. Health misinformation attracted the highest effectiveness rating at 90%, a finding that resonates strongly with the work of Krystallidou and Braun (2022), who demonstrated in their scoping review of COVID-19 communication that linguistically and culturally adapted risk messaging was significantly more effective in reaching diverse communities than translated versions of centrally produced content. The present study's findings from Southwest Nigeria extend this insight beyond the specific context of the pandemic, suggesting that the principle of linguistic and cultural alignment between corrective content and target audience holds across a range of health misinformation contexts.

The comparatively lower effectiveness reported for religious and ethnic misinformation at 60% represents a notable and theoretically significant finding. Ecker and colleagues (2022) have established through extensive psychological research that misinformation belief is most resistant to correction when false claims are deeply intertwined with identity commitments and emotional investments. The present findings align with and empirically extend this argument in a multilingual African context, suggesting that even linguistically accessible corrections are insufficient to overcome the identity-protective cognition that characterises the consumption of religiously or ethnically charged false narratives. This intersection between linguistic accessibility and psychological resistance to correction represents an important contribution to the understanding of multilingual fact-checking's limits.

The findings related to platform dynamics, particularly the identification of WhatsApp as the primary vector for Yoruba-language misinformation, are consistent with Quelle and colleagues' (2025) analysis of how misinformation evolves and spreads across multilingual digital environments. Their finding that misinformation frequently mutates as it crosses linguistic boundaries underscores the particular importance of community-embedded monitoring, as institutional actors are structurally ill-positioned to track these transformations within closed messaging environments.

One finding that warranted particular attention was the degree to which dialect variation within Yoruba, cited by 80% of participants, constituted a barrier to effective fact-checking. Whilst the literature acknowledges linguistic diversity as a challenge for fact-checking, the granularity of intra-language dialectal complexity documented in this study surpassed initial expectations. This finding suggests that the conceptual framing of multilingual fact-checking in much of the existing literature, which tends to treat languages as relatively homogeneous units, is insufficiently nuanced. Warf (2026) has argued that the geographies of fake news are deeply shaped by localised cultural and linguistic landscapes, and the present study provides empirical substance to this claim at the level of dialectal community rather than merely national or regional

language difference. The implication is that effective multilingual fact-checking in Southwest Nigeria requires not merely Yoruba-language competence but community-specific dialectal and cultural knowledge that cannot be standardised across the region.

Limitations of the study

Several limitations must be acknowledged. The study was conducted over three months across three cities in Southwest Nigeria, which, whilst methodologically appropriate for a qualitative inquiry, limits the generalisability of findings to other multilingual contexts. The reliance on purposive sampling, whilst suited to the interpretive aims of the study, means that the perspectives of less engaged or marginalised community members may be underrepresented. Furthermore, participant self-reporting of effectiveness, as captured in Tables 2 and 3, is subject to social desirability bias, as participants with investment in community fact-checking may have overstated the impact of their interventions. Future studies employing longitudinal network analysis or experimental designs would be better positioned to establish causal rather than perceived effectiveness.

Directions for future research

Future research should prioritise comparative studies across multiple African multilingual contexts to assess whether the patterns identified in Southwest Nigeria are regionally specific or indicative of broader continental dynamics. The integration of civil society organisations into fact-checking sustainability, which van Wessel, Kontinen, and Bawole (2023) have theorised in the context of Global South development collaborations, warrants specific empirical investigation in media and information contexts. Additionally, given the socio-technical barriers identified in this study, future inquiry should examine the co-design of community-adapted verification tools, building on frameworks advanced by Bakchan and colleagues (2026) for integrated socio-technical infrastructure modelling.

Conclusion

This study set out to investigate the role of community-based multilingual fact-checking

networks in countering digital misinformation in Southwest Nigeria, guided by three research questions concerning comparative model characteristics, intervention effectiveness, and sustainability determinants. The findings demonstrated that community-based networks achieved substantially greater reach and community trust than institutional models, though they trailed in verification accuracy, a tension rooted in inconsistent training and the absence of standardised protocols. Multilingual interventions proved most effective against health misinformation and least effective where religious or ethnic identity was implicated, confirming that linguistic accessibility, whilst necessary, is insufficient to overcome deep-seated psychological resistance to correction. Organisational fragility, socio-technical constraints, and the underappreciated complexity of dialectal variation within Yoruba collectively undermined network sustainability. These findings carry significant implications for the design of counter-misinformation strategies in linguistically diverse African contexts, affirming that durable solutions must be grounded in community linguistic realities and supported by adequate institutional and financial infrastructure. Future research should pursue longitudinal and comparative studies across multiple multilingual African contexts, and should explore the co-design of community-adapted verification technologies. Ultimately, this study reaffirms that the democratisation of fact-checking is both a linguistic and a structural imperative.

Recommendations

The findings of this study generate several actionable recommendations directed at civil society organisations, media development agencies, technology developers, and policymakers engaged in counter-misinformation work in Southwest Nigeria and comparable multilingual contexts.

Civil society organisations and media development agencies should prioritise the establishment of hybrid fact-checking models that integrate the editorial standards and verification rigour of institutional actors with the linguistic reach, cultural embeddedness, and community trust of grassroots networks. Such models would directly address the trust-accuracy tension identified in this study and

align with the collaborative frameworks theorised by van Wessel, Kontinen, and Bawole (2023) for effective civil society engagement in Global South contexts.

Community-based fact-checking networks should invest in structured training programmes that equip volunteer checkers with standardised verification methodologies, whilst preserving the dialectal and cultural flexibility that underpins their community credibility. Training curricula must be sensitive to intra-language dialectal variation within Yoruba, ensuring that checkers are equipped to operate effectively across the diverse linguistic communities of Southwest Nigeria.

Technology developers and platform providers should co-design multilingual verification tools adapted to low-resource language environments and limited digital infrastructure, ensuring that technological solutions do not replicate the exclusions of the existing global information ecosystem. Sustainable funding mechanisms, including institutional partnerships and community media grants, should be pursued to mitigate the precarity that currently threatens network longevity.

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