

**Post-Truth and its Effects on Public Perception of Political  
Information and the Role of Media: An Empirical study using  
Selective Exposure Theory**

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**Mass Communication and Journalism**

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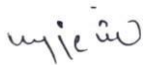
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**LOVELY PROFESSIONAL UNIVERSITY, PUNJAB**  
**2025**

## DECLARATION

I, hereby declared that the presented work in the thesis entitled “**Post-Truth and its Effects on Public Perception of Political Information and the Role of Media: An Empirical study using Selective Exposure Theory**” in fulfilment of degree of **Doctor of Philosophy (Ph. D.)** is outcome of research work carried out by me under the supervision of **DR. Jitendra Singh**, working as **Associate Professor (HOD)** in the Department of **Mass Communication and Journalism** school of **Liberal and Creative Arts** of Lovely Professional University, Punjab, India. In keeping with general practice of reporting scientific observations, due acknowledgements have been made whenever work described here has been based on findings of another investigator. This work has not been submitted in part or full to any other University or Institute for the award of any degree



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# CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the work reported in the Ph. D. thesis entitled “**Post-Truth and its Effects on Public Perception of Political Information and the Role of Media: An Empirical study using Selective Exposure Theory**” submitted in fulfillment of the requirement for the award of degree of **Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)** in the Department of **Mass Communication and Journalism** school of **Liberal and Creative Arts** is a research work carried out by **Yasir Ahmed** Registration No.**12109920**, is bonafide record of his/her original work carried out under my supervision and that no part of thesis has been submitted for any other degree, diploma or equivalent course.



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## ABSTRACT

The advent of the “post-truth era” has fundamentally altered the landscape of media consumption and public trust. In this era, objective facts are often overshadowed by “appeals to emotion and personal beliefs,” resulting in a proliferation of misinformation and disinformation that can significantly influence public perception and political discourse. This study investigates the prevalence of post-truth narratives across various media channels, the psychological mechanisms that influence their acceptance, and role of media in promoting objectivity and counteracting misinformation.

The primary objective is to evaluate how media outlets' efforts in promoting accuracy, transparency, and diverse representation of political perspectives influence public trust, confidence, understanding of political issues, and the prevention of misinformation. This study had four specific objectives and corresponding hypotheses to guide the investigation, including an examination of selective exposure theory in the context of post-truth narratives. “Selective exposure theory posits that individuals prefer information that aligns with their pre-existing beliefs and attitudes,” leading them to “selectively expose themselves to media content” that confirms their views while avoiding contradictory information. This behavior reinforces “existing beliefs” and contributes “to the formation of echo chambers,” where individuals are insulated from diverse perspectives.

The methodology employed in this study includes a “mixed-methods approach”, combining “quantitative and qualitative” “data collection” and analysis. The quantitative section involved a survey of a sample of 395 individuals. The survey included questions about respondents' exposure to political information, “perceptions of media bias,” trust in political institutions, and beliefs about the impact of media on political polarization. The survey data were analyzed using crosstabulation and chi-square tests to identify significant associations between variables. Symmetric measures, such as Phi and Cramer's V, were calculated to assess the strength of these associations.

The findings of this study highlight the widespread prevalence of “post-truth” narratives in contemporary “political discourse”. The rapid dissemination of information through social

media and other online platforms has amplified the reach and impact of these narratives, often at the expense of objective truth. Experts emphasized that the lack of editorial oversight and the prioritization of engagement over accuracy have facilitated the “spread of misinformation”, contributing to the erosion of public trust in political information and institutions. The thematic analysis of expert interviews reinforced the notion that “selective exposure” and the creation of “echo chambers” significantly contribute to the entrenchment of ideological divides, diminishing the public's ability to engage with diverse perspectives.

In examining “selective exposure” theory within the context of post-truth narratives, this research revealed that “individuals are more likely to seek out information that aligns with their pre-existing beliefs”, thereby reinforcing cognitive biases such as confirmation bias and cognitive dissonance. These psychological mechanisms play a crucial role in the acceptance of “post-truth” narratives, as individuals tend to favor emotionally resonant and ideologically consistent information over factual accuracy. The empirical analyses, supported by chi-square tests, confirmed that selective exposure significantly impacts public perception and contributes to political polarization. For instance, the chi-square test results indicated significant relationships between perceived media balance and public trust, as well as between the inclusion of diverse viewpoints and public confidence, highlighting the importance of balanced and inclusive reporting in mitigating the effects of post-truth narratives.

Furthermore, this study evaluated the broader impact of post-truth narratives on public perception, particularly focusing on the “erosion of trust in political institutions”. The strategic use of misinformation by political actors and the increasing skepticism towards traditional information sources were identified as significant factors contributing to this erosion. The thematic insights from expert interviews and the literature review consistently pointed to the detrimental effects of post-truth narratives on public trust and democratic engagement. Experts emphasized that the culture of post-truth undermines the credibility of political institutions by exploiting psychological vulnerabilities and reinforcing false narratives, leading to a fragmented information environment and deepening ideological divides.

Media’s role in promoting objectivity and counteracting “post-truth” narratives was a critical focus of this research. The findings highlighted the need for media outlets to prioritize factual accuracy, transparency, and diverse representation of viewpoints. Rigorous fact-checking and investigative reporting were identified as essential practices for maintaining media integrity

and credibility. The quantitative analyses demonstrated that accurate and fact-checked reporting significantly contributes to the prevention of misinformation, as evidenced by the “chi-square test results” indicating a “significant relationship between” media accuracy and the prevention of misinformation. Additionally, the qualitative insights from expert interviews highlighted the importance of media literacy programs in helping the public critically evaluate information and recognize misinformation. Collaborative journalism, regulatory measures, and the use of AI to detect misinformation were also suggested as strategies to enhance the accuracy and transparency of media practices.

This thesis provides a comprehensive analysis of the prevalence of post-truth narratives and their impact on public perception, using selective exposure theory to elucidate the mechanisms driving these phenomena. The findings emphasize the critical role of media in promoting objectivity and mitigating the negative effects of post-truth narratives. By prioritizing accuracy, transparency, and inclusivity, media outlets can foster a more informed public and support healthier democratic discourse. The integration of theoretical frameworks, empirical analyses, and expert insights offers a robust foundation for knowing the dynamics of “post-truth politics” and also strategies necessary to counteract its adverse effects. Future research should continue to explore the complex relationship between media practices, public perception, and the psychological mechanisms underpinning the acceptance of post-truth narratives, with an emphasis on developing comprehensive approaches to grow media literacy and substitute critical thinking skills among public.

The significance of this research extends to media literacy, which is crucial for equipping the public with the skills to critically evaluate the information they consume. In an era where “false information can spread rapidly through social media platforms,” enhancing media literacy can help individuals distinguish between credible sources and misinformation. This research aimed to provide empirical evidence on the effectiveness of media literacy initiatives and suggest improvements to current educational frameworks to better prepare citizens to navigate the complex information landscape. The results provide helpful imputes for media practitioners, policymakers, and educators in developing strategies to combat misinformation and promote a more informed and engaged citizenry. By addressing cognitive biases and habitual consumption patterns, these interventions can help create a more informed and balanced public discourse, ultimately supporting democratic processes and reducing political polarization.

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### **About My Life Journey**

As the youngest in my family, I consider myself blessed to have had role models to look up to. Being born into a well-educated family provided me with numerous advantages. Despite never excelling academically, I was fortunate to have a father who never emphasized grades, allowing me to view education beyond mere rankings. I was passionate about writing and reading literature, though unsure of my abilities and goals until my second year of graduation. In 2014,



I made a key decision to quit my BA in Arts and pursue a BA in Journalism, aligning with my true interests. This was not an easy decision, but with the support of my family, it eventually became manageable. Choosing a different field that I admired most came with its responsibilities. However, with my parents' blessings and God's favor, I did not disappoint anyone.

When I joined Lovely Professional University as a research scholar, I was aware of the challenges ahead. Fortunately, the faculty and my supervisor made this journey manageable. After three years of hard work, creating something substantial and beneficial for society brings immense satisfaction. I thank the Almighty for everything I have received in life and for every experience. Life is incomplete without challenges, and challenges cannot be overcome without hard work and God's will.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The advent of “the post-truth era” has fundamentally altered the landscape of media consumption and public trust. In this era, objective facts are often overshadowed by “appeals to emotion and personal beliefs”, resulting in a proliferation of misinformation and disinformation that can significantly influence public perception and political discourse (McIntyre, 2018). The rise of social media platforms has exacerbated this phenomenon, enabled the rapid dissemination of false information and creating “echo chambers” where individuals are primarily exposed to content that “aligns with their pre-existing beliefs” (Vosoughi et al., 2018). This research seeks to investigate the prevalence of post-truth narratives, examine selective exposure theory in this context, evaluate the impact on public perception, and study the role of media in promoting objectivity.

### **1.1 Purpose of the Study**

The prime purpose of this study is to explore the effects of post-truth narratives on public perception and trust in political information and institutions in India. By examining how media consumption habits and selective exposure contribute to the spread of misinformation and polarization, this research aims to provide a widespread understanding of the dynamics involved in the post-truth era. Additionally, the study seeks to identify strategies that media outlets can employ to enhance public trust and promote more objective and balanced political discourse.

### **1.2 Objectives of the Study**

This research addresses four primary objectives:

1. To investigate the prevalence of post-truth narratives in Indian media.
2. To examine selective exposure theory in the context of post-truth and its effects on public perception of political information.
3. To evaluate the impact of post-truth on public perception and trust in

political institutions.

4. To study the role of media in promoting objectivity and diverse political perspectives.

### **1.3 Hypotheses**

The study is guided by the following hypotheses

H1: The prevalence of post-truth narratives is significantly higher in online and social media compared to traditional news sources.

H2: Individuals exhibit selective exposure behaviour in consuming political information.

H3: Exposure to post-truth narratives negatively influences public trust in political information and institutions, contributing to increased polarization.

H4: Media outlets that prioritize accuracy, transparency, and diverse representation enhance public trust and understanding.

### **1.4 Research Problem**

This research addresses the major impact of “post-truth narratives” on public trust in political information and institutions in India, emphasizing the role of misinformation in challenging the credibility of traditional and social media platforms. The study highlights the lack of empirical data on public perception and trust in media, and how selective exposure theory contributes to ideological divides, affecting democratic processes and public discourse.

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This study holds significant importance in understanding the “role of media in the post-truth era,” especially in the context of India’s diverse and complex media landscape. By examining the effects of “selective exposure” and post-truth narratives, the research contributes to the broader discourse on media literacy, public trust, and political polarization.

One of the critical aspects of this study is its focus on the Indian “media environment”, which is exemplified by a vast array of a traditional as well as digital media platforms that cater to a multilingual and multicultural audience (Guha, 2021). In such a dynamic and diverse media

landscape, the proliferation of misinformation and disinformation poses a unique set of challenges. The study's findings will be instrumental in identifying how these challenges manifest and what measures can be implemented to mitigate them.

The research significance lies in its contribution to media literacy, which is essential for providing the public with the skills needed to critically assess the information they encounter. In an era where “false information can spread rapidly through social media platforms”, enhancing media literacy can help individuals distinguish between credible sources and misinformation (McDougall et al., 2018). This research aims to provide empirical evidence on the effectiveness of media literacy initiatives and suggest improvements to current educational frameworks to better prepare citizens to navigate the complex information landscape.

Furthermore, this study addresses the growing concern of declining public trust in media and political institutions. The spread of post-truth narratives has eroded confidence in traditional news outlets and led to increased scepticism towards political information (Newman et al., 2020). By analysing the factors that influence public trust and the role of selective exposure in shaping perceptions, the research offers multiple insights into how trust can be restored. This is particularly relevant in India, where trust in political institutions and media is essential for maintaining social cohesion and democratic integrity (Banaji & Bhat, 2021).

The research also explores the implications of political polarization, which has been aggravated by selective exposure and the echo chambers created by social media algorithms (Sunstein, 2014). Following these intricacies is vital for formulating “effective strategies” to bridge ideological divides as well as to foster a more inclusive and informed public discourse. The study's findings are beneficial for policymakers seeking to implement regulations that promote media diversity and reduce the impact of polarization on democratic processes.

Moreover, this study provides helpful understandings for media practitioners, who play a fundamental role in influencing public opinion and discourse. The research highlights the importance of journalistic integrity, accuracy, and transparency in combating misinformation. By identifying best practices and strategies for responsible journalism, the study aims to support media professionals in their efforts to uphold the standards of their profession and contribute to a more informed society (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017).

Educators and academic institutions also stand to benefit from the findings of this study. The study emphasizes the imperative of integrating media literacy pedagogy into academic curricula to equip students with the critical acumen necessary for discerning engagement with information in the digital era. By fostering critical thinking skills and an understanding of the media landscape, educators can empower the next generation to become discerning consumers and creators of information (Hobbs, 2010).

This study is important in its contribution to understanding the complexities of “media influence in the post-truth era” within the Indian context. Its findings will inform media literacy initiatives, policy development, and journalistic practices, in the long run promoting a more informed and engaged citizenry capable of navigating the challenges of misinformation and political polarization. The research aims to provide a comprehensive framework for addressing the issues arising from the post-truth phenomenon, thereby enhancing the overall quality of public discourse and democratic engagement in India.

## **1.6 Aim of the Study**

The aim of this study is to provide empirical evidence on the impact of post-truth narratives and selective exposure on public perception and trust in political information. By analyzing data from surveys and expert interviews, the research seeks to identify the prevalence of post-truth narratives, the patterns of selective exposure, and their implications for political polarization and trust in media.

## **1.7 Context of Jammu and Kashmir**

Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) provides a unique and pertinent context for this study. The region's media landscape is marked by significant challenges, including frequent internet shutdowns, stringent media policies, and a complex socio-political environment (Majeed, 2022). The political system of J&K has undergone significant transformations, influenced by both domestic and geopolitical factors (Dar, 2023; Bajpae, 2022). These dynamics make J&K an ideal case study for examining “the impact of post-truth narratives” and selective exposure on public perception and trust in media.

## **1.8 Brief Overview of Post-Truth in India**

The post-truth concept has gained considerable traction in India, especially in the political realm. Since the rise of Narendra Modi to power in 2014, India has experienced a proliferation of emotive rhetoric and the dissemination of misinformation within its political discourse. (Goswami, 2022). This era has seen a shift towards a more polarized and divided society, where facts are often overshadowed by beliefs and emotions. The media's involvement in this context has been both pivotal and problematic, as the spread of misinformation and the creation of echo chambers have intensified existing divides (Mallia, 2021; Ulya, 2018).

## **INTRODUCTION TO POST-TRUTH**

### **1.9.1 Conceptualizing the Post-Truth Era**

The term "post-truth" gained widespread attention following its selection as the Oxford Dictionaries' Word of the Year in 2016. "It describes a cultural and political context where objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief" (McIntyre, 2018). This epoch is defined by the rampant spread of misinformation, disinformation, and fabricated narratives, frequently propagated via digital and social media platforms. The post-truth paradigm disrupts conventional conceptions of truth and epistemology, rendering it progressively arduous for individuals to distinguish fact from falsehood within a media ecosystem inundated with contradictory information (D'Ancona, 2017).

This period challenges traditional notions of truth and knowledge, rendering it ever more challenging for individuals to "discern fact from fiction in a media landscape" saturated with conflicting information (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). The philosophical underpinnings of "post-truth era" can be traced to postmodernist thinkers like Baudrillard and Foucault, who argued that media can create hyperrealities that shape perceptions of truth (Marwick & Lewis, 2017). The relationship between "selective news consumption" and "political polarization" has garnered significant interest within the domain of communication scholarship. Nonetheless, despite the documented presence of selective exposure in various contexts, such as offline and online settings, there is not a consensus regarding the scope of this phenomenon and its implications for political polarization (Tóth et al., 2022/2023). The "post-truth" concept of has roots in the wider historical and philosophical discussions about the nature of truth and the

influence of media. Postmodernist thinkers Jean Baudrillard and Michel Foucault have long argued that media can create hyperrealities and power dynamics that shape perceptions of truth. In this light, The post-truth epoch may be interpreted as a continuation of these antecedent theories, amplified by the digital revolution and the widespread emergence of social media platforms

### **1.9.2 Historical Development of the Post-Truth Era**

The term "post-truth" was first used in its modern context by Serbian American playwright Steve Tesich in his article "A Government of Lies," published in 1992. Tesich criticized the "American public" for acquiescently accepting the lies of George H. W. Bush's administration and choosing to live in a world where truth no longer held relevance" (Tesich, 1992) He contended that society had consciously chosen to inhabit a "post-truth" reality, signifying a cultural transformation wherein the notion of truth was progressively losing its relevance. Tesich's analysis was a foresighted commentary on the evolving dynamics of political and social discourse. The term resurfaced in 2004 with Ralph Keyes's book, "The Post-Truth Era" which discussed the growing disregard for truth in contemporary life (Keyes, 2004). Keyes argued that the erosion of truth was not just a byproduct of political spin or media bias, but a fundamental shift in the way society valued honesty and integrity. For nearly a decade, the term remained relatively obscure "until the 2016 American presidential elections and the Brexit referendum" events that significantly increased its usage and brought it to the forefront of political discourse. The tumultuous political climate of 2016, characterized by the spread of misinformation and emotionally charged rhetoric, highlighted the post-truth concept in a way that resonated globally.

That year, "post-truth" was selected as "the Word of the Year" by the Oxford Dictionary , defining it as "a situation where objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal beliefs" (Oxford Dictionary, 2016). This definition highlighted a profound change in public discourse, where feelings and subjective interpretations often overshadow factual evidence. The term "post-truth politics" was introduced in 2010 by blogger Roberts, (2021) on the website Grist, describing a political culture where public opinion and media narratives are disconnected from policy. Roberts used the term to highlight the behaviour of the Republican Party in the US Congress, which opposed Democratic policies to exploit follower loyalties rather than support their own policies.

### 1.9.3 Orwell's Insights and Doublethink Concept

To investigate whether “post-truth” is a novel “phenomenon”, this chapter opens with an examination of George Orwell's 1984. Orwell's work is frequently cited in discussions of post-truth because of its prescient depiction of a society where truth is manipulated by those in power. The contemporary situation is often compared with Orwell's depiction of a totalitarian dystopia, especially with the omnipresence of surveillance technologies. The phrase "Big Brother is watching" has become a reality in many ways, with the widespread use of cameras and data collection in public and private spaces.

Orwell suggested that

*“politicians across the political spectrum lie, making their lies sound truthful”:  
"Political language—and with the variations this is true of all political parties, from conservatives to anarchist—is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind" (Orwell, 1949/2021).*

Orwell's analysis of political language reveals a deep understanding of the mechanisms by which truth is distorted. He argued that political language is crafted to obscure reality and manipulate public perception, a phenomenon that is increasingly evident in today's media landscape.

Some scholars argue that the character of Winston Smith in 1984 and his fate reflect the treatment of contemporary whistle-blowers like Julian Assange, Edward Snowden, and Chelsea Manning. These individuals have faced persecution for revealing truths that challenge the system. Their experiences highlight the risks associated with exposing inconvenient truths in a post-truth world. Whistle-blowers often face significant personal and professional consequences for their actions, reflecting the hostile environment for truth-tellers in contemporary society.

Orwell was the first writer who insisted upon taking the emotional field of politics seriously, emphasizing the unsubstantiated relationship of people with reason and truth. Now for a decade, that phenomenon is called post-truth politics. After the 9/11 incident, scholars started



to study “the voting behavior of the people” with a particular focus on the influence of emotional appeals and policy considerations in cultivating voter trust. The phenomena of post-truth were observed by Orwell in the first half of the 20th century. Now the concept is developed more “post-2016 US presidential elections and the Brexit referendum.” This research takes Post-Truth and its Effects on Public Perception of Political Information and the role of media into investigation to understand its impact and future consequences it holds for democratic societies like India using selective exposure theory.

Orwell's understanding of post-truth was mainly linked with the way he observed Hitler's emotional appeals. What is now referred to as “post-truth” can be likened to the concept of “doublethink,” as introduced by Orwell in his novel 1984. He stated that

*"To know and not to know, to be conscious of complete truthfulness while telling carefully constructed lies, to hold simultaneously two opinions which cancelled out, knowing them both to be contradictory and believing in both of them; to repudiate morality while laying claim to it" (Orwell, 1949/2021)*

Doublethink induces people to overlook reality and accept an alternative reality. This cognitive dissonance allows for the acceptance of multiple conflicting truths, making it easier for politicians to manipulate public perception. Fake news, which spreads conspiracy theories through social media, exemplifies this characteristic of post-truth. Orwell described "organized lying" as systematic and integral to totalitarianism, emphasizing the importance of rewriting history to serve the regime's needs. He realized it in Spain, that how intentionally, “systematic lies” can be used as a political tool and how quickly those lies will be believed.

#### **1.9.4 Philosophical Perspectives**

In a blog post titled "Orwell and Post-Truth," Danae Karydaki discusses Orwell's exceptional understanding of “post-truth politics” decades before the term was introduced. Karydaki highlights Orwell's view that Hitler could manipulate reality to make trivial threats seem catastrophic. Applying this to contemporary politics, Karydaki concludes that many well-meaning liberal commentators failed to understand how social and economic anxieties could be transformed into support for populist, divisive politics (Karydaki, 2017). Karydaki's analysis

stresses the enduring relevance of Orwell's insights in understanding the dynamics of post-truth politics.

In her 1967 essay "*Truth and Politics*" philosopher Hannah Arendt argued that honesty and truthfulness have never been considered essential qualities for politicians. She asserted that lies are often seen as necessary tools for politicians and statesmen. Arendt asserted that the greatest adversary of "factual truth is opinion", especially when the lines between opinion and fact are blurred. This confusion, often spread by mass media, leads to a public that cannot distinguish between fabrication and reality. Arendt noted that early lies were primarily directed at enemies, but modern "lies are channeled domestically through mass media to deceive the public", making factual truth-tellers seem more dangerous than external enemies (Arendt, 1973).

Arendt's analysis highlights the role of mass media in spreading confusion and blurring the lines between fact and fiction. She argued that in an ever-changing, incomprehensible world, the masses could be made to believe anything and everything simultaneously. This willingness to accept absurdities reflects the deep cynicism and distrust that characterizes the post-truth era. Arendt's insights align with modern anxieties regarding the influence of misinformation and the diminishing public trust in institutions.

### **1.9.5 Modern Scholars' Views**

Prof. Yuval Noah Harari argues that "humans have always lived in an age of post-truth". He describes "Homo sapiens" as a "post-truth species" capable of creating as well believing in fabricated stories, such as myths, ideologies, and religions, to develop cooperation among strangers. Harari highlights that the post-truth phenomenon is intrinsic to human nature, rooted in Homo sapiens' capacity to "construct narratives," fabricate them, and embrace them as truths. This storytelling ability has been pivotal in fostering cooperation among unrelated individuals. Throughout history, Homo sapiens have consistently valued power over truth, dedicating more effort and resources to governing the world than to comprehending it. Harari further differentiates modern fake news with technology, which allows propaganda to be individualized according to a person's prejudices. Data hackers exploit individual weaknesses to fabricate content, strengthening prejudices and undermining democratic systems. For him, disinformation is not new, even denying nations entirely and creating fake ones has a prolonged history. For example, in 1931, the Japanese army attempted a fake attack on itself to justify its

invasion of China, creating a fake country called Manchukuo to legitimize the invasion. Similarly, China has a long history of denying Tibet was ever an independent state (Harari, 2019).

Lee McIntyre, in his book "Post-Truth," offers three illustrations of post-truth in various countries, emphasizing the importance of "respecting the truth" through scientific methodologies. McIntyre contends that the uniqueness of the "post-truth phenomenon" lies in the subjugation of facts to personal perceptions rather than the rejection of truth. He notes that cognitive biases make people vulnerable to manipulation, especially when credible sources of knowledge are discredited (McIntyre, 2018). McIntyre's analysis highlights the need for a rigorous commitment to truth and the scientific method to combat the spread of misinformation. Lekka-Kowalik (2022) argues that post-truth replaces facts with emotion, substituting argumentation with power, and threatening individual freedom and rationality. Her analysis highlights the dangers of a political culture that prioritizes emotional appeals over rational discourse. This suggests that such a shift may undermine democratic governance and individual autonomy.

Keane (2018) describes post-truth as "an omnibus term" that brings together multiple interconnected communicative phenomena designed to confuse recipients. He explains that its power lies in this hybrid form, which mixes old-fashioned lying, emotional appeals, buffoonery, and silence into performances that function as tools of political manipulation. Ultimately, Keane argues, this erosion of truth signals the weakening of traditional democratic politics.

In the global post-truth era, politics takes an allegedly indecisive relationship to truth, relying more on feelings and identity. In an interview with Carole Cadwalladr, American philosopher Daniel Dennett stated that humanity is entering an era of "epistemological murk and uncertainty," unseen since the Middle Ages. He argues that the real danger lies in the lack of respect for truth and facts, leading to a world where people have lost the will to understand reality based on evidence (Cadwalladr, 2017). Dennett's concerns reflect the broader anxiety about the impact of post-truth on intellectual and political life.

British professor Michael Marmot maintains that lies have always played a part in politics, but the shock of Donald Trump's presidency and the Brexit supporters' behavior show up the new

intensity of post-truth. Marmot argues that discussion is fundamental to science, but once one side presents factual evidence supporting their claims, the opposing side must acknowledge their mistake. Despite facts being the cornerstone of reality, they have lost their influence in the modern era. For instance, Donald Trump may claim that immigrants are responsible for a rise in murders and refuses to withdraw this assertion even when confronted with evidence disproving it. Using Harry Frankfurt's distinction from his book "On Bullshit," Marmot argues that Donald Trump best fits in the category of a bullshitter, as both the liar and bullshitter hide things while persuading listeners that what they are conveying is true. However, a bullshitter does not accept or reject the distinction between truth and falsehood, deliberately concealing the truth from the targeted audience. According to Marmot, Trump qualifies as a bullshitter because he exhibits a striking lack of concern for the veracity of his claims. As a result, he does not change his position in the face of data that refutes his claims (Marmot, 2017). Marmot's analysis features the challenge of engaging in rational discourse in a post-truth world, where evidence and reason are often disregarded.

While lies have long been a part of politics, according to Matthew d'Ancona, the year 2016 marked the beginning of the period post-truth. D'Ancona argues that the typical dishonesty of politicians does not make this time unique; rather, it is how people react to it. The normalization of lying, where politicians' untruths are expected and accepted, signifies a profound shift in public values. D'Ancona contends that the importance of truth has greatly decreased, skepticism and mockery question scientific conclusions, and emotions override reason. Experts are no longer regarded as reliable authorities on knowledge and information; rather, they are often met with skepticism and perceived as members of a malevolent establishment. Emotional stories and subjective interpretations have replaced objective facts (D'Ancona, 2017).

Modreanu (2017) traces the rise of the post-truth era to the influence of agnotology, or culturally generated ignorance and doubt. She notes that political correctness has morphed into euphemistic language—such as referring to someone “ethically challenged” instead of calling them a liar—which has eroded clear distinctions between truth and falsehood. Deception, she claims, now functions not just as a rhetorical tool but as a habitual, game-like behavior in public life.

### 1.9.6 Post-Truth and Politics

In examining the contemporary political landscape, “the concept of post-truth has gained growing relevance” reflecting a range of societal transformations. The phrase can refer to the prominence of unsubstantiated or entirely false claims in political discourse, the general decline in the importance of truth in modern society, and the predominance of feelings over factual information. Opinions on the post-truth phenomenon range widely, from outright denial to hesitant acceptance and occasionally even alarming exaggeration (Kalpokas, 2019).

Mair (2017) argues that a fundamentally new level of dishonesty defines the idea of "post-truth" among politicians. It entails the creation of false information rather than merely being selective in how the truth is presented. In the post-truth era, verifiable facts are fabricated on the spot to conform to a particular narrative or larger objective. This means that every narrative of an event, trend, or phenomenon is accompanied by a counter-account, highlighting the dynamic and contested nature of social reality (Döveling et al., 2018).

The growth of the “post-truth phenomenon” has deeper psychological component that is essential to it. Political narratives based on post-truth can easily become aspirational. Similar to how people frequently portray traits and virtues in their personal lives that they do not actually possess, these "aspirational lies" on a political level center around enhancing the collective identity. They aim to make the collective "we" great again by aggrandizing and enhancing the collective identity (and, by extension, one's personal identity) (McGranahan, 2017).

### 1.10 Findings About Post-Truth

- **Purposeful Departure from Objective Facts:** Post-truth is characterized by a deliberate move away from objective facts, with a greater reliance on emotions, personal views, and narratives. In post-truth politics, where people, particularly politicians, may put power ahead of truth, deception is a recurring theme.
- **Historical Precedents:** George Orwell's works, especially "1984," offered early insights into the politicization of reality and the function of propaganda. Orwell's

remarks on doublethink and the rewriting of history are still relevant in today's post-truth debates.

- **Change in Public Perception:** The public's perception of and value for truth has changed in the “post-truth era”. Objective facts “no longer hold” the same significance they once did, and there is a growing skepticism towards conventional wisdom. Objective evidence has frequently been substituted by emotional tales and subjective interpretations.
- **Technology's Contribution:** The spread of false information and fake news has been accelerated by technological advancements, particularly those in social media. Information may now be tailored to fit each person's preconceptions, making it simpler to sway public opinion.
- **Concerns to Democracy:** Because it undermines the basis for reasoned decision-making, post-truth societies face issues. It becomes challenging for citizens to make logical decisions that are in their best interests when facts become mutable and vulnerable to interpretation.

Although the idea of post-truth is not new, its modern applications raise significant concerns about the state of democracy, the function of information in society, and the obligations of political figures and the media to preserve the truth. For the health of democratic institutions and an informed populace in the modern period, it is fundamental to recognise and solve problems caused by “post-truth politics”.

## 1.11 Summary

The idea of post-truth has deep historical origins and is not a new phenomenon. It has been watched, debated, and examined by academics, philosophers, and writers for many years. The 2016 American presidential elections and the Brexit vote brought the term “post-truth” to the political forefront, but its basic dynamics have been present in human society for a very long time. The concept of post-truth is characterized by a purposeful departure from objective facts and a greater reliance on emotions, personal views, and narratives. Deception is a recurring theme in post-truth politics, where power often takes precedence over truth.

George Orwell's works, especially “1984,” offered early insights into the politicization of reality and the function of propaganda. Orwell's remarks on doublethink and the rewriting of

history remain relevant in today's post-truth debates. The public's perception of and value for truth has changed in the post-truth era, with a growing skepticism towards conventional wisdom and a tendency to prioritize emotional tales over objective evidence. Technological advancements, particularly in social media, have amplified the dissemination of false information and fabricated news, thereby fueling the post-truth phenomenon. Information can now be tailored to fit individual preconceptions, making it easier to sway “public opinion”.

Although the notion of post-truth is not novel, its contemporary manifestations evoke profound concerns regarding the condition of democracy, the role of information within society, and the responsibilities of political leaders and media to uphold truth. Safeguarding the integrity of democratic institutions and fostering an informed citizenry in the modern era necessitates recognizing and confronting the challenges posed by post-truth politics.

## **1.12 Overview of Chapterization**

- **Chapter 2: Review of Literature** - This chapter covers a comprehensive review of literature on selective exposure studies, “post-truth narratives and their implications” in the Indian context. It includes an analysis of previous research to identify the research gap and the need for this study.
- **Chapter 3: Theoretical framework and Methodology** - This chapter provides a detailed explanation of the theoretical framework and methodology adopted in the study. It includes theories applied in this study, the rationale behind the chosen methods, sample size determination, data collection procedures, and analytical techniques.
- **Chapter 4: Statistical Tests and Results** - This chapter presents the empirical findings of the study, with each section addressing a specific hypothesis. It includes statistical analysis using Chi-square tests and measures of association to understand the relationships between variables.
- **Section 4.1: Objective 1** - Prevalence of post-truth narratives.
- **Section 4.2: Objective 2** - Selective exposure behaviour.

- **Section 4.3: Objective 3** - Impact on public trust and polarization.
- **Section 4.4: Objective 4** - Role of media in promoting objectivity.
- **Chapter 5: Interview Discussion** - This chapter discusses the qualitative insights gained from expert interviews, employing thematic analysis to examine the media's role in the post-truth era and the widespread occurrence of selective exposure.
- **Chapter 6: Conclusion** - This chapter summarizes the key findings, discusses the implications for media practices and public policy, evaluates the fulfillment of the research objectives and hypotheses, and offers recommendations for future research.

This research addresses significant gaps in the understanding of “post-truth narratives and their effects on public perception” and trust in political information. By studying the association between “selective exposure”, “misinformation”, and media practices, the study aims to participate to the advancement of strategies that can encourage a healthier and more informed democratic discourse.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

## INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2 presents a ample review of the literature on misinformation, disinformation, and selective exposure, emphasizing their significant impacts on media consumption, public trust, and political polarization. This chapter explores the theoretical underpinnings and empirical evidence surrounding these phenomena, with a particular focus on how they interact within the framework of the post-truth era.

The literature review spans various themes, beginning with the definitions and distinctions between misinformation and disinformation and their proliferation through modern digital platforms. This discussion includes an examination of the roles and consequences of social media in accelerating the spread of false information and shaping public discourse.

Moreover, the chapter looks into the psychological and sociological aspects of how individuals interact with information, highlighting theories such as cognitive dissonance, confirmation bias, and motivated reasoning. These psychological insights provide a deeper understanding of why selective exposure occurs and how it contributes to reinforcing pre-existing beliefs and exacerbating ideological divides.

Furthermore, this chapter reviews empirical studies that demonstrate the real-world implications of misinformation and selective exposure, such as their roles in political polarization and their impact on public trust in media and institutions. Special attention is given to the effects of these dynamics in various geopolitical contexts, with a focus on both global and Indian perspectives.

This chapter sets the stage for understanding the multifaceted association between “media practices”, “public perception”, and political behavior in the digital age, thus providing a solid foundation for the subsequent empirical investigation detailed in later chapters of this thesis.

### **2.1 Misinformation and Disinformation**

“Misinformation refers to false or misleading information spread without malicious intent, while disinformation involves deliberately misleading or biased information” (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). The ascendance of social media has notably contributed to the rapid spread

of both misinformation and disinformation. Research by Vosoughi et al. (2018) found that “false news spreads more quickly and broadly on social media platforms than true news”, primarily due to its novelty and emotional appeal. This finding highlights the role of user engagement metrics in prioritizing sensational content, which often includes false information. Bakir and McStay (2018) examined the strategic dissemination of disinformation, finding that these campaigns are often designed to exploit social and political divisions, thereby undermining democratic processes. Disinformation campaigns are frequently state-sponsored or politically motivated, aiming to destabilize societies by creating confusion and distrust. While Bakir and McStay (2018) focus on the strategic, top-down dissemination of disinformation, the research by Pennycook et al. (2018) shifts the focus to the individual-level cognitive processes that make such campaigns effective. Their findings suggest that the success of deliberate disinformation campaigns is facilitated by widespread cognitive biases, such as the public's reliance on intuition over analytical thinking, which they identified as key factors in the belief and spread of misinformation. (Pennycook et al., 2018) identified cognitive biases, such as the reliance on intuition over analytical thinking, as “key factors contributing to the spread of misinformation”. Their findings suggest that promoting critical thinking skills could mitigate the impact of false information, emphasizing the need for educational interventions that enhance media literacy.

Vosoughi et al. (2018) demonstrated that the novelty and emotional content of false information drive its spread more effectively than true information. This highlights the challenge for platforms that prioritize engagement metrics over accuracy. Bakir and McStay (2018) pointed out that disinformation is often strategically disseminated to exploit and deepen social and political divides, further eroding trust in democratic institutions.

## **2.2 Fake News**

Fake news, a subset of disinformation, refers to “news articles that are intentionally and verifiably false and could mislead readers” (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). The impact of fake news has been particularly pronounced in political contexts, influencing public opinion and electoral outcomes. Studies have shown that exposure to fake news can significantly alter individuals' perceptions and beliefs, even in the presence of counteracting information (Nyhan & Reifler, 2010). The extensive spread of fake news during the 2016 U.S. presidential election stands as a glaring example of its capacity to influence political landscapes.

A study conducted by Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) investigated the fake news impact on political polarization during the presidential election 2016 U.S. The researchers originate that “exposure to fake news” significantly prejudiced individuals' political attitudes, contributing to increased polarization. The study highlighted the role of social media in facilitating the spread of fake news and its influence on political beliefs. This highlights the necessity of understanding the mechanisms through which fake news propagates and its broader implications for democratic societies.

Further research by Friggeri et al. (2014) on Facebook found that false news often garnered more interactions than corrections, indicating that social media platforms' engagement algorithms may inadvertently prioritize misinformation due to its high shareability. This highlights the challenge of combating fake news in environments where engagement metrics drive content visibility. Vosoughi et al. (2018) further corroborated this by showing that “false news stories are 70% more likely to be retweeted than true ones”, highlighting the compelling nature of false information.

### **2.3 The Role of Social-Media**

"Social media platforms" play a crucial role in the "dissemination of information" in the "post-truth era." These platforms are engineered to optimize user engagement, frequently privileging sensationalistic or emotionally provocative content. Algorithms that prioritize engagement can amplify the “spread of misinformation and disinformation”, as such content tends to elicit strong emotional reactions and encourage sharing (Tucker et al., 2018). As a result, users “are more likely to encounter and share false information”, reinforcing their “existing beliefs” and aiding to the “formation of echo chambers” (Flaxman et al., 2016).

Guess et al., (2019), observed that the consumption of “fake news” is concentrated among a small group of users with strong partisan leanings, emphasizing selective exposure role “in the dissemination of misinformation”. This corroborates the findings of Flaxman et al. (2016), who demonstrated that individuals prefer news that “aligns with their pre-existing beliefs”, creating “echo chambers” that reinforce ideological divides. These findings point to the need for interventions that address the algorithmic biases inherent in “social media platforms”.

The phenomenon of selective exposure and echo chambers, as documented by Flaxman et al. (2016) and Guess et al. (2019), is not solely a product of human choice. It is actively amplified

by non-human actors. Ferrara et al. (2016) studied the rise of 'social bots,' demonstrating that automated accounts were responsible for a significant portion of the dissemination of fake news. This automation creates an artificial perception of widespread belief, which in turn encourages human users within these echo chambers to share the content further, creating a vicious cycle of misinformation

Eady et al. (2019) found that while social media can increase exposure to diverse perspectives, “it also facilitates the rapid spread of false information”. The dual function of social media platforms in promoting and hindering the dissemination of accurate information highlights the challenges in leveraging these platforms for public good. Ferrara et al. (2016) emphasized the significant “role of social bots in spreading misinformation” illustrating the automated nature of many disinformation campaigns.

## **2.4 Trust and Media Credibility**

The “post-truth era” has resulted in a considerable decline in “trust in traditional media” and authoritative sources. The proliferation of misinformation and disinformation has made it “increasingly challenging for individuals to distinguish between credible information and falsehoods”. This erosion of trust carries significant implications for democratic governance, as public confidence in the media is crucial for informed civic engagement and accountability (Ladd, 2011). The decline in trust is exacerbated by the hostile media effect, where people see media coverage as “biased against” their “perspectives” (Vallone et al., 1985).

Newman et al. (2020) conducted a global survey on trust in media, finding a significant decline in trust, particularly in countries with high levels of misinformation. This decline in trust is further exacerbated by the proliferation of alternative media sources that often present biased or misleading information. Graves (2016) analyzed the effectiveness of fact-checking initiatives, finding that while they can correct false beliefs, their reach and influence are limited. This stresses the need for broader strategies to fight “misinformation” beyond fact-checking. The persistence of misinformation and the backfire effect, where corrections can reinforce false beliefs (Nyhan & Reifler, 2010; Thorson, 2015), further complicate efforts to address misinformation.

The association between “media trust” and the “perceived accuracy” of news sources is influenced by exposure to misinformation, fact-checking, and news consumption patterns. Perceived accuracy enhances trust (Kožuš & Čaks, 2023), while exposure to false news decreases trust and increases skepticism, leading to misjudgments (Altay et al., 2023). This study emphasized the importance of accuracy and fact-checking in maintaining public trust in media. These results feature the critical “role of media” credibility in fostering informed “public discourse”.

## **2.5 Historical Background of Selective Exposure Theory**

This erosion of trust in traditional media, as documented in Section 2.5, is both a cause and a consequence of selective exposure behavior. When individuals distrust mainstream sources, they are more likely to seek information from alternative outlets that align with their worldview. This psychological tendency is explained by the selective exposure theory, which has its roots in cognitive dissonance theory developed by Leon Festinger in 1957. Selective exposure theory has its roots in “cognitive dissonance theory”, developed by Leon Festinger in 1957. “Cognitive dissonance” theory posits that “individuals experience psychological discomfort when they encounter information that conflicts with their beliefs” (Festinger, 1957). To decrease this discomfort, individuals engage in “selective exposure”, “seeking out consonant information and avoiding dissonant information”. This theoretical framework provides a basis for understanding why individuals “gravitate towards information that aligns with their existing beliefs and avoid contradictory information”.

## **2.6 Mechanisms of Selective Exposure**

Several psychological mechanisms support selective exposure behavior.

### **Cognitive dissonance**

“Cognitive dissonance theory suggests that individuals are motivated to maintain cognitive consistency by avoiding information that contradicts their existing beliefs” (Festinger, 1957). This motivation leads to selective exposure, where individuals preferentially “seek out information that aligns with their beliefs and avoid information that challenges them”. The

discomfort associated with “cognitive dissonance” drives individuals to create environments that reinforce their pre-existing views.

### **Confirmation bias**

“Confirmation bias refers to the tendency to search for, interpret, favor, and recall information in a way that confirms one's pre-existing beliefs” (Nickerson, 1998). This bias causes individuals to place excessive value on information that aligns with their views, while dismissing or undervaluing information that challenges them. “Confirmation bias” is particularly pronounced in the context of political information, where deeply held beliefs and identities are at stake. This bias not only affects information consumption but also influences how individuals process and remember information.

### **Motivated reasoning**

Motivated reasoning is the process by which individuals selectively gather and evaluate information to arrive at conclusions that are congruent with their desires or preferences (Kunda, 1990). This process involves both selective exposure to information and selective interpretation of that information. Research has shown that motivated reasoning can lead individuals to accept weak evidence that supports their beliefs while dismissing strong evidence that contradicts them (Taber & Lodge, 2006). This features the role of cognitive biases in perpetuating misinformation and the challenge of correcting false beliefs.

## **2.7 Empirical Evidence of Selective Exposure**

Empirical studies have consistently demonstrated the prevalence of selective exposure behavior. Stroud (2010) learnt that “individuals who identify strongly with a political party are more likely” to consume media that aligns with their party's views and avoid media that presents opposing viewpoints. This behavior is not limited to political information but extends to various domains where beliefs and attitudes play a crucial role, such as health information (Wedderhoff et al., 2022) and environmental issues (Weber & Stern, 2011)

Garrett (2009) conducted a study examining “selective exposure to online political information”. The findings indicated that “individuals are more likely to seek out information

that aligns with their political views and avoid information that challenges them”. This behavior was “particularly” pronounced among individuals with strong political affiliations. These findings highlight the pervasive nature of selective exposure and its implications for public discourse and political polarization.

Moreover, selective exposure is influenced by affective forecasting errors, where individuals overestimate the negative emotions, they will experience from encountering opposing views. This miscalculation drives their preference for congenial information. For instance, political partisans have been found to overestimate the negative effect from consuming information from opposing parties, increasing selective exposure (Dorison et al., 2019). Additionally, selective exposure involves identity signalling, as people choose information aligning with their beliefs to convey their identity, avoiding uncongenial information which can feel uncomfortable and inauthentic (Hart et al., 2020).

## **2.8 Selective Exposure and Political Polarization**

Rising polarization is not simply a phenomenon confined to the developing world. The long-standing trends of rather consensual competition in Europe among center-right and center-left parties are evolving towards increased political polarization due to the emergence of populist factions challenging traditional political entities and practices. The case of Poland, for instance, has defied expectations of a smooth democratic consolidation process, instead experiencing significant polarization. The escalating tensions in the country, fueled by a right-wing populist party and a confrontational opposition, present a grave risk to the autonomy of the Polish judiciary and other essential democratic establishments (O'Donohue & Carothers, 2020; McCoy et al. 2018). “Selective exposure contributes to political polarization” by reinforcing existing beliefs and attitudes, “leading individuals to become more entrenched in their views”. This “process creates echo chambers, where individuals are exposed primarily to information that aligns with their beliefs”, further isolating them from opposing perspectives. Sunstein (2009) describes this phenomenon as “cyberbalkanization,” where the “internet and social media” create fragmented groups of like-minded individuals who rarely encounter divergent viewpoints. This isolation can exacerbate political polarization and reduce the likelihood of constructive dialogue and compromise.



A study by Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) examined the impact of fake news on political polarization during the presidential election 2016 U.S. The researchers found that exposure to fake news significantly influenced individuals' political attitudes, contributing to increased polarization. The study highlighted the function of “social media in facilitating the spread of fake news” and its impact on political beliefs. These findings highlight the importance of addressing selective exposure as a key factor in mitigating political polarization.

Iyengar and Hahn (2009) “provided empirical evidence of selective exposure” in the context of cable news, finding that individuals prefer news outlets that align with their political views. This behavior is not limited to social media but is prevalent across various media consumption habits. The concept of motivated reasoning, explored by Kunda (1990), further explains how individuals “process information in a way that aligns with their desires and pre-existing beliefs”, reinforcing their existing attitudes.

Mitchell et al. (2016) conducted a survey on media trust, finding that trust in news varies significantly by source and demographic factors. Their study revealed that individuals with strong partisan identities are more likely to trust news sources that align with their political views and distrust sources that present opposing viewpoints. These findings highlight the critical role of selective exposure in shaping media trust and its implications for political polarization.

The empirical evidence of selective exposure in cable news provided by Iyengar and Hahn (2009) illustrates the micro-level behavior that leads to the macro-level societal threat described by McCoy et al. (2018). McCoy et al. (2018) argue that the severe polarization fueled by these behaviors is fundamentally relational and poses a significant threat to democracy itself, as it leads citizens to perceive politics in stark 'Us' versus 'Them' terms.

McCoy et al. (2018) argues that severe political and societal polarization, which is increasingly evident worldwide, poses significant threats to democracy. This polarization goes beyond mere ideological differences between political entities; it is fundamentally relational and strategically used in politics. It occurs when various societal differences align along a single dimension, leading individuals to perceive politics and society in stark "US" versus "Them" terms. The resulting oppositional political discourse and intergroup conflicts, rooted in social psychology, are primary sources of the democratic threats posed by this polarization.

Arbatli and Rosenberg (2020) seek to empirically examine the connections between political polarization and the erosion of democracy, addressing a gap in existing research that often overlooks contemporary polarization. They contend that polarization heightens animosity between opposing groups, leading voters to be more accepting of anti-democratic actions against their adversaries, especially during critical election periods. The authors propose that political polarization correlates with increased “government intimidation of the opposition”, with this bond being more pronounced in “democracies than in autocracies”. They develop a new measure of “political polarization” based on “Esteban and Ray’s metric and test their hypotheses” using panel data, supported by “anecdotal evidence from Turkey, Hungary, and the United States”. Key aspects of their research include the theoretical framework linking polarization to democratic erosion and the empirical analysis demonstrating this relationship.

## **2.9 Integration of Selective Exposure and Post-Truth**

The “relationship between selective exposure and the post-truth paradigm” has profound implications for media consumption and public trust. The tendency toward selective exposure, coupled with the widespread dissemination of misinformation in the “post-truth era,” serves to bolster individuals’ pre-existing beliefs and attitudes, resulting in heightened polarization and entrenched viewpoints. This dynamic significantly hinders the ability of factual information to challenge and rectify false narratives (Lewandowsky et al., 2012).

### **Media consumption patterns**

The combination of “selective exposure and the post-truth environment” influences media consumption patterns. Individuals are more likely to “seek out and consume information that aligns with their beliefs, while avoiding information that challenges them”. This behavior is facilitated by “social media algorithms” that prioritize content based on user engagement, often amplifying sensational or emotionally charged content that aligns with users’ beliefs (Pariser, 2011). These consumption patterns “contribute to the formation of echo chambers and filter bubbles”, where “individuals” are insulated from diverse perspectives.

Eady et al. (2019) investigated the “role of social media in spreading misinformation”, finding that while social media increases exposure to diverse perspectives, it also facilitates the rapid

“spread of false information”. Their study stressed the “dual role of social media” in both promoting and hindering the dissemination of accurate information. These findings suggest that while social media can expose users to a broader range of viewpoints, the engagement-driven nature of these platforms often amplifies misinformation.

### **Public trust and media credibility**

The interaction between selective exposure and the post-truth environment has led to a significant erosion of “trust in media and political institutions”. When individuals are consistently exposed to information that supports their views, they become more skeptical of information that contradicts their beliefs, even if it comes from reputable sources. This skepticism can extend to institutions that are perceived as promoting conflicting information, leading to a broader erosion of trust in authoritative sources (Lazer et al., 2018).

Kalogeropoulos et al. (2019) investigate how individuals judge media credibility across 35 countries, revealing that while consuming mainstream and alternative news sources tends to correlate with higher trust in news, relying on social media as a primary news source is associated with lower trust. This highlights how context and media type both significantly influence perceptions of credibility.

Newman et al. (2020) found that “trust in news” varies significantly by source and demographic factors. Their global survey revealed that trust in traditional media is declining, particularly in countries with high levels of misinformation. This decline in trust is further exacerbated by the proliferation of alternative media sources that often present biased or misleading information. These findings highlight the need for strategies to increase “media literacy and critical thinking skills” to help individuals steer the complex information landscape.

### **Political polarization**

The formation of “echo chambers” is a critical consequence of the interaction between selective exposure and post-truth dynamics. “Echo chambers are environments where individuals are primarily exposed to information that reinforces their beliefs”, with little exposure to opposing viewpoints. This isolation can exacerbate political polarization, “as individuals become more entrenched in their views and less open to dialogue” and compromise (Sunstein, 2009). The

post-truth era amplifies this effect by facilitating the rapid spread of misinformation that aligns with individuals' beliefs, further insulating them from divergent perspectives.

Flynn, Nyhan, and Reifler (2017) explored the effectiveness of fact-checking, finding that while it can correct false beliefs, its impact is often limited by partisan biases. Their research highlighted the challenges of correcting misinformation in a polarized environment where individuals are more “likely to accept information that aligns with their beliefs and dismiss information that contradicts them”. These results accentuate the importance of addressing cognitive biases and motivated reasoning in efforts to combat misinformation.

## **2.10 Empirical Studies**

Numerous empirical studies have explored the dynamics of “selective exposure, misinformation”, and “political polarization” in the “post-truth era”.

### **Misinformation and selective exposure**

During the Covid-19 pandemic, conservatives were more “exposed to and shared misinformation” on Twitter, while moderates filtered it out, influencing the information ecosystem (Rao et al., 2022). Misinformation amplifies election fraud beliefs, especially among conservatives, driven by motivated reasoning (Dahlke & Hancock, 2022). Garrett (2009) found strong political affiliations drive selective exposure to online political information.

### **Fake news and political polarization**

Ramaciotti Morales et al. (2023) states that Fake news and political polarization are intricately linked phenomena that have been extensively studied across various contexts and countries. Research indicates that the spread of fake news is not merely a result of individual cognitive biases but is deeply embedded in complex socio-political dynamics. For instance, political polarization, particularly anti-elite sentiments, significantly predicts the dissemination of misinformation, as seen in multi-dimensional ideological settings in France the study highlighted the “role of social media” in facilitating the spread of “fake news” and its impact on political beliefs.

## **Media trust and accuracy**

The prominence of accuracy and “fact-checking” in maintaining public trust in media is crucial, as highlighted in the paper. With the rise of media manipulation and the dissemination of misinformation, fact-checking becomes a priority to “combat the spread of false information”. Ensuring that news providers prioritize truthful reporting of facts helps in building credibility and trust among the audience. In today's news consumption landscape, where distrust in news sources is on the rise, accurate reporting and thorough fact-checking are essential to uphold the integrity of the media and retain public trust (Burkhardt, 2022). The study emphasized the importance of accuracy and fact-checking in maintaining public trust in media.

### **2.11 Additional Empirical Studies**

Lewandowsky et al. (2017) reviewed strategies for debunking misinformation, finding that pre-exposure to refutations can mitigate the impact of false information. However, Thorson (2015) noted that corrections are often ineffective due to motivated reasoning, suggesting that cognitive biases pose significant challenges to correcting misinformation. Weeks & Gil de Zúñiga, (2019) found that “exposure to fake news increases political cynicism and decreases political engagement”, highlighting the broader detrimental effects of misinformation.

Mitchell et al. (2016) conducted a survey on media trust, finding that trust in news varies significantly by source and demographic factors. Guess et al. (2019) explored the function of “social media” in “political polarization”, finding that social media use is associated with increased polarization. Druckman et al., (2013) found that exposure to partisan media reinforces existing attitudes, contributing to ideological divides.

Pennycook et al. (2020) studied the effects of warnings on misinformation, finding that specific and clear warnings can reduce belief in false information. Waisbord (2018) discussed the challenges of “journalism” in the “post-truth era”, emphasizing the importance of maintaining professional standards. Hameleers and Van der Meer (2019) found that populist rhetoric undermines trust in traditional news outlets, posing a challenge to maintaining public trust in media.

Flynn, Nyhan, and Reifler (2017) explored “the effectiveness of fact-checking”, finding that while it can correct false beliefs, its impact is often limited by partisan biases. Hindman (2018) analyzed the effectiveness of algorithmic transparency in mitigating the spread of misinformation, finding that greater transparency can reduce the impact of false information. Tandoc Jr. et al. (2018) examined the impact of fake news on journalism, finding that the rise of fake news has led to increased efforts by journalists to emphasize credibility and accuracy.

McNair (2017) discussed the function of media in democracy and the effect of commercial pressures on journalistic practices. Benkler et al.,(2018) analysed the impact of networked propaganda on public discourse, finding that coordinated disinformation campaigns can significantly influence political attitudes. Lazer et al. (2018) reviewed the state of misinformation research, highlighting the need for interdisciplinary approaches to address the challenges posed by misinformation.

Eady et al. (2019) investigated the role of “social media” in spreading “misinformation”, finding that while social media increases exposure to diverse perspectives, it also facilitates the rapid spread of false information. Shires, (2021) examination of the impact of disinformation on international relations aligns with a broad body of research indicating that state-sponsored disinformation campaigns significantly influence public opinion and policy decisions. “Disinformation, defined as the intentional and systematic dissemination of information” known to be false, disinformation poses a “significant threat to democratic processes” and crisis response efforts, such as during events like the coronavirus pandemic. Chagas (2023) and Saberon et al. (2019) analyzed the role of memes in political communication, finding that memes can be powerful tools for spreading both information and misinformation.

Brady & Kent (2022) studied the impact of political polarization on social cohesion, finding that increasing polarization is associated with decreased trust in political institutions. Harff et al., (2022) asserted the role of social media influencers in spreading misinformation, finding that influencers with large followings can significantly impact public opinion. Gottfried, (2016) conducted a survey on news consumption habits, finding that younger audiences are increasingly turning to “social media” for news, with implications for “exposure to misinformation”.

Mihailidis and Viotty (2017) evaluated media literacy initiatives, finding that media literacy education can enhance critical thinking skills. Martel, Pennycook, and Rand (2020) found that reliance on emotion increases the likelihood that individuals believe and share misinformation, highlighting how emotionally charged content can override more deliberative reasoning. Kahne & Bowyer, (2016) investigated the impact of political discussion on social media, finding that online discussions can both reinforce and challenge political beliefs.

Papacharissi & Oliveira (2012) explored the role of “social media in political mobilization”, finding that while social media can facilitate political engagement, it can also spread misinformation. Pennycook et al. (2020) studied the role of cognitive reflection in misinformation susceptibility, finding that “individuals with higher cognitive reflection are less likely to believe” and share “false information”. Francis et al. (2023) address the impact of digital journalism on public trust, finding that transparency and accountability are key to rebuilding trust in digital news.

Tandoc et al. (2018) investigated the impact of fact-checking on misinformation, finding that while fact-checking can reduce belief in false information, its effectiveness is limited by partisan biases. Zimmermann & Kohring, (2020) conducted a meta-analysis on media trust, finding that trust in media is influenced by perceptions of bias, accuracy, and transparency. This extensive literature review highlights the involved nature of post-truth narratives and their implications for political discourse and public trust in media and political institutions. The prevalence of misinformation, driven by cognitive biases and selective exposure behavior, contributes to the erosion of trust and increased political polarization. Media organizations play a crucial role in promoting objectivity and balanced reporting yet face significant challenges in maintaining public trust amidst commercial pressures and the rapid spread of false information. The findings from these empirical studies accentuate the need for comprehensive strategies to address misinformation, including promoting critical thinking skills, enhancing transparency, and ensuring diverse representation of political perspectives. By addressing these challenges, media organizations can contribute to a more informed public perception, mitigating the negative impact of post-truth narratives and fostering healthier democratic discourse.

## **2.12 Selective Exposure and Political Polarization in India**

### **Selective exposure in the Indian context**

The global dynamics of selective exposure and post-truth politics, as outlined in previous sections, manifest with distinct characteristics in the Indian context. The work of scholars like Neyazi (2017, 2019) demonstrates how the theoretical framework of selective exposure and echo chambers applies to India, arguing that digital platforms have blurred offline and online politics, embedding partisan rhetoric into everyday life. This has created a fertile ground for the phenomena studied elsewhere, as seen in the case of WhatsApp misinformation inciting mob violence, as investigated by Banaji and Bhat (2019)

“Selective exposure” theory, which posits that individuals preferentially consume “information” aligning with their “pre-existing beliefs”, has significant implications in the Indian political landscape. In India, media consumption is deeply intertwined with political affiliations, leading to distinct patterns of selective exposure. Studies have shown that Indian audiences, much like their global counterparts, tend to gravitate towards news sources that “confirm their political beliefs and avoid those that challenge them”.

### **Political polarization in India**

Political polarization in India has been exacerbated by the proliferation of partisan media outlets and the surge of social media platforms. The advent of digital media has provided a fertile ground for selective exposure, where “algorithms prioritize content that aligns with users’ preferences, creating echo chambers and filter bubbles”. This phenomenon is evident in the way political discourse is shaped on platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp, where misinformation and disinformation can spread rapidly.

Research on India demonstrates how social media has increasingly shaped and intensified political polarization. Neyazi (2017) argues that digital platforms have blurred the boundaries between offline and online politics, enabling negative partisan rhetoric to become embedded in everyday conversations. His analysis highlights how social media fosters echo chambers that amplify ideological divides, deepening political fragmentation in the country. Building on this perspective, Neyazi (2019) provides a more detailed account of how digital propaganda and the use of political bots have reshaped India’s online political landscape. The study shows how coordinated campaigns and algorithm-driven circulation of partisan content further reinforced polarization, particularly during election cycles. Together, these studies illustrate the dual role



of social media in India: as a space for political engagement but also as a tool for reinforcing existing biases, spreading misinformation, and intensifying partisan divides. Selective dissemination and consumption of information on WhatsApp reinforced ideological beliefs and contributed to political polarization (Williams, 2019).

### **Post-truth politics in India**

The concept of post-truth politics, where “objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief”, is particularly relevant in the Indian context. The term gained prominence in Indian political discourse following several high-profile incidents of misinformation and fake news, especially during election periods. The use of emotionally charged and factually dubious content to sway public opinion has become a common strategy among political actors.

The right-wing movement in India gained significant momentum in 2014 with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) ascending to national power. A defining feature of this movement, similar to its American counterpart, is the “post-truth condition,” marked by the strategic production and circulation of narratives that blur the boundaries between truth and falsehood for ideological purposes. Das (2023) critically examines this post-truth dynamic within India’s right-wing ecosystem, situating it in the context of the country’s capitalist political economy and underscoring its broader global relevance. This environment of post-truth politics not only undermines democratic processes but also exacerbates political polarization by reinforcing pre-existing biases and beliefs.

## **2.13 Consequences of Post-Truth**

### **Communal tensions and violence**

One of the most “dangerous” consequences of “post-truth” narratives in India is the exacerbation of communal tensions. False information and rumors spread via social media and messaging platforms have led to mob lynchings and violent attacks on individuals based on unfounded suspicions. For instance, numerous cases of mob violence were triggered by rumors of child kidnappers circulating on WhatsApp, resulting in the deaths of innocent people (Banaji et al., 2019)

## **Public health threats**

The impact of post-truth on public health is also significant. The persistence of anti-vaccine narratives and misinformation about medical treatments can undermine public health initiatives. During the COVID-19 pandemic, misinformation about the virus, its transmission, and vaccine safety spread widely, leading to vaccine hesitancy and reluctance to follow “public health guidelines”. This has hampered “efforts to control the spread of the virus” and “protect public health” (Al-Zaman, 2021; Prasad, 2023; Dhalaria et al., 2022)

## **2.14 Case Studies**

### **The citizenship amendment act (CAA) and National register of citizens (NRC)**

The debates and protests surrounding the CAA and NRC have been marked by a plethora of misinformation and emotionally charged narratives. Both supporters and opponents of the legislation have used post-truth tactics to mobilize public opinion, often resorting to exaggerated claims and selective presentation of facts. This has led to widespread confusion, fear, and polarization among the populace (Deb, 2019)

### **Farmers' protests**

The farmers' protests against the new agricultural laws introduced by the Indian government in 2020 saw a significant use of post-truth narratives. Both the government and protestors leveraged social media to spread their perspectives, often relying on emotional appeals and misinformation to strengthen their positions. This has contributed to a highly polarized and contentious public discourse (BAHL, 2024; Menon, 2020)

## **2.15 Scholarly Works on Post-Truth in India**

Several scholarly works and books have examined the “phenomenon of post-truth” in India. One such work is *India Misinformed: The True Story* by Sinha, Shaikh, and Sidharth (2019), which documents how fake news and misinformation have increasingly shaped political narratives. The authors show how systematic campaigns of disinformation—particularly around elections and communal issues—have contributed to the rise of post-truth politics,

undermining democratic processes and eroding public trust in institutions (Sinha, Shaikh, & Sidharth, 2019). Das (2023) found that the “right-wing movement in India” gained momentum in 2014 with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) taking national power. This movement, characterized by post-truth tactics, spreads ideological falsehoods to deny objective social and economic structures, supported by India's capitalist economy. "India Misinformed: The True Story" edited by Pratik Sinha and Arjun Sidharth, provides an in-depth analysis of various instances of misinformation in India. The book highlights how fake news and post-truth narratives have influenced public opinion and contributed to social and political instability (Sinha et al., 2019). The study analyzes works by Arundhati Roy, Amitav Ghosh, and Kiran Desai to examine how Indian writers address the blurring of truth and fiction and the preference for subjective narratives over empirical evidence. It highlights how Indian English literature offers insights into the interplay of truth, power, and storytelling in the post-truth era (Kumari, 2024).

## **2.16 Empirical Studies and Theoretical Perspectives**

Empirical studies on selective exposure and political polarization provide a nuanced understanding of how media consumption patterns contribute to misinformation (Hameleers & van der Meer, 2020). Analysis of retweet networks revealed patterns of selective exposure among Indian politicians, showing fragmented interactions and support networks. The highest polarization was observed in discussions on Farm Bills and Citizenship Amendment Act, with lower polarization in topics like COVID-19. These findings confirm that selective exposure is prevalent in the retweet networks, highlighting social media's role in both opening up conversation spaces and fostering polarized communication (Ksiazek, 2016). Banaji and Bhat (2019) investigated how WhatsApp misinformation is received and circulated among citizens, highlighting its role in inciting mob violence in India.

The theoretical framework provided by these studies aligns with global research on selective exposure and post-truth politics, while also highlighting unique aspects of the Indian media landscape. The association between traditional media, digital platforms, and political actors in India creates a complex environment where “selective exposure and political polarization” are mutually reinforcing phenomena. The literature on “selective exposure and political polarization” in India highlights the significant “impact of media consumption patterns” on political discourse. The rise of partisan media and the proliferation of social media platforms

have facilitated “selective exposure”, leading to increased “political polarization”. The advent of post-truth politics further complicates this landscape, as misinformation and emotionally charged narratives shape public opinion and reinforce ideological divides. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach, including promoting media literacy, enhancing transparency in media practices, and fostering critical thinking among media consumers.

## **2.17 Problem Statement**

The spread of misinformation and disinformation on social media has undermined the trustworthiness of traditional news sources and contributed to increased political polarization in India (Sinha et al., 2019; Banaji et al., 2019). Despite the significant impact of these changes, there is a lack of empirical data on how individuals perceive and trust different sources of political information, how often they encounter false information, and how these experiences influence their trust in media and political institutions (Newman et al., 2020).

Moreover, the selective exposure theory suggests that individuals tend to consume information that aligns with their pre-existing beliefs, further reinforcing ideological divides (Festinger, 1957; Stroud, 2010). In the Indian context, algorithm-driven social media platforms exacerbate this behavior by prioritizing content that elicits strong emotional reactions, creating echo chambers where individuals are exposed primarily to information that confirms their biases, making it difficult for factual information to penetrate and correct false narratives (Thorson & Wells, 2016; Sunstein, 2009). Understanding the relationship between selective exposure and the post-truth environment is crucial for democratic processes and public discourse, as it informs strategies to combat misinformation, restore public trust in media, and foster a more informed and balanced political dialogue (Lazer et al., 2018; Lewandowsky et al., 2017).

## **2.18 Research Gap**

### **Trust in information sources**

Existing literature highlights the declining trust in traditional media and the increasing reliance on digital and social media platforms for political information (Ladd, 2012; Newman et al., 2020). However, empirical studies quantifying trust levels in traditional versus online/social media are limited, especially in the Indian context. Cross-national research including India

reveals that ideology significantly predicts trust in both mainstream and social media, with right-wing citizens showing greater trust in social media platforms compared to left-wing citizens (Cordero et al., 2023). Further Previous studies have primarily focused on theoretical implications rather than providing quantitative comparisons.

Understanding where the public places its trust is crucial for assessing how different media platforms contribute to the spread of misinformation and post-truth narratives. This research aims to bridge this gap by empirically evaluating trust in traditional news outlets compared to online and social media platforms, thereby providing a comparative analysis.

### **Encountering false or misleading information**

While the spread of misinformation and its impacts have been extensively discussed (Vosoughi, Roy, & Aral, 2018), there is a paucity of empirical data on the frequency with which individuals encounter false information across different media types, particularly in India (Banaji et al., 2019). This gap is significant because understanding these patterns can illuminate the extent to which misinformation permeates various platforms. This study addresses this gap by surveying individuals on the frequency of encountering false or misleading information in traditional news sources versus online and social media platforms, offering a clearer picture of the prevalence of misinformation.

### **Contribution to post-truth narratives**

Although scholars have identified media as a key factor in the post-truth era (McIntyre, 2018), focused empirical studies on the perceived contribution of different media types remain limited, with emerging work such as that by Sinha et al. (2019) beginning to address this gap within the Indian context. This research gap is critical as it affects public trust and the perceived credibility of different media platforms. By surveying individuals on their perceptions of how different media contribute to post-truth narratives, this study aims to provide empirical evidence on the perceived roles of various media in spreading misinformation, identifying which platforms are seen as more responsible and why.

### **Reaction to conflicting information**

Selective exposure theory is well-documented (Festinger, 1957; Stroud, 2010), but there is limited empirical research on how individuals react “when faced with information that contradicts their beliefs”, especially in the context of the post-truth era in India. Understanding these reactions is crucial for comprehending the mechanisms of belief reinforcement and polarization. This study fills this gap by surveying individuals on their reactions to conflicting information, providing insights into whether they reconsider their beliefs, feel challenged, or reject conflicting information outright.

### **Media consumption and diversification**

While existing literature discusses the potential for the internet to create echo chambers (Sunstein, 2009), empirical data on how frequently individuals actively seek diverse perspectives is limited, particularly in India. Studies have shown that selective exposure to political information can reinforce ideological polarization (Kubin & von Sikorski, 2023). In the Indian context, social media platforms have been identified as contributors to ideological polarization, as their algorithms lead to filter bubbles that screen out differing views (Lin & Tsai, 2022). Additionally, research indicates that individuals' political attentiveness varies depending on whether their political party is 'winning' or 'losing,' highlighting the need to understand when people choose to consume news (Vanderbilt University, 2021). This gap is significant as it influences the extent to which selective exposure contributes to political polarization. This study aims to address this gap by surveying individuals on their media consumption habits and their efforts to diversify sources. The findings will elucidate the prevalence of selective exposure versus diversification and its implications for political discourse.

### **Engagement with diverse viewpoints**

While existing literature discusses the benefits of exposure to diverse perspectives (Mutz, 2002), yet empirical studies on the frequency and impact of such exposure are lacking in the Indian context. This gap is critical for understanding how media practices can foster informed public discourse. By surveying individuals on their engagement with diverse viewpoints and the perceived benefits, this research provides empirical data on the effectiveness of media practices in promoting balanced perspectives.

## **Perceived media bias and polarization**

Although media bias and its impact on polarization have been extensively studied (Vallone, Ross, & Lepper, 1985; Iyengar & Hahn, 2009), empirical studies on public perceptions of media bias and its contribution to polarization are less common in India (Banaji et al., 2019). This gap is significant as it affects trust in media and the perceived legitimacy of political information. By surveying individuals on their perceptions of media bias and its impact on polarization, this study provides empirical evidence on how perceived media bias influences political polarization.

## **Trust in political institutions and mainstream media**

While it is understood that post-truth narratives erode trust in institutions (Lewandowsky, Ecker, & Cook, 2017), empirical studies quantifying this effect are limited, especially in India (Kukreja, 2024; Camaj, 2014). This gap is significant as it directly impacts the credibility of democratic institutions and their functions. By surveying individuals on their trust in political institutions and the impact of exposure to false information, this research provides empirical data on the erosion of trust due to post-truth narratives, offering insights into the broader societal impact of misinformation. Media efforts in providing balanced perspectives  
Theoretical discussions on the role of media in providing balanced perspectives are extensive (Carlson, 2018), but empirical data on public perceptions of these efforts are sparse, particularly in India (Sinha et al., 2019). This gap is significant for understanding how media practices influence public trust and information consumption. By surveying individuals on their perceptions of media efforts to provide balanced perspectives and their effectiveness in fact-checking, this research provides empirical evidence on the perceived role of media in promoting objectivity and balanced reporting.

The identified research gaps highlight the need for comprehensive empirical investigations into how selective exposure and post-truth narratives influence media consumption, public trust, and political polarization in India. By addressing these gaps, this study aims to provide a distinctive understanding of the impact of post-truth on public perception and political discourse. The findings will offer valuable insights for media practices and public policy, contributing to the development of strategies that foster border-balanced, informed public discourse in India.

## 2.19 Summary

This chapter provides a comprehensive theoretical foundation for the thesis by synthesizing the existing body of knowledge on misinformation, media trust, and selective exposure, linking these concepts to the phenomenon of political polarization in the post-truth era, with a specific focus on the Indian context. The review systematically constructs a narrative that begins with the definition of misinformation and disinformation (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017), including the concept of fake news (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017), which has been shown to spread rapidly and influence major events such as the 2016 U.S. election (Vosoughi et al., 2018). This problem is amplified by social media platforms whose engagement-driven algorithms prioritize sensational and emotional content, thereby promoting falsehoods (Tucker et al., 2018; Flaxman et al., 2016), while automated social bots (Ferrara et al., 2016) reinforce the circulation of misleading narratives. The consequence is a decline in media credibility (Ladd, 2011; Newman et al., 2020), leaving audiences increasingly vulnerable to unreliable sources. At the psychological level, selective exposure explains why individuals are receptive to misinformation, as people avoid cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957), rely on confirmation bias (Nickerson, 1998), and engage in motivated reasoning (Kunda, 1990), with empirical evidence showing these tendencies are particularly strong among politically committed individuals (Stroud, 2010; Garrett, 2009). The interaction of these dynamics—misinformation, social media amplification, and psychological predispositions—leads to heightened political polarization, reinforced through echo chambers and filter bubbles (Sunstein, 2009), which entrench existing beliefs and hinder constructive dialogue. Empirical studies confirm that exposure to fake news increases polarization (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017), a trend that is also evident in India, where partisan affiliations drive selective exposure and platforms like WhatsApp serve as major vectors for misinformation that deepen divides (Neyazi, 2017). The post-truth condition has become a defining feature of Indian political discourse, with consequences for communal harmony and public health (Das, 2023), and empirical analyses confirm strong polarization around contentious issues (Ksiazek, 2016). The chapter concludes by identifying gaps in the Indian context, emphasizing the lack of empirical data on citizens' trust in media, frequency of misinformation encounters, behavioral responses to contradictory information, and perceptions of media bias. By weaving together digital platforms, psychological mechanisms, and the strategic use of misinformation, the review provides a coherent framework that explains how the post-truth environment fractures public discourse



and undermines democratic processes, setting the stage for the empirical investigation that follows.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

## INTRODUCTION

This study adopts the Selective Exposure Theory as its primary theoretical lens because it explains why individuals tend to consume information that supports their pre-existing beliefs while avoiding content that contradicts them. This tendency, well documented in political communication research, shapes media choice and reinforces ideological divisions (Stroud, 2010). In the contemporary post-truth context, the dynamics of selective exposure intersect with the proliferation of misinformation and disinformation, influencing patterns of media consumption, levels of public trust, and the degree of political polarization. The theoretical framework, therefore, provides a structured basis for investigating these relationships by linking psychological mechanisms, media dynamics, and socio-political outcomes.

### 3.2 Core Constructs and Variables

The study is organized around the following constructions:

#### **Selective Exposure Behavior:**

Defined as the tendency to seek out information consistent with prior beliefs and avoid dissonant sources (Stroud, 2010). This construct captures individuals' media choices in both traditional and digital settings.

#### **Post-Truth Environment:**

Characterized by a cultural and political context where “objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief” (McIntyre, 2018). This environment is marked by the widespread circulation of misinformation and disinformation.

#### **Media Consumption:**

Refers to patterns of exposure to television, print, and digital platforms, including diversity of information sources and trust in different types of media (Mutz, 2006).

**Public Trust:**

Conceptualized as confidence in the credibility of media outlets and political institutions, Trust is central to understanding how audiences respond to competing narratives and corrective information (Lazer et al., 2018).

**Political Polarization:**

Defined as the process by which political attitudes become increasingly divided and entrenched, often resulting in echo chambers that isolate individuals from opposing views (Sunstein, 2009).

**Media Practices:**

Encompassing fact-checking, transparency in reporting, and the representation of diverse political perspectives. These practices shape audience perceptions of fairness and accuracy (Karlsson, 2010).

**3.3 Alternative and Supporting Theories**

While selective exposure theory serves as the central framework, related theories enrich its explanatory power:

Cognitive Dissonance Theory. Festinger (1957) proposed that individuals experience psychological discomfort when confronted with information that conflicts with their beliefs. This discomfort motivates avoidance of dissonant information and preference for consonant content.

Confirmation Bias. Nickerson (1998) highlighted the cognitive tendency to favor, recall, and interpret information in ways that confirm prior beliefs. This mechanism reinforces selective exposure by filtering information through biased processing.

Agenda-Setting Theory. McCombs and Shaw (1972) argued that media influence the salience of issues in public opinion by emphasizing certain topics. While agenda-setting underscores

media power, it does not account for the audience's active role in choosing belief-consistent content. It therefore complements but does not replace selective exposure as the main theoretical perspective. Together, these perspectives integrate psychological, cognitive, and media-level dynamics, providing a multidimensional explanation of how selective exposure operates in the post-truth era.

### **3.4 Selective Exposure and Political Polarization**

Selective exposure contributes to political polarization by reinforcing individuals' ideological commitments and insulating them from opposing viewpoints. This dynamic produces what Sunstein (2009) describes as "cyberbalkanization," where digital networks fragment into echo chambers of like-minded individuals. Stroud (2010) empirically demonstrated that individuals with strong partisan identities are more likely to select partisan media, reinforcing political divides.

### **3.5 Selective Exposure in the Post-Truth Paradigm**

The concept of a post-truth era describes conditions in which emotions and personal beliefs outweigh factual accuracy in shaping public opinion (McIntyre, 2018). Digital technologies have amplified this phenomenon, enabling the rapid spread of misinformation and disinformation. Vosoughi, Roy, and Aral (2018) demonstrated that false news spreads more quickly and broadly than factual news on social media, primarily because of its novelty and emotional appeal.

Selective exposure in this context means that individuals are more likely to encounter and believe misinformation that aligns with their worldview. Lewandowsky et al. (2012) information is integrated into a belief system, corrective efforts are often resisted or ignored, especially when they threaten group identities. This highlights the interplay between selective exposure and the resilience of misinformation.

### **3.6 The Role of Media Practices**

Media outlets play a central role in either exacerbating or mitigating the effects of selective exposure and post-truth dynamics. Accuracy and fact-checking are essential for countering

misinformation, as studies show that corrective information can reduce misperceptions, though its effectiveness depends on timing and source credibility (Lewandowsky et al., 2012). Transparency in sourcing and reporting enhances credibility and builds public trust (Karlsson, 2010). Furthermore, the inclusion of diverse political perspectives can broaden audience exposure, reducing echo chamber effects and supporting democratic deliberation (Mutz, 2006).

### **3.7 Scope and Limitations**

The theoretical framework primarily emphasizes individual-level cognitive mechanisms and institutional media practices. While this approach captures the psychological and communicative dimensions of selective exposure, it does not fully address structural factors such as algorithmic recommendation systems (e.g., YouTube or Facebook algorithms) or socio-economic inequalities that shape access to information. These factors, though relevant, remain beyond the present scope and are identified as directions for future research.

### **3.8 Methodological Linkage**

The study employs a mixed-methods design that directly operationalizes the theoretical constructs by combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. The survey component captures individual patterns of selective exposure, perceptions of misinformation, levels of public trust, and indicators of polarization, while expert interviews provide contextual insights into media practices, professional challenges, and audience behaviour within the post-truth environment. Through this integration, the study ensures that empirical findings are firmly grounded in established conceptual frameworks and remain theory-driven rather than merely descriptive.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **3.9.1 Introduction**

This section of the chapter defines the research design, methodologies, data collection procedures, and analytical techniques used to explore the impact of post-truth narratives on public perception of political information and the role of media, framed within the Selective Exposure Theory. The research utilizes an integrated methodological framework, amalgamating both “quantitative and qualitative techniques” to furnish a holistic comprehension of the phenomena under investigation. This chapter explains the rationale for choosing this approach, the implementation process, and the ethical considerations involved, while emphasizing the importance and significance of the methodologies employed.

### **3.9.2 Research Design**

#### **Mixed-methods approach**

A “mixed-methods approach” combines the strengths of both “quantitative and qualitative research methodologies” to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem. This approach is particularly beneficial in social sciences where complex phenomena often require both numerical data and contextual insights for thorough exploration and analysis. In this study, the mixed-methods approach allows for strong statistical analysis through quantitative methods and deeper contextual understanding through qualitative interviews.

#### **Rationale for mixed-methods**

The choice to employ a mixed-methods approach was motivated by the necessity to comprehensively understand selective exposure and post-truth narratives. Quantitative methods are essential for measuring the prevalence and patterns of media consumption, trust, and polarization, while qualitative methods provide distinctive insights into the essential reasons and implications of these patterns. The integration of these methodologies ensures a holistic understanding of the “research questions” and hypotheses, “enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

### **3.9.3 Quantitative Methodology**

#### **Definition and importance**

Quantitative research entails “the systematic empirical study of observable phenomena using mathematical, statistical, or computational methods.” This methodology is decisive for testing hypotheses, identifying patterns, and making predictions based on numerical data. In the context of this research, quantitative methods are employed to measure the prevalence of selective exposure behavior, the frequency of encountering misinformation, and the level of trust in different media sources. In this study, quantitative methods are employed to measure selective exposure behaviour, frequency of encountering misinformation, and levels of trust in media and institutions.

#### **Survey design**

A structured survey was developed to collect data from respondents. The survey consisted of 30 questions designed to capture various aspects of media consumption behavior, perceptions of misinformation, trust in media and political institutions, and reactions to conflicting information. The questions included, Likert-scale following a 5-point 4-point, Likert scale and 2-point scale, to ensure comprehensive data collection. The survey was pre-tested with a small sample to refine the questions and ensure clarity and reliability (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2014). For Interviews, 10 questions were framed for the expert opinion. The survey instrument was designed to operationalize the constructs from the theoretical framework, including selective exposure (measured via questions on media choice), public trust (measured via Likert-scale trust indices), and political polarization (measured via attitudinal scales).

#### **Survey instrument**

The survey instrument was carefully designed to capture a wide range of variables relevant to the study. The questions were structured to gather data on respondents' media consumption habits, trust in various media sources, exposure to misinformation, and reactions to conflicting information.

#### **Questionnaire design**



The questionnaire included the following sections

- **Demographics:** Age, gender, education level, and political affiliation.
- **Media Consumption Habits:** Frequency of media consumption, preferred media sources, and reasons for choosing specific sources.
- **Trust in Media:** Levels of trust in traditional media, online news sources, and social media platforms.
- **Exposure to Misinformation:** Frequency and context of encountering false or misleading information.
- **Reactions to Conflicting Information:** Behavioural and attitudinal responses to information that contradicts existing beliefs.

### **Piloting the survey**

The "survey" underwent a preliminary trial with a modest cohort of 30 participants to assess the "clarity" and "reliability" of the "questions." Insights gleaned from this "pilot phase" were utilized to fine-tune the "survey instrument," ensuring that the "questions" were comprehensible and adeptly captured the desired "data."

### **Sample size determination**

In this study, we used the sample size calculation formula for an unknown (infinite) population to ensure the reliability and validity of our results. Given the context of the study on "Post-Truth and its Effects on Public Perception of Political Information and the Role of Media," and to maintain a high level of confidence in our findings, we applied a 95% confidence level with a margin of error set at 5% (Cochran, 1977; Israel, 1992; Bartlett, Kotrlik, & Higgins, 2001). The combination of online convenience sampling and offline random sampling was adopted to balance reach and representativeness, particularly in Jammu and Kashmir, where internet penetration varies. This ensured inclusion of both literate and non-literate populations, strengthening external validity.

## Formula for sample size calculation

The sample size for an infinite population is determined using the following formula:

$$n = \frac{z^2 \cdot p \cdot (1 - p)}{e^2}$$

were

- $n$  is the required sample size
- $Z$  is the Z-value corresponding to the desired confidence level (1.96 for 95% confidence)
- $p$  is the estimated proportion of the population expected to exhibit the characteristic of interest (assumed to be 0.5 for maximum variability).
- $e$  is the margin of error (0.05).

## Calculation of sample size

For this study, the parameters are set as follows:

- Confidence Level ( $Z$ ): 1.96 (for 95% confidence)
- Estimated Proportion ( $p$ ): 0.5
- Margin of Error ( $e$ ):

0.05. Implementing these values into the formula:

$$n = 1.96^2 \cdot 0.5 \cdot (1 - 0.5) / 0.05^2$$

$$n = 3.8416 \cdot 0.5$$

$$0.0025$$

$$n = 0.9694 / 0.0025$$

$$n = 384.16$$

The required sample size is 385.

## **Implementation in this study**

To account for potential non-responses or incomplete surveys, we collected more than the calculated sample size. Therefore, a total of 455 survey questionnaires were collected, which is approximately 18.49% more than the originally determined sample size of 384 (Cochran, 1977; Israel, 1992; Bartlett, Kotrlik, & Higgins, 2001). After data cleaning and removing incomplete responses, the final sample size was 395.

Based on the calculation, we initially determined a sample size of 385 for a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error (Cochran, 1977; Israel, 1992; Bartlett, Kotrlik, & Higgins, 2001). To ensure robustness, 471 questionnaires were collected, and after excluding incomplete responses, a final sample size of 395 was achieved.

## **Sampling area**

The study was conducted in Jammu and Kashmir, with a final sample size of 395 respondents. To achieve a representative sample across different demographics such as age, gender, education level, and political affiliation, a combination of convenience and random sampling techniques was employed. Initially, convenience sampling was used to distribute the Google Forms through various social media platforms, allowing the survey to reach a broad audience. Additionally, random sampling was implemented by distributing and collecting forms face-to-face in universities, marketplaces, and other public places. This hybrid approach ensured that the sample was both accessible and representative, thereby minimizing sampling bias and enhancing the generalizability of the findings (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016; Kothari, 2004).

Furthermore, to ensure inclusivity, 40 samples were collected from participants who were not literate. For these participants, the questions were read out, and their responses were recorded. This subgroup included shopkeepers, working laborers, and other individuals who might not have been able to complete the survey independently, selected randomly to ensure broader population representation.

## **Rationale for sample size**

The sample size of 395 was determined using statistical “power analysis to ensure that the study had sufficient power to detect significant effects and relationships within the data. This calculation was based on the formula for an unknown (infinite) population, with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error (Cochran, 1977; Israel, 1992; Bartlett, Kotrlik, & Higgins, 2001). Initially, a required “sample size of 384 was calculated”. To address potential “non-responses” and enhance the study's efficacy, over 10% additional questionnaires were gathered, resulting in a total of 455 completed responses. After data cleaning, which involved removing incomplete responses, the final sample size was 395.

This sample size provides sufficient statistical power to conduct Chi-square tests and other statistical analyses with a high degree of confidence, ensuring the reliability and validity of the results (Cohen, 1988).

## **Data collection**

Data was collected through both online and offline methods to maximize response rates. Online surveys were distributed and social media platforms, including WhatsApp, Telegram, Twitter, and Instagram, via email and Facebook, while offline surveys were conducted through face-to-face interactions in public spaces such as universities, markets, and community centers. This dual approach ensured that a diverse and representative sample was obtained. The data collection period spanned three months, from January to March 2024, allowing ample time to gather sufficient responses. For interview questions, it was also circulated through WhatsApp and email. An open-ended Google form was circulated to 17 experts, and 6 of them responded from February to April 12, 2024

## **Analytical procedures**

The collected data was analyzed using statistical software to ensure accuracy and reliability. The analytical procedures included “descriptive statistics, Chi-square tests of independence, and measures of association such as Phi and Cramer's V.”

## **Descriptive statistics**

"Descriptive statistics" were employed to encapsulate the data, offering a snapshot of respondents' "demographics," "media consumption patterns," and "trust levels" across different "media sources." Metrics such as "mean," "median," "mode," and "standard deviation" were computed to characterize the "central tendency" and "dispersion" of the data.

### **Chi-square tests of independence**

"Chi-square tests of independence" were performed to examine the association between "categorical variables." This test evaluates whether a significant relationship exists between two variables by comparing the "observed frequencies" in each category with the frequencies that would be expected if the variables were independent. A significant "Chi-square" result suggests that the variables are related (Agresti, 2018). The tests were conducted using SPSS software." Chi-square tests were employed because the key variables (e.g., selective exposure categories, trust levels, media source preference) are categorical. Phi and Cramer's V were then used to assess the strength of these associations, providing standardized effect size measures (Agresti, 2018).

### **Phi and cramer's v**

Phi and Cramer's V were used to measure the strength and direction of the associations identified through Chi-square tests. Phi is used for 2x2 contingency tables, while Cramer's V is appropriate for larger tables. These measures provide a standardized value (ranging from 0 to 1) that indicates the strength of the association, with higher values representing stronger relationships (Cohen, 1988).

## **3.9.4 Qualitative Methodology**

### **Definition and importance**

"Qualitative research" involves collecting and analyzing "non-numerical data" to understand "concepts," "opinions," or "experiences." This methodology is valuable for exploring complex phenomena and gaining deeper insights into participants' perspectives. In this study, qualitative

methods were used to complement the quantitative findings, providing a richer context and understanding of “the impact of post-truth narratives”.

### **Expert interviews**

"Semi-structured interviews" were conducted with 6 "experts" in the fields of "media studies," including "journalists" and "academics," to gain deeper insights into the role of "media" in the "post-truth era," the prevalence of "selective exposure," and the implications for "democratic processes." These experts were selected based on specific criteria, including their academic qualifications, research experience, Industry experience, and significant contributions to their respective fields.

To reach these experts, interview questions were circulated through WhatsApp and email. An open-ended Google Form was designed to facilitate the collection of detailed and distinctive responses. This form was distributed to 10 experts, and responses were received from 6 of them between February 1st and April 12th, 2024. The use of an open-ended format allowed the experts to provide comprehensive and elaborate answers, contributing valuable qualitative data to the study.

The semi-structured nature of the interviews ensured that while there was a consistent set of questions to guide the discussion, the experts had the flexibility to delve into areas they found most pertinent, thus providing rich, context-specific insights. This methodology not only allowed for a broad understanding of the topics but also facilitated “the identification of emerging themes and patterns” relevant to the study's focus on media influence and political information in the post-truth era.

### **Selection criteria for experts**

Experts were chosen based on the following parameters:

- **Academic Qualifications:** Holding a Ph.D. or equivalent in relevant fields.
- **Research Experience:** At least five years of research experience related to media studies.
- **Publications:** Authored or co-authored articles, books, or reports on topics related to

the study.

- **Professional Recognition:** Recognition through awards, memberships in professional organizations, or positions in academic institutions.
- **Industry experience:** minimum five 5years of working experience in TV print media, radio, or online portals

### Interview guide

The "interview guide" comprised "open-ended questions" crafted to prompt detailed responses on topics such as the role of "media" in the "post-truth era," the effect of "misinformation" on "public trust," and strategies for promoting balanced reporting. Follow-up questions were used to probe deeper into specific issues and clarify responses.

### Data analysis

- "Thematic analysis" was utilized to examine the "qualitative data." This approach involves "identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns" (or "themes") within the data. The subsequent steps were undertaken:
- **Familiarization:** Reading and re-reading transcripts to become immersed in the data.
- **Coding:** Systematically coding interesting features of the data. Codes were assigned to segments of text that captured key concepts and insights.
- **Generating Themes:** Collating codes into potential themes. Themes were identified based on patterns and commonalities in the data.
- **Reviewing Themes:** Reviewing the compatibility of themes with coded extracts and the entire dataset. This process included refining and consolidating themes for coherence.
- **Defining and Naming Themes:** Clarifying the details of each theme and creating precise definitions and labels. Themes were clearly defined to capture the essence of the data.
- **Writing Up:** Integrating the analysis with research questions and literature to produce a coherent narrative. The final write-up presented the themes in a structured manner, supported by direct quotes from the interviews.

## **Integration of quantitative and qualitative findings**

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings enhances the validity and reliability of the research by providing a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under study. Quantitative data offers measurable evidence of selective exposure behavior and its impacts, while qualitative insights contextualize these findings, offering depth and nuance.

## **Triangulation**

Triangulation was employed to validate the findings by cross-verifying data from multiple sources. The convergence of evidence from surveys and expert interviews strengthened the credibility of the results, ensuring that conclusions drawn are robust and well-founded (Denzin, 1978). The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings directly addressed the research questions: while surveys quantified the extent of selective exposure and its relationship with trust and polarization, interviews explained why audiences and experts perceive media practices as influencing these outcomes.

### **Types of triangulations used**

- **Data Triangulation:** Using multiple data sources, such as surveys and interviews, to validate findings.
- **Methodological Triangulation:** Combining “quantitative and qualitative” methods to cross-verify results.
- **Theoretical Triangulation:** Applying “multiple theoretical perspectives” to interpret the data.

## **Complementarity**

The qualitative data complemented the quantitative findings by providing detailed explanations and interpretations of the statistical results. For instance, while survey data quantified the prevalence of selective exposure, expert interviews elucidated the underlying reasons and implications of this behavior.

## **Examples of Complementarity**



- **Quantitative Finding:** A significant portion of respondents exhibited selective exposure behaviour.
- **Qualitative Insight:** Experts provided explanations on how selective exposure is influenced by cognitive biases and media practices.

### **Ethical considerations**

Ethical imperatives were central to the entirety of the research process, ensuring both the preservation of the study's scholarly rigor and the protection of participant welfare.

### **Informed consent**

All participants were furnished with an informational document outlining the study's objectives, the nature of their involvement, and their entitlements, including the right to withdraw at any juncture. "Informed consent" was duly acquired from all participants prior to the initiation of data collection.

### **Process of obtaining informed consent**

- **Survey Participants:** Informed consent was obtained electronically through the survey platform. Participants read the information sheet and provided consent by selecting a checkbox.
- **Interview Participants:** Informed consent was obtained verbally before the interviews began. Participants were given the information sheet in advance and asked to confirm their consent at the start of the interview.

### **Confidentiality and anonymity**

Participants' responses were anonymized to protect their identities. "Data was stored securely, and access was restricted to the research team." Pseudonyms were used in reporting qualitative findings to maintain confidentiality.

### **Significance of the methodology**

The chosen methodology is significant for several reasons

### ***Comprehensive understanding***

By combining “quantitative and qualitative methods,” the study provides a thorough understanding of the complex phenomena of selective exposure and post-truth narratives. The mixed-methods approach allows for robust statistical analysis and rich contextual insights, offering a well-rounded perspective.

### ***Generalizability and depth***

The large sample size and rigorous sampling techniques ensure that the quantitative findings are generalizable to the broader population. At the same time, the qualitative interviews offer depth and nuance, capturing the subtleties and complexities of the issues under investigation.

### ***Addressing research gaps***

The methodology addresses significant research gaps identified in the literature, such as the lack of empirical data on media trust and misinformation exposure in India. By employing both “surveys and expert interviews,” the study provides an ample assessment of these gaps. Information policy and practice

The findings from this study have practical implications for media practices and public policy. By understanding the dynamics of selective exposure and post-truth narratives, media organizations can develop strategies to promote balanced reporting and enhance public trust. Similarly, policymakers can use the insights to design interventions that mitigate the impact of misinformation and foster a more informed public discourse.

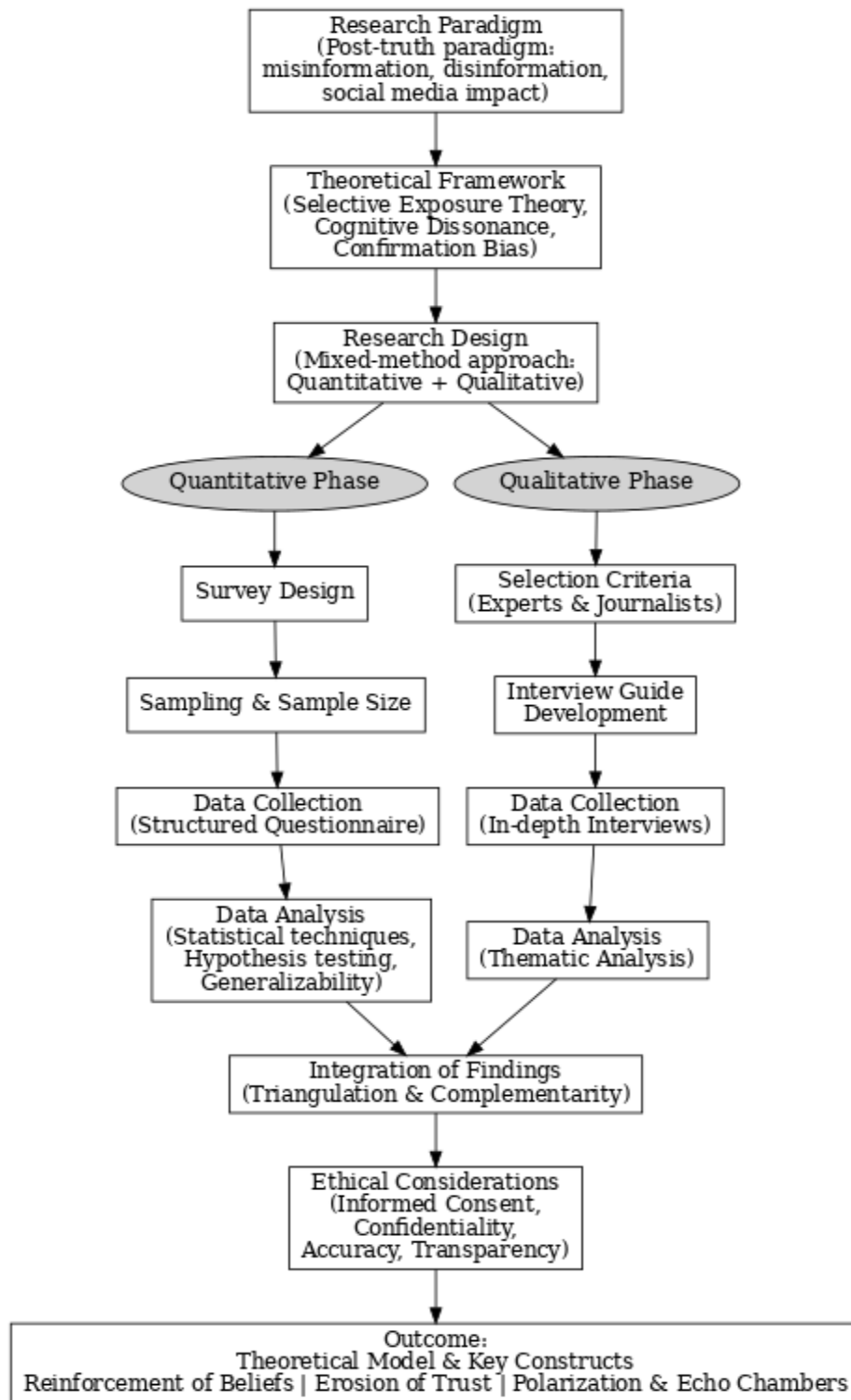


Figure 1 The mixed-method research design integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches.

### 3.9.5 Summary

"Chapter 3" offers an exhaustive examination of the "theoretical framework" and "methodology" employed to investigate the influence of "selective exposure" and "post-truth narratives" on "public perception" and the "role of media." This chapter methodically explains the integration of selective exposure theory with the post-truth paradigm, outlining how these theories guide the empirical investigation into media consumption patterns, public trust, and political polarization.

The “mixed-methods approach” adopted in this study harnesses the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, ensuring a robust analysis of the complex phenomena at hand. Quantitative methods allow for the measurement of patterns and prevalence of selective exposure and its effects, while qualitative insights from expert interviews offer depth, shedding light on the underlying mechanisms and broader implications of these patterns.

The methodology section thoroughly details the processes of survey design, sample size determination, data collection, and analytical procedures, emphasizing the study's commitment to rigorous, ethical research practices. The integration of these methods provides a holistic view of the research landscape, enhancing the study's “validity and reliability.”

Furthermore, the careful consideration of ethical standards in the research process, including informed consent and the protection of participants' confidentiality, highlights the “integrity and ethical rigor of the study.”

This "chapter" establishes a robust basis for the ensuing "empirical investigation" equipped with a clear theoretical and methodological roadmap. The findings from this research are poised to contribute significantly to our understanding of how selective exposure and post-truth narratives influence public discourse and political dynamics, potentially informing media practices and public policy to foster a more informed discourse.



## **CHAPTER 4.1**

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **PREVALENCE OF POST-TRUTH NARRATIVES**

## INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary media landscape, the prevalence of post-truth narratives has become a significant concern, especially with the advent and proliferation of digital platforms. The term "post-truth," often associated with the political and media environment, refers to a situation where emotional appeals and personal beliefs have a more substantial influence on public opinion than objective facts (McIntyre, 2018). This chapter aims to investigate the dynamics of post-truth narratives, examining how different types of news sources contribute to the spread of misinformation and shape public trust.

The media ecosystem has witnessed a dramatic shift with the rise of online and social media platforms, which offer rapid information dissemination but also facilitate the spread of false and misleading information (Vosoughi, Roy, & Aral, 2018). Traditional news sources, such as print media, radio, and television, have traditionally been viewed as more reliable, but they are not immune to the influence of post-truth dynamics (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). This chapter explores the comparative prevalence of post-truth narratives in both traditional and digital media, providing insights into the varying levels of public trust and the frequency of encountering misinformation across these platforms.

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the prevalence of post-truth narratives by examining how different types of news sources contribute to the "spread of misinformation" and influence public trust. The main hypothesis is that the prevalence of "post-truth narratives" is significantly higher in online and social media compared to traditional news sources.

### 4.1.2 VARIABLES

#### **Independent Variable:**

- **Type of News Source:** This is the independent variable in the study, classified into various categories such as traditional news outlets (print media, radio, TV) and digital platforms (social media, alternative news). The type of news source represents different media consumption habits which are presumed to influence perceptions and behaviors related to media trust and misinformation.

### **Dependent Variables:**

1. **Trust in Traditional News Outlets for Accurate Political Information:** Measures the level of trust users have in traditional news outlets to provide accurate political information.
2. **Trust in Social Media for Accurate Political Information:** Assesses the level of trust users place in social media platforms for obtaining accurate political information.
3. **Encountering False or Misleading Information in Traditional News:** Evaluates how frequently users encounter false or misleading information when consuming traditional news sources.
4. **Encountering False or Misleading Information on Online Media:** Concerns the frequency with which users encounter false or misleading information on online and social media platforms.
5. **Belief in Online Media's Role in Post-Truth Narratives:** Measures the belief among users that online and social media platforms contribute significantly to the spread of post-truth narratives.
6. **Belief in Traditional Media's Role in Post-Truth Narratives:** Assesses the belief among users that traditional news sources contribute to the spread of post-truth narratives.

These dependent variables are directly influenced by the independent variable, and the relationships between them were analyzed using Chi-square tests to understand the statistical significance of associations. This setup allows for a detailed examination of how different types of media impact user perceptions and experiences regarding the reliability and credibility of news, which is crucial in the era of misinformation and post-truth narratives.

#### **4.1.3 Objective**

- To investigate the Prevalence of Post-Truth Narratives

#### **4.1.4 Hypotheses 1:**



- The prevalence of post-truth narratives is significantly higher in online and social media compared to traditional news sources.

#### 4.1.5 Statistical Tests Results and Discussions

This "study" employs a series of "statistical analyses," including "crosstabulations" and "chi-square tests," to examine the relationship between the "type of news source" and the "level of trust" in "political information." The "chi-square test" is utilized to ascertain whether a significant association exists between "categorical variables," while symmetric measures such as "Phi" and "Cramer's V" are applied to evaluate the "strength" of these associations.

*Table 4.1. 1 Crosstabulation of Trust in Traditional News Outlets for Accurate Political Information by Source Type*

			Traditional news outlets as Sources for accurate political information					Total
			Distrust	Neutral	Strongly Distrust	Strongly Trust	Trust	
Source type	Alternative News	Count	5	14	4	19	36	78
		Expected	12.0	9.3	7.5	17.4	31.8	78.0
		Count						
	Print Media	% within Source type	6.4%	17.9%	5.1%	24.4%	46.2%	100.0%
		Count	12	10	5	26	47	100
		Expected	15.4	11.9	9.6	22.3	40.8	100.0
		Count						
	Radio	% within Source type	12.0%	10.0%	5.0%	26.0%	47.0%	100.0%
		Count	8	6	5	19	33	71
		Expected	11.0	8.4	6.8	15.8	28.9	71.0
		Count						
	Social Media	% within Source type	11.3%	8.5%	7.0%	26.8%	46.5%	100.0%
		Count	24	3	18	4	5	54
		Expected	8.3	6.4	5.2	12.0	22.0	54.0
		Count						
	TV	% within Source type	44.4%	5.6%	33.3%	7.4%	9.3%	100.0%
		Count	12	14	6	20	40	92
		Expected	14.2	10.9	8.9	20.5	37.5	92.0
		Count						

		% within Source type	13.0%	15.2%	6.5%	21.7%	43.5%	100.0%
Total		Count	61	47	38	88	161	395
		Expected Count	61.0	47.0	38.0	88.0	161.0	395.0
		% within Source type	15.4%	11.9%	9.6%	22.3%	40.8%	100.0%

The crosstabulation data shows the relationship between different types of news sources and the level of trust in traditional news outlets for accurate political information. Key findings include

### ***Alternative News***

Users show a mixed trust level, with 46.2% trusting and 24.4% strongly trusting traditional news outlets. However, a significant portion (17.9%) remains neutral.

### ***Print Media***

Users largely trust traditional news outlets, with 47.0% trusting and 26.0% strongly trusting them.

### ***Radio***

Similar to print media, 46.5% of users trust and 26.8% strongly trust traditional news outlets.

### **Social Media**

**Users** of social media exhibit the highest level of distrust (44.4%) and strongly distrust (33.3%) in traditional news outlets, with only 9.3% trusting them.

### ***TV***

Users show moderate trust, with 43.5% trusting and 21.7% strongly trusting traditional news outlets.

*Table 4.1. 2 Chi-Square Test Results for Trust in Traditional News Outlets for Accurate Political Information*

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	100.541 <sup>a</sup>	16	.000
Likelihood Ratio	88.371	16	.000
N of Valid Cases	395		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.19.

Chi-Square Test: Traditional News Outlets as Sources for Accurate Political Information

Pearson Chi-Square: 100.541, p-value = 0.000

Likelihood Ratio: 88.371, p-value = 0.000

### ***Hypothesis***

**Null Hypothesis (H0):** There is no significant association between the type of news source and trust in traditional news outlets for accurate political information.

**Alternative Hypothesis (H1):** There is a significant association between the type of news source and trust in traditional news outlets for accurate political information.

The Pearson Chi-Square test shows a highly significant association between the type of news source and trust in traditional news outlets for accurate political information. This means the level of trust in traditional news outlets varies significantly based on the source type (alternative news, print media, radio, social media, TV).

### ***Result***

The Pearson Chi-Square test shows a significant association (p-value = 0.000). Hence, we reject the null hypothesis.

*Table 4.1. 3 Symmetric Measures for Trust in Traditional News Outlets*

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.505	.000
	Cramer's V	.252	.000
N of Valid Cases		395	

Symmetric Measures for Traditional News Outlets Phi: 0.505, p-value = 0.000

Cramer's V: 0.252, p-value = 0.000

The Phi and Cramer's V values indicate a moderate association between the type of news source and trust in traditional news outlets. This further supports the significant relationship identified by the Chi-Square test.

*Table 4.1. 4 Crosstabulation of Trust in social media for Accurate Political Information by Source Type*

			Social media as sources of trust for more for accurate political information					Total
			Distrust	Neutral	Strongly Distrust	Strongly Trust	Trust	
Source type	Alternative News	Count	22	16	13	9	18	78
		Expected Count	26.3	16.2	13.6	7.3	14.6	78.0
		% within Source type	28.2%	20.5%	16.7%	11.5%	23.1%	100.0%
	Print Media	Count	33	24	18	10	15	100
		Expected Count	33.7	20.8	17.5	9.4	18.7	100.0
		% within Source type	33.0%	24.0%	18.0%	10.0%	15.0%	100.0%
	Radio	Count	21	17	11	6	16	71
		Expected Count	23.9	14.7	12.4	6.7	13.3	71.0
		% within Source type	29.6%	23.9%	15.5%	8.5%	22.5%	100.0%
	Social Media	Count	29	5	10	8	2	54
		Expected Count	18.2	11.2	9.4	5.1	10.1	54.0

		% within Source type	53.7%	9.3%	18.5%	14.8%	3.7%	100.0%
	TV	Count	28	20	17	4	23	92
		Expected Count	31.0	19.1	16.1	8.6	17.2	92.0
		% within Source type	30.4%	21.7%	18.5%	4.3%	25.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	133	82	69	37	74	395
		Expected Count	133.0	82.0	69.0	37.0	74.0	395.0
		% within Source type	33.7%	20.8%	17.5%	9.4%	18.7%	100.0%

The crosstabulation data reveal significant insights into the level of trust users of different news sources place in social media for obtaining accurate political information. Notably, users of alternative news sources demonstrate a fairly balanced view, with 28.2% expressing distrust and 23.1% showing trust in social media's reliability. In contrast, those who primarily consume print media exhibit a higher level of skepticism, with a notable 33.0% indicating distrust and only 15.0% expressing trust. This pattern suggests a more conservative trust perspective among traditional media users.

Radio listeners present a distrust level similar to that of print media users, with 29.6% distrusting social media, yet they maintain a relatively high trust level at 22.5%. This indicates a nuanced perception of social media's role in providing political information, balancing skepticism with a recognition of its utility. On the other hand, social media users themselves are the most critical of their primary news source, showing a significant distrust rate of 53.7% and a minuscule trust rate of 3.7%. This high level of distrust among the most frequent users of the platform could reflect a heightened awareness of the prevalence of misinformation within the medium.

Television news consumers also show a cautious approach, with 30.4% distrusting and 25.0% trusting social media. This group appears to maintain a moderate stance, perhaps influenced by the visual and real-time nature of both television and social media content. These findings indicate a “complex relationship between the type of primary news source and trust in social media,” highlighting varying levels of skepticism and acceptance across different media user groups.

## **Interpretation of Results and Implications**

The crosstabulation data presented in Table 4.1.4 sheds light on the diverse “levels of trust in social media as a source” for accurate political information, as perceived by users of various news sources. Here's a nuanced interpretation of the results:

### ***Alternative News***

Users of alternative news sources display a relatively balanced perspective towards social media, with a slight lean towards distrust. This could indicate a skepticism that stems from the recognition of both the strengths and the weaknesses of social media in disseminating political information.

### ***Print Media***

Print media consumers show a considerable amount of distrust in social media, which may reflect a preference for more traditional, perhaps perceived as more credible, sources of news. This group’s stronger distrust could be influenced by the contrast in editorial standards and checks in traditional media compared to social platforms.

### ***Radio***

Radio listeners' trust and distrust in social media are fairly evenly split, suggesting that this group may recognize the utility of social media but remain cautious about its reliability. This could be due to the oral nature of both mediums, where immediacy may sometimes compromise depth and fact- checking.

### ***Social Media***

Interestingly, users who primarily consume news from social media exhibit the highest levels of distrust and the lowest levels of trust in it for accurate political information. This paradox could be due to their firsthand experience with the prevalence of misinformation on these platforms, which enhances their awareness of the platforms’ limitations.

## **TV**

Television news viewers show moderate distrust in social media but also a significant level of trust. This group may be more accustomed to visual and immediate forms of information, similar to what social media offers, yet they maintain a level of skepticism about the credibility of the content.

*Table 4.1. 5 Chi-Square Test Results for Trust in Social Media for Accurate Political Information*

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	27.611 <sup>a</sup>	16	.035
Likelihood Ratio	30.906	16	.014
N of Valid Cases	395		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.06.

Hypothesis

**Null Hypothesis (H0):** There is no significant association between the type of news source and trust in social media for accurate political information.

**Alternative Hypothesis (H1):** There is a significant association between the type of news source and trust in social media for accurate political information.

Chi-Square Test 2: Social Media as Sources for Accurate Political Information Pearson Chi-Square: 27.611, p-value = 0.035

Likelihood Ratio: 30.906, p-value = 0.014

The Pearson Chi-Square test also shows a significant association between the type of news source and trust in social media for accurate political information, though the association is weaker compared to traditional news outlets. This indicates that people's trust in social media varies significantly based on their primary news source.

## **Result:**

The Pearson Chi-Square test shows a significant association (p-value = 0.035). Hence, we reject the null hypothesis.

*Table 4.1. 6 Symmetric Measures for Trust in Social Media*

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.264	.035
	Cramer's V	.132	.035
N of Valid Cases		395	

Symmetric Measures for Social Media

Phi: 0.264, p-value = 0.035

Cramer's V: 0.132, p-value = 0.035

Phi and Cramer's V values indicate a weaker association between the type of news source and trust in social media compared to traditional news outlets. However, the association is still significant, reflecting the variability in trust levels based on the source type.

*Table 4.1. 7 Crosstabulation of Encountering False or Misleading Information in Traditional News Sources by Source Type*

			Encounter false or misleading information in traditional news sources					Total
			Always	Frequently	Never	Occasionally	Rarely	
Source type	Alternative News	Count	35	5	4	10	24	78
		Expected Count	14.8	28.6	11.5	7.5	15.6	78.0
		% within Source type	44.9%	6.4%	5.1%	12.8%	30.8%	100.0%
	Print Media	Count	8	47	28	8	9	100
		Expected Count	19.0	36.7	14.7	9.6	20.0	100.0
		% within Source type	8.0%	47.0%	28.0%	8.0%	9.0%	100.0%
	Radio	Count	5	36	19	2	9	71
		Expected Count	13.5	26.1	10.4	6.8	14.2	71.0
		% within Source type	7.0%	50.7%	26.8%	2.8%	12.7%	100.0%
		Count	13	27	0	14	0	54



	Social Media	Expected Count	10.3	19.8	7.9	5.2	10.8	54.0
		% within Source type	24.1%	50.0%	0.0%	25.9%	0.0%	100.0%
	TV	Count	14	30	7	4	37	92
		Expected Count	17.5	33.8	13.5	8.9	18.4	92.0
		% within Source type	15.2%	32.6%	7.6%	4.3%	40.2%	100.0%
	Total	Count	75	145	58	38	79	395
		Expected Count	75.0	145.0	58.0	38.0	79.0	395.0
		% within Source type	19.0%	36.7%	14.7%	9.6%	20.0%	100.0%

The crosstabulation data presented in Table 4.1.7 offers a detailed view of how users of different news sources encounter false or misleading information within traditional news channels. The patterns of encounter vary significantly across the types of sources, suggesting varied perceptions and experiences with misinformation depending on the chosen medium.

Users of **alternative news sources** exhibit a high likelihood of consistently encountering misinformation, with 44.9% reporting that they "always" find false or misleading information. This significant percentage is complemented by 30.8% who encounter misinformation "rarely," indicating a mixed reliability, but with a considerable risk of encountering misinformation frequently.

For those who primarily consume **print media**, the frequency of encountering false information is notable, with 47.0% encountering it "frequently" and only 8.0% "always" seeing false information. This suggests that while print media is not free from misinformation, it is perceived as relatively more reliable, with 28.0% of users never encounter false information.

**Radio listeners** show a similar pattern to print media consumers, with a majority (50.7%) encountering false information "frequently." However, a significant portion (26.8%) reports "never" encountering misinformation, suggesting a higher level of trust in the accuracy of radio compared to alternative news, with a low incidence of constant misinformation encounters.

The scenario is significantly different for **social media users**, where a substantial 50.0% encounter false information "frequently" and 24.1% "always" encounter it. Strikingly, none of the respondents in this category claimed to "never" encounter misinformation, emphasizing

social media as a centre for misinformation and reflecting its challenges in information accuracy.

**Television news consumers** show a more moderate encounter rate with misinformation. While 32.6% encounter false information "frequently," a notable 40.2% find it "rarely," and only 15.2% "always" encounter it. This suggests that television is perceived as more reliable than alternative news and social media, though not completely free from the issues of misinformation. The findings highlight significant differences in how misinformation is encountered across various news media types. Alternative news and social media users experience higher frequencies of misinformation, pointing to the need for enhanced scrutiny and media literacy in these areas. In contrast, print media, radio, and television tend to be perceived as more reliable sources, though they are not immune to the spread of false information. These patterns highlight the complex landscape of news consumption and the ongoing challenges in ensuring the accuracy of information in the digital age.

## **Implications and Discussion of Key Findings**

The analysis of how users encounter false or misleading information in traditional news sources, as delineated in the crosstabulation data, provides critical insights into the current state of news consumption and its implications for public trust and media literacy. Below, we explore the broader implications of these findings and discuss what they could mean for various stakeholders in the media landscape.

### **Heightened Vulnerability in Alternative News and Social Media**

The high rates at which users of alternative news sources and social media encounter misinformation suggest a vulnerability that may undermine the credibility of these platforms. This vulnerability could be attributed to less stringent fact-checking processes and a higher prevalence of user-generated content, which is often less regulated. For policymakers and platform developers, this highlights an urgent need to implement more robust verification mechanisms and to promote digital literacy, helping users critically evaluate the content they consume.

### **Comparative Reliability of Traditional Media**

Despite the pervasive nature of misinformation, traditional media outlets like print media, radio, and television are perceived as more reliable sources. This perception could stem from longstanding journalistic practices and editorial standards that typically govern these media. However, the existence of misinformation even in these mediums stresses the importance of continuous efforts to uphold and possibly enhance journalistic standards. Media organizations should consider reinforcing their fact-checking units and transparency about sourcing to maintain and boost public trust.

### **Educational Initiatives on Media Literacy**

The varying degrees of trust and experiences with misinformation across different media types point to the critical need for comprehensive media literacy education. Such education ought to be designed to equip people with skills to identify credible sources, understand media biases, and recognize the markers of misinformation. Educational institutions and civil society organizations could play a pivotal role in designing and disseminating these educational programs.

### **Policy and Regulation**

Regulatory bodies and governments may need to consider formulating and enforcing policies that ensure greater accountability in media production and distribution, especially in alternative news sources and social media. Policies could include mandating the disclosure of information sources, the application of labels to unverified content, and the implementation of penalties for the deliberate spread of misinformation.

### **Enhanced Public Engagement and Dialogue**

Encouraging public engagement and dialogue about the nature of news consumption can foster a more discerning audience. Media outlets and educational forums should encourage discussions about how news is produced, highlighting the processes of journalistic inquiry and fact-checking. Such transparency can demystify the news process and build public confidence in the media they consume.

### **Need for Cross-Platform Collaborations**

Given the pervasive spread of misinformation, there is a significant opportunity for collaboration across different media platforms to tackle this issue. Collaborative efforts could include shared fact-checking services, cross-publishing of verified content, and joint public education campaigns about misinformation. These collaborations could leverage the strengths of each platform to address the weaknesses of others, particularly in standardizing the approach to combating misinformation.

The key findings from the crosstabulation of encountering false or misleading information in traditional news sources reveal a complex picture of news consumption that is fraught with challenges but also opportunities for improvement. By understanding the nuances of how misinformation is encountered across different media, stakeholders can better strategize interventions aimed at enhancing the accuracy, reliability, and integrity of information circulating in the public sphere. This is crucial not just for maintaining public trust but also for ensuring the healthy functioning of democratic societies.

*Table 4.1. 8 Chi-Square Test Results for Encountering False or Misleading Information in Traditional News Sources*

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	169.067 <sup>a</sup>	16	.000
Likelihood Ratio	185.452	16	.000
N of Valid Cases	395		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.19.

Square Test 8: Encountering False or Misleading Information in Traditional News Sources

Pearson Chi-Square: 169.067, p-value = 0.000

Likelihood Ratio: 185.452, p-value = 0.000

### ***Hypothesis***

**Null Hypothesis (H0):** There is no significant association between the type of news source and encountering false or misleading information in traditional news sources.

**Alternative Hypothesis (H1):** There is a significant association between the type of news source and encountering false or misleading information in traditional news sources.

***Interpretation:***

The Chi-Square test results for encountering false or misleading information in traditional news sources indicate a highly significant association between the type of news source and the frequency of encountering misinformation. The Pearson Chi-Square value of 169.067, with a p-value of less than 0.001, suggests that the differences in frequencies across the various categories are not due to random chance. This means that the type of news source (alternative news, print media, radio, social media, TV) significantly affects how often users encounter false or misleading information in traditional news outlets. The high Likelihood Ratio further supports this finding, reinforcing the robustness of the association.

***Result:***

There is a significant association between the type of news source and encountering false or misleading information in traditional news sources (p-value = 0.000). Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis

*Table 4.1. 9 Symmetric Measures for Encountering False or Misleading Information in Traditional News Sources*

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.654	.000
	Cramer's V	.327	.000
N of Valid Cases		395	

Symmetric Measures for Traditional News Sources Phi: 0.654, p-value = 0.000

Cramer's V: 0.327, p-value = 0.000

***Interpretation:***

The symmetric metrics, "Phi" and "Cramer's V," offers further understanding of the strength and character of the relationship. A "Phi" value of 0.654 signifies a robust connection between the "type of news source" and the frequency of exposure to "false information." "Cramer's V," which accounts for the number of "categories," is 0.327, indicating a moderate to strong correlation. These statistics imply that the "news source type" significantly influences users' interactions with "misinformation" in traditional news outlets.

*Table 4.1.10 Crosstabulation of Encountering False or Misleading Information on Online and Social Media Platforms by Source Type*

			Encountering false or misleading information on online and social media platforms					Total
			Always	Frequently	Never	Occasionally	Rarely	
Source type	Alternative News	Count	28	22	8	7	13	78
		Expected Count	28.8	18.6	13.0	7.5	10.1	78.0
		% within Source type	35.9%	28.2%	10.3%	9.0%	16.7%	100.0%
	Print Media	Count	39	27	11	10	13	100
		Expected Count	37.0	23.8	16.7	9.6	12.9	100.0
		% within Source type	39.0%	27.0%	11.0%	10.0%	13.0%	100.0%
	Radio	Count	24	7	22	10	8	71
		Expected Count	26.2	16.9	11.9	6.8	9.2	71.0
		% within Source type	33.8%	9.9%	31.0%	14.1%	11.3%	100.0%
	Social Media	Count	20	17	6	1	10	54
		Expected Count	20.0	12.9	9.0	5.2	7.0	54.0
		% within Source type	37.0%	31.5%	11.1%	1.9%	18.5%	100.0%
	TV	Count	35	21	19	10	7	92
		Expected Count	34.0	21.9	15.4	8.9	11.9	92.0
		% within Source type	38.0%	22.8%	20.7%	10.9%	7.6%	100.0%
Total		Count	146	94	66	38	51	395
		Expected Count	146.0	94.0	66.0	38.0	51.0	395.0
		% within Source type	37.0%	23.8%	16.7%	9.6%	12.9%	100.0%

The crosstabulation data in Table 4.1.10 offer a comprehensive look at how frequently users of different news sources encounter false or misleading information on online and social media platforms. The variability in these encounters is significant and illuminates the diverse experiences and perceptions users have regarding the reliability of digital media.

Users of **alternative news sources** report a high frequency of encountering misinformation, with 35.9% stating they always find false information and 28.2% encountering it frequently. This high incidence reflects the often-criticized reliability of alternative news outlets, particularly in the digital realm, where the rapid spread and lack of regulatory oversight can exacerbate the dissemination of false content.

**Print media consumers** also experience a substantial rate of encountering false information online, with 39.0% reporting they always come across misinformation and 27.0% frequently encountering it. Despite their preference for traditionally more credible print media, these users are not insulated from the challenges posed by digital misinformation, indicating that the issue spans across different media consumption habits.

**Radio listeners** appear to have a more discerning or perhaps less engaged interaction with online content, as evidenced by 31.0% reporting they never encounter false information, which is substantially higher compared to other groups. However, 33.8% of radio users still report always encountering misinformation, suggesting that while a segment of this group is well-protected, others remain vulnerable.

**Social media users**, perhaps unsurprisingly, face a high occurrence of misinformation, with 37.0% always and 31.5% frequently encountering false information. This highlights the central role social media plays in the spread of misinformation due to its algorithm-driven content distribution, which often prioritizes engagement over accuracy.

**Television news consumers** show a mixed experience with 38.0% always encountering false information, yet a notable 20.7% never encounter it. This suggests that while TV consumers are exposed to misinformation online, a significant portion are either skeptical of what they read online or access more reliable sources.

These findings highlight the pervasive challenge of misinformation across all media platforms, especially online and on social media. They reveal a critical need for enhanced media literacy initiatives that help users identify and “critically evaluate the veracity of information they encounter online.” Moreover, the data calls for media producers and platforms to increase efforts in verifying content and clarifying sources, aiming to build a digital media landscape that upholds truth and reliability.

## **Interpretation and Discussion of Key Findings**

The crosstabulation data from Table 4.10 reveal essential insights into the encounter rates of false or misleading information across different media consumption groups on online and social media platforms. These findings illuminate the pervasive challenge of misinformation in the digital age and prompt a deeper analysis of their implications for media literacy, public trust, and the integrity of the information ecosystem.

### **High Encounter Rates Among All Media Consumers**

The data indicates that users across all media types—alternative news, print media, radio, social media, and television—report high levels of encountering misinformation online. Notably

- **Alternative news and social media users** report the highest rates of always encountering misinformation. This could reflect the unregulated nature of these platforms, where sensational and unverified content often circulates more freely to maximize engagement.
- **Print media and television users**, traditionally reliant on more regulated media forms, also experience significant misinformation encounters online, suggesting that no group is immune to the challenges posed by digital misinformation.

### **Radio Listeners: A Distinct Profile**

Radio listeners demonstrate a unique profile with a significant proportion reporting never encountering false information. This could imply more selective engagement with content or higher media literacy levels within this group. Alternatively, it might reflect a lower interaction rate with online and social media platforms compared to other media consumers.

Implications for Media Literacy and Public Trust



The widespread encounter with misinformation across all media types stresses a critical need for thorough “media literacy programs” that empower users to “critically assess” the “credibility of information.” Media literacy initiatives should be tailored to address the specific vulnerabilities of each media consumer group, emphasizing skills such as source evaluation, cross-checking facts, and understanding media biases.

### **Challenges and Opportunities for Media Producers**

Media producers and platforms face significant challenges in curtailing the spread of misinformation. For traditional media companies transitioning into digital spaces, maintaining rigorous journalistic standards online is as crucial as in their traditional outputs. For social media platforms, there is a pressing need to refine algorithms to prioritize accuracy over engagement, potentially through more robust partnerships with fact checking organizations and the implementation of AI-driven tools to flag dubious content.

### **Policy Implications**

The findings suggest a need for policy interventions that could support the fight against misinformation. These might include:

- **Regulations that mandate transparency** about sources and fact-checking processes, particularly for alternative news sources and social media platforms.
- **Support for public awareness campaigns** about misinformation, possibly funded by governments but led by independent media organizations to maintain credibility.
- **Incentives for media companies** that consistently apply strong fact-checking and ethical reporting standards.

The encounter with false or misleading information is a common experience across all media user groups, highlighting a ubiquitous challenge in the digital information landscape. This situation calls for a engaged approach involving enhanced media literacy, stringent content regulation, and proactive measures by media producers to ensure the accuracy and reliability of information disseminated online. Addressing these issues effectively will require

collaborative efforts between media companies, educational institutions, policymakers, and the public to foster a more informed and discerning global audience.

*Table 4.1. 11 Chi-Square Test Results for Encountering False or Misleading Information on Online and Social Media Platforms*

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	32.398 <sup>a</sup>	16	.009
Likelihood Ratio	34.425	16	.005
N of Valid Cases	395		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.19.

Chi-Square Test 4.1.11: Encountering False or Misleading Information on Online and Social Media Platforms

Pearson Chi-Square: 32.398, p-value = 0.009

Likelihood Ratio: 34.425, p-value = 0.005

**Null Hypothesis (H0):** There is no significant association between the type of news source and encountering false or misleading information on online and social media platforms.

**Alternative Hypothesis (H1):** There is a significant association between the type of news source and encountering false or misleading information on online and social media platforms.

### ***Interpretation:***

The Chi-Square test results for encountering false or misleading information on online and social media platforms also show a significant association, albeit weaker than for traditional news sources. The Pearson Chi-Square value of 32.398, with a p-value of 0.009, indicates that there is a statistically significant difference in how often users from different news source categories encounter false information online. This suggests that the type of primary news source (alternative news, print media, radio, social media, TV) influences the frequency of encountering misinformation on digital platforms. The Likelihood Ratio of 34.425 supports this finding, further validating the association.

***Result:***

There is a significant association between the type of news source and encountering false or misleading information on online and social media platforms (p-value = 0.009). Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis

*Table 4.1. 12 Symmetric Measures for Encountering False or Misleading Information on Online and Social Media Platforms*

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.286	.009
	Cramer's V	.143	.009
N of Valid Cases		395	

Symmetric Measures for Online and Social Media Platforms Phi: 0.286, p-value = 0.009

Cramer's V: 0.143, p-value = 0.009

***Interpretation:***

The symmetric measures for online and social media platforms indicate a weaker, but still significant, association. The Phi value of 0.286 suggests a moderate association between the type of news source and encountering false information online. Cramer's V, which accounts for the degrees of freedom, is 0.143, indicating a weak to moderate association. These measures confirm that while the type of news source influences the prevalence of misinformation on digital platforms, the effect is less pronounced compared to traditional news sources.

*Table 4.1. 13 Crosstabulation of Belief that Online and Social Media Platforms Contribute to the Spread of Post-Truth Narratives by Source Type*

			Belief that online, and social media platforms contribute to the spread of post-truth narratives					Total
			Moderately	Not at all	Significantly	Slightly	Very Significantly	
Source type	Alternative News	Count	8	12	12	34	12	78
		Expected Count	8.9	16.2	12.8	27.3	12.8	78.0
		% within Source type	10.3%	15.4%	15.4%	43.6%	15.4%	100.0%
	Print Media	Count	15	39	8	27	11	100
		Expected Count	11.4	20.8	16.5	34.9	16.5	100.0
		% within Source type	15.0%	39.0%	8.0%	27.0%	11.0%	100.0%
	Radio	Count	5	11	11	32	12	71
		Expected Count	8.1	14.7	11.7	24.8	11.7	71.0
		% within Source type	7.0%	15.5%	15.5%	45.1%	16.9%	100.0%
	Social Media	Count	7	8	13	9	17	54
		Expected Count	6.2	11.2	8.9	18.9	8.9	54.0
		% within Source type	13.0%	14.8%	24.1%	16.7%	31.5%	100.0%
	TV	Count	10	12	21	36	13	92
		Expected Count	10.5	19.1	15.1	32.1	15.1	92.0
		% within Source type	10.9%	13.0%	22.8%	39.1%	14.1%	100.0%
Total		Count	45	82	65	138	65	395
		Expected Count	45.0	82.0	65.0	138.0	65.0	395.0
		% within Source type	11.4%	20.8%	16.5%	34.9%	16.5%	100.0%

The data from Table 4.1.13 provides a detailed look at how different groups of media consumers perceive the role of online and social media platforms in contributing to the spread of post-truth narratives. The results show significant variability across different types of news consumers, reflecting diverse perceptions based on the primary source of news consumption.

**Alternative News and Radio Consumers:** A significant portion of alternative news consumers (43.6%) and radio listeners (45.1%) believe that online platforms contribute slightly to the spread of post-truth narratives. This perception might be influenced by the characteristics of these media types. Alternative news sources, often unregulated and diverse in nature, and radio, less interactive and slower to update, may lead consumers to perceive a lesser impact from online platforms compared to their primary sources.

**Print Media Consumers:** Consumers of print media show a high level of skepticism about the impact of online and social media on spreading post-truth narratives, with 39.0% believing these platforms do not contribute at all. This group's skepticism could stem from a reliance on more traditional, editorially controlled forms of media, which historically emphasize fact-checking and credibility.

**Social Media Users:** Users of social media platforms demonstrate the highest concern about the role of these platforms in disseminating post-truth narratives, with 31.5% believing that the contribution is very significant. This internal awareness might be due to direct exposure to the dynamics of misinformation spread on these platforms, where viral content often prioritizes sensationalism or emotional engagement over factual accuracy.

**Television News Consumers:** TV consumers largely perceive a slight contribution (39.1%) from online and social media platforms to the spread of post-truth narratives. Given television's traditional format and regulated content, viewers may see these platforms as less influential compared to the immediate and pervasive nature of online misinformation.

### **Implications for Media Literacy and Platform Responsibility:**

The findings stress the need for increased media literacy across all platforms, with a particular focus on educating users about the mechanisms of misinformation on social media. Additionally, these results suggest that media consumers recognize the potential of online platforms to spread misinformation, which calls for platform managers and policymakers to take more robust actions to mitigate this issue. Strategies could include improving algorithmic transparency, enhancing user controls over content, and expanding efforts to label and reduce the reach of identified misinformation.

The diversity in perceptions among different media consumers highlights the composite landscape of media influence in the digital age. Understanding these perceptions can help tailor media literacy programs and guide platform policies to more effectively address the challenges of misinformation and its impact on public discourse and trust

*Table 4.1. 14 Chi-Square Test Results for Belief that Online and Social Media Platforms Contribute to the Spread of Post-Truth Narratives*

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	53.548 <sup>a</sup>	16	.000
Likelihood Ratio	51.321	16	.000
N of Valid Cases	395		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.15.

The results from the Chi-Square tests in Table 14 provide statistically significant evidence on the association between the type of news source and the beliefs about the role of online and social media platforms in spreading post-truth narratives.

Chi-Square Test Overview:

- **Pearson Chi-Square Value:** 53.548 with a degree of freedom (df) of 16.
- **Likelihood Ratio:** 51.321 with a df of 16.
- **Significance Level (Asymp. Sig.):** Both tests show a p-value of 0.000.

### ***Hypothesis***

**Null Hypothesis (H0):** There is no significant association between the type of news source and the belief that online and social media platforms contribute to the spread of post-truth narratives.

**Alternative Hypothesis (H1):** There is a significant association between the type of news source and the belief that online and social media platforms contribute to the spread of post-truth narratives.

### ***Interpretation:***

The Pearson Chi-Square and Likelihood Ratio tests both indicate highly significant results, with p-values well below the conventional threshold of 0.05. This statistical outcome suggests a strong association between the type of primary news source a person uses and their perceptions of the impact of online and social media on the dissemination of post-truth narratives.

This implies that the differences observed in how users of different media types perceive the influence of online and social media in spreading misinformation are not random but rather reflect a consistent pattern across the sample. For instance:

- **Users of social media and alternative news sources** tend to perceive these platforms as significantly contributing to the spread of misinformation, likely due to their direct and frequent interaction with highly dynamic and less regulated information environments.
- **Print media and television users** may perceive a slightly lesser impact from online platforms, possibly reflecting their engagement with more traditional forms of media that emphasize editorial control and fact-checking.

### ***Implications:***

The findings suggest that awareness and perceptions of misinformation are influenced by the media consumption habits of individuals. This has significant implications for media literacy initiatives, which need to be customized according to the primary media consumption patterns of different groups to effectively address and mitigate the spread of misinformation.

For policymakers and platform designers, these results highlight the importance of developing targeted interventions that address the specific vulnerabilities associated with each type of media consumption. For online and social media platforms, there is a clear directive to enhance algorithmic transparency, improve content moderation practices, and actively engage in user education to combat the proliferation of misinformation.

The statistically significant results of the Chi-Square tests affirm the critical need for a nuanced approach to understanding and combating misinformation across various media platforms. As media consumption continues to evolve, so too must the strategies employed to ensure the integrity of information in the digital age. This requires a concerted effort from all stakeholders involved in media production, dissemination, and regulation.

*Table 4.1. 15 Symmetric Measures for Belief that Online and Social Media Platforms Contribute to the Spread of Post-Truth Narratives*

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.368	.000
	Cramer's V	.184	.000
N of Valid Cases		395	

Symmetric Measures for Online and Social Media Platforms Phi: 0.368, p-value = 0.000

Cramer's V: 0.184, p-value = 0.000

***Interpretation:***

The Phi value of 0.368 indicates a moderate association between the type of news source and the belief that online platforms spread post-truth narratives. Cramer's V of 0.184 further supports this moderate association, indicating that the type of news source significantly influences perceptions of misinformation on online and social media platforms.



*Table 4.1. 16 Crosstabulation of Belief that Traditional News Sources Contribute to the Spread of Post-Truth Narratives by Source Type*

			Belief wither traditional news sources contribute to the spread of post-truth narratives					Total
			Moderately	Not at all	Significantly	Slightly	Very Significantly	
Source type	Alternative News	Count	18	26	9	17	8	78
		Expected Count	14.8	21.5	10.5	21.3	9.9	78.0
		% within Source type	23.1%	33.3%	11.5%	21.8%	10.3%	100.0%
	Print Media	Count	18	39	10	20	13	100
		Expected Count	19.0	27.6	13.4	27.3	12.7	100.0
		% within Source type	18.0%	39.0%	10.0%	20.0%	13.0%	100.0%
	Radio	Count	11	24	4	22	10	71
		Expected Count	13.5	19.6	9.5	19.4	9.0	71.0
		% within Source type	15.5%	33.8%	5.6%	31.0%	14.1%	100.0%
	Social Media	Count	10	4	24	7	9	54
		Expected Count	10.3	14.9	7.2	14.8	6.8	54.0
		% within Source type	18.5%	7.4%	44.4%	13.0%	16.7%	100.0%
	TV	Count	18	16	6	42	10	92
		Expected Count	17.5	25.4	12.3	25.2	11.6	92.0
		% within Source type	19.6%	17.4%	6.5%	45.7%	10.9%	100.0%
Total		Count	75	109	53	108	50	395
		Expected Count	75.0	109.0	53.0	108.0	50.0	395.0
		% within Source type	19.0%	27.6%	13.4%	27.3%	12.7%	100.0%

The crosstabulation data from Table 16 sheds light on the varied perceptions regarding the role of traditional news sources in the propagation of post-truth narratives among different types of media consumers. The findings highlight a notable diversity in beliefs, influenced by the primary source of news consumption for each group.

**Alternative News and Radio Users:** A significant segment of alternative news (33.3%) and radio (33.8%) users believe that traditional news sources do not contribute to the spread of post-truth narratives. This perspective might reflect a comparative view where these consumers see their chosen alternative and radio sources as more aligned with their personal beliefs or potentially more trustworthy than mainstream traditional media.

**Print Media Users:** The largest proportion of print media users (39.0%) also holds a skeptical view of the role of traditional news in spreading misinformation, reflecting a possible bias towards the perceived reliability and editorial rigor of print media. These users likely value the depth of analysis typically associated with print journalism, which may be seen as a buffer against the spread of unchecked narratives.

**Social Media Users:** In contrast, social media users exhibit a much more critical stance, with 44.4% believing that traditional news sources significantly contribute to the spread of post-truth narratives. This high level of distrust could be indicative of the broader skepticism that pervades the environment of social media, where users are regularly exposed to both real and fake news stories side by side. It also suggests an awareness among social media users of the potential for traditional media to engage in sensationalism or biased reporting that aligns with certain narratives or agendas.

**Television Users:** TV users predominantly perceive only a slight contribution (45.7%) from traditional news to the spread of post-truth narratives, which may suggest a moderate trust in televised news. This trust might stem from the visual and real-time nature of television broadcasting, which can offer a sense of immediacy and transparency that written media cannot.

### ***Implications:***

These varying perceptions feature a fragmented trust landscape in media, where scepticism and acceptance intersect differently across media types. The data points to a need for all media, especially traditional outlets, to enhance their transparency and fact-checking processes to rebuild and maintain public trust. For policymakers and media watchdogs, these insights emphasize the importance of supporting initiatives that foster media literacy and critical

engagement with news sources to help the public navigate the complex media environment effectively

*Table 4.1. 17 Chi-Square Test Results for Belief that Traditional News Sources Contribute to the Spread of Post-Truth Narratives*

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	85.540 <sup>a</sup>	16	.000
Likelihood Ratio	75.017	16	.000
N of Valid Cases	395		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.84.

The Chi-Square test results from Table 4.1.17 reveal a highly significant association between the type of news source used by respondents and their perceptions regarding the role of traditional news sources in the spread of post-truth narratives.

Chi-Square Test Overview:

- **Pearson Chi-Square Value:** 85.540
- **Likelihood Ratio:** 75.017
- Both tests yield a **p-value of 0.000**, which is well below the conventional threshold (0.05) for statistical significance.

### ***Hypothesis***

**Null Hypothesis (H0):** There is no significant association between the type of news source and the belief that traditional news sources contribute to the spread of post-truth narratives.

**Alternative Hypothesis (H1):** There is a significant association between the type of news source and the belief that traditional news sources contribute to the spread of post-truth narratives.

### ***Interpretation:***

The strangely high Chi-Square values and the corresponding p-values close to zero strongly suggest that the differences in how users of various news sources perceive the contribution of traditional media to the spread of post-truth narratives are not random. There is a statistically significant variation in perceptions based on the primary news source, indicating that this factor plays a crucial role in shaping opinions about the reliability and influence of traditional media.

### ***Implications:***

This significant finding emphasizes the need for media outlets, especially traditional ones, to address public concerns about bias and misinformation. For media practitioners and policymakers, these results highlight the importance of enhancing transparency, adhering to rigorous journalistic standards, and engaging in proactive public communication to rebuild and sustain trust among viewers and readers. Moreover, these insights could guide educational campaigns aimed at improving media literacy, helping the to critically evaluate news sources and understand the media landscape's complexity in the age of misinformation.

*Table 4.1. 18 Symmetric Measures for Belief that Traditional News Sources Contribute to the Spread of Post-Truth Narratives*

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.465	.000
	Cramer's V	.233	.000
N of Valid Cases		395	

Symmetric Measures for Traditional News Sources Phi: 0.465, p-value = 0.000  
Cramer's V: 0.233, p-value = 0.000

### ***Interpretation:***

The Phi value of 0.465 indicates a strong association between the type of news source and the belief that traditional news sources contribute to the spread of post-truth narratives. Cramer's V of 0.233 further supports this strong association, indicating that the type of news source significantly influences perceptions of misinformation in traditional media.

*Table 4.1. 19 Chi-Square Test Results for Examining the Influence of News Source Type on Trust and Perception of Misinformation*

TAB L E NO.	HYPOTHESIS DESCRIPTION	CHI- SQUARE VALUE	P- VALU E	DECISION (ACCEPT/RE JECT H0)
2	Trust in Traditional News Outlets for Accurate Political Information	100.541	0.00	Reject H0
5	Trust in Social Media for Accurate Political Information	27.611	0.035	Reject H0
8	Encountering False or Misleading Information in Traditional News	169.067	0.00	Reject H0
11	Encountering False or Misleading Information on Online Media	32.398	0.009	Reject H0
14	Belief in Online Media's Role in Post-Truth Narratives	53.548	0.00	Reject H0
17	Belief in Traditional Media's Role in Post-Truth Narratives	85.54	0.00	Reject H0

Table 19. presents the results from a series of chi-square tests conducted to evaluate the impact of different news sources on trust in media and the prevalence of misinformation. The analysis is structured around the central hypothesis that online and social media are significantly associated with higher instances of post-truth narratives compared to traditional news sources. Each test assesses a distinct aspect of media interaction—trust in news sources for accurate political information, encounters with false or misleading information, and beliefs about the role of media in spreading post-truth narratives. The results robustly support the hypothesis, showing significant associations across all tested categories, leading to the rejection of the null hypotheses (H0) in each case. These findings highlight the differential impact of media type on public perception and trust, aligning with the study's objective to map the landscape of post-truth narratives across various media platforms.

#### **4.1.6 Summary**

This section of Chapter 4.1 has critically analyzed the dynamics of trust, misinformation encounters, and the perceptions of post-truth narratives across different news sources. The study aimed to investigate the prevalence of post-truth narratives by examining how various

types of news sources contribute to the spread of misinformation and influence public trust. Through a series of crosstabulations and chi-square tests, the findings have highlighted significant differences in how users of alternative news, print media, radio, social media, and television perceive and interact with both traditional and digital media platforms.

#### **Comprehensive Findings from Crosstabulation Data**

The crosstabulation data provided a nuanced insight into how different types of news sources are perceived and how they interact with the phenomena of trust and misinformation

#### **Trust Analysis in Traditional News Outlets:**

Trust varied significantly with a notable divide between conventional news sources like print and radio, which generally retained higher trust levels, and newer platforms like social media and alternative news, which were viewed with considerable skepticism. This highlights a pivotal shift in media consumption dynamics where newer media forms are scrutinized more intensely due to their real or perceived roles in disseminating misinformation.

#### **Examination of Social Media Trust**

Social media's low trust scores are particularly concerning given its role as a primary news source for a large segment of the population. The pervasive distrust could be attributed to frequent viral misinformation campaigns and the platforms' initial slow response to such activities, which has only recently seen a shift towards more aggressive misinformation management strategies.

#### **Varied Encounters with Misinformation:**

The frequency and nature of misinformation encounters revealed a complex landscape where users of all media types reported encountering false information, albeit more frequently on digital platforms. This highlights the pervasive challenge of maintaining information integrity in an era where digital content is easily manipulated and spread.

#### **Objective and Hypothesis Review:**

The primary objective was to explore the prevalence of post-truth narratives, particularly focusing on the comparison between online/social media and traditional news sources. The formulated hypothesis posited that the prevalence of post-truth narratives is significantly higher in online and social media compared to traditional news sources.

**Analysis of Chi-Square Tests:** The results from the chi-square tests provide substantial evidence regarding the relationship between the type of news source and various aspects of media trust and misinformation:

- **Trust in News Outlets:** The tests demonstrated a significant variance in trust levels for both traditional and social media outlets, dependent on the primary news source of the respondents. Alternative news and social media users showed a notably higher level of distrust compared to those who primarily consume print media and radio.
- **Encountering Misinformation:** A high frequency of encountering misinformation was noted particularly among users of alternative and social media, underscoring the challenges digital platforms face in controlling false narratives.
- **Perceptions of Post-Truth Contribution:** There was a strong belief among social media users that online platforms significantly contribute to the spread of post-truth narratives, highlighting an acute awareness of the issues inherent in these platforms.

### **Conclusion on Hypothesis:**

Based on the comprehensive data analysis, the hypothesis that the prevalence of post-truth narratives is significantly higher in online and social media compared to traditional news sources is supported. The chi-square tests across different tables (specifically Tables 11 and 14) show that there is a significant association between the type of news source and the prevalence of misinformation, with online and social media platforms exhibiting a greater tendency to spread post-truth narratives.

The exploration of how different types of news sources contribute to the spread of misinformation and shape public trust has revealed a complex landscape of media consumption. The findings from this study emphasize a significant challenge in the digital age: the pervasive spread of misinformation, particularly through online and social media platforms. This issue is compounded by the varying levels of trust and scepticism exhibited by users depending on their primary news sources.

## **Statistical Insights from Phi and Cramer's V Values**

The statistical insights provided by Phi and Cramer's V values, it's evident that the strength of association varies across different dimensions of media interaction:

### **Phi Coefficients:**

The stronger Phi values in encounters with misinformation suggest that the type of news source plays a crucial role in how often users come across false information. For instance, the highest Phi values were associated with social media and alternative news, indicating these platforms' strong link with misinformation encounters.

### **Cramer's V Results:**

Cramer's V values further delineate the relative strength of these associations across different user groups. The moderate values highlight the complexity of media influence, suggesting that while there is a significant effect of media type on misinformation perception, this effect is interwoven with other user-specific factors such as prior beliefs, media literacy levels, and individual critical thinking abilities.

## **Implications of Phi and Cramer's V Findings**

The statistical findings provide a robust framework for understanding the quantitative impact of media type on misinformation dynamics. These results are critical for:

- **Developing Targeted Media Literacy Programs:** Tailored programs that address the specific vulnerabilities exposed by these statistical insights can more effectively enhance public discernment.
- **Informing Policy and Regulation:** Policymakers can use these insights to craft more precise regulations that target the identified weak points in information dissemination processes, particularly on platforms that show a higher propensity for spreading misinformation.

## **Fulfillment of the Study's Objective and Validation of the Hypothesis**



This analysis not only meets the study's objective but also strongly supports the hypothesis. The findings clearly demonstrate the greater prevalence of post-truth narratives in online and social media. This is corroborated by the significant statistical associations observed and the pervasive public distrust noted in these media forms.

### **Implications for Media Organizations:**

- There is an urgent necessity for comprehensive "media literacy" initiatives that customize interventions to address the distinct susceptibilities linked to various forms of "media consumption." These programs should prioritize strengthening users' skills in assessing the "credibility" of information and comprehending the processes behind the creation and dissemination of "news."
- **Regulatory and Policy Initiatives:** Policymakers and media regulators need to consider more stringent measures to ensure the accountability of news sources, particularly online platforms. This might include enforcing transparency about sourcing and fact-checking processes.
- **Enhancing Public Trust:** Traditional and digital media organizations must prioritize building and maintaining public trust by adhering to high journalistic standards, promoting transparency, and engaging with their audiences to explain their editorial decisions and news-handling processes.

### **Strategic Recommendations**

1. **Sector-Specific Media Literacy:** Develop media literacy curricula that address specific sectors such as young adults, seniors, and non-native language speakers who might be more vulnerable to misinformation.
2. **Enhancing Fact-Checking Accessibility:** Simplify the process of fact-checking for the average user by integrating real-time fact-checking tools directly into social media platforms, leveraging AI and machine learning technologies.
3. **Promoting Inter-Platform Collaboration:** Encourage collaborative efforts between traditional and new media platforms to cross-verify news stories and share reliable information, reducing the echo chamber effect that exacerbates misinformation spread.

## **CHAPTER 4.2**

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

#### **EXPOSURE THEORY IN POST-TRUTH AND ITS EFFECTS ON PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF POLITICAL INFORMATION PERSPECTIVES**

## INTRODUCTION

In an era marked by the proliferation of misinformation and the rise of post-truth politics, understanding how individuals consume political information has become increasingly crucial. The “selective exposure theory posits that people tend to favor information that aligns with their pre-existing beliefs while avoiding or dismissing contradictory information.” This chapter looks into the patterns of selective exposure behavior among individuals and its implications for public discourse, particularly in the context of a post-truth environment.

The primary objective of this study is to investigate how selective exposure behaviour influences public perception, trust in political institutions, and overall political discourse. By examining the ways individuals engage with political information, the study aims to uncover the underlying mechanisms driving selective exposure and its broader implications. The general hypothesis guiding this research is that individuals exhibit selective exposure behaviour in consuming political information.

This chapter presents a comprehensive analysis based on four different aspects of media consumption and political information exposure, each analysed using Chi-Square tests to determine the statistical significance of observed associations:

### 4.2.1 Variables

- **Exposure to Contradictory Information and Reactions**

This analysis explores how individuals react to information that contradicts their political beliefs, highlighting the defensive mechanisms that come into play

#### **Independent Variable:**

- Frequency of exposure to contradictory information.

#### **Dependent Variable:**

- Reaction to the contradictory information

### **Conscious Diversification of Media Consumption and Behaviour:**

This section examines whether conscious efforts to diversify media consumption translate into actual behaviour change, shedding light on the persistence of selective exposure

#### **Independent Variable:**

- Conscious diversification of media consumption

#### **Dependent Variable:**

- Media consumption behaviour

### **Discussing Political Information with Different Viewpoints:**

This analysis investigates the frequency of political discussions among individuals with differing viewpoints, assessing the stability of discussion habits

#### **Independent Variable:**

- Frequency of discussing political information with different viewpoints.

#### **Dependent Variable:**

- Frequency of these discussions.

### **Exposure to Various Political Perspectives and Belief in Enhancement of Understanding:**

This section evaluates how exposure to diverse political perspectives influences individuals' beliefs about the enhancement of their understanding of political issues.

#### **Independent Variable:**

- Exposure to a variety of political perspectives.

**Dependent Variable:**

- Belief in the enhancement of understanding.

#### **4.2.3 Objective**

- To examine Selective Exposure theory in Post-Truth and its Effects on Public Perception of Political Information perspectives

#### **4.2.4 Hypothesis 2**

- Individuals exhibit selective exposure behaviour in consuming political information.

The findings from these analyses provide critical insights into the selective exposure behaviour of individuals and its implications for public discourse in a polarized and post-truth era. By addressing cognitive biases and promoting media literacy, there is potential to foster a more balanced and informed public, contributing to healthier political dialogue and engagement. The subsequent sections will look into these analyses in detail, providing a thorough examination of selective exposure behaviours and its implications for political information consumption and public discourse.

#### **4.2.5 Statistical Analysis Results and Discussion**

Table 4.2. 1 Exposure to Information that Contradicts Political Beliefs \* Reaction to the Information Crosstabulation

			Reaction to the Information					Tot al	
			Feel challe nged but consid er it	Reject confli cting inform ation outrig ht	Somew hat open to reconsid ering my beliefs	Strongl y open to reconsid ering my beliefs	Tend to ignore confli cting inform ation		
Expo sure to Infor matio n that Contra dicts Politic al Belief s	Alway s	Count	27	27	13	8	43	118	
		Expect ed Count	27.5	28.7	13.7	14	34.1	118	
		%	22.90%	22.90 %	11.00%	6.80%	36.40%	100	
		within Expos ure to Inform ation that Contra dicts Politic al Belief s						0.00 %	
	Frequ e ntly	Count	22	25	7	11	26	91	
		Expect ed Count	21.2	22.1	10.6	10.8	26.3	91	
		%	24.20 %	27.50 %	7.70%	12.10%	28.60 %	0	
		within Expos ure to Inform ation that Contra dicts						100	
		Politic						0.00 %	
		Never	al Belief s						
			Count	8	5	12	17	10	52
			Expect ed Count	12.1	12.6	6.1	6.2	15	52
%			15.40%	9.60%	23.10%	32.70%	19.20%	0	
within Expos ure to Inform ation that Contra dicts Politic al Belief s								100	
Occasi onally		Count	20	24	9	7	16	76	
		Expect ed Count	17.7	18.5	8.9	9	21.9	76	
		%	26.30 %	31.60 %	11.80 %	9.20%	21.10 %	0	
		within Expos ure to						100	
		Inform						0.00 %	
			ation that						

		Contra dicts Polit ic Belief s						
	Rarely	Count	15	15	5	4	19	58
		Expect ed Count	13.5	14.1	6.8	6.9	16.7	58 0
		%	25.90%	25.90 %	8.60%	6.90%	32.80%	100
		within Expos ure to Inform ation that Contra dicts Polit ic Belief s						0.00 %
Total		Count	92	96	46	47	114	395
		Expect ed Count	92	96	46	47	114	395 0
			%	23.30	24.30	11.60	11.90	28.90%
	within Expos ure to Inform ation that Contra dicts Polit ic Belief s	%	%	%	%		0.00%	

The crosstabulation data presented in Table 4.2.1 offers a detailed view of how individuals react to contradictory political information based on their frequency of exposure. The patterns of reaction vary significantly across the levels of exposure, suggesting varied perceptions and defensive mechanisms depending on how often individuals encounter information that challenges their political beliefs.

Individuals who are always exposed to contradictory information exhibit a high likelihood of defensive reactions, with 36.4% tending to ignore it and 22.9% rejecting it outright. A small proportion (6.8%) is strongly open to reconsidering their beliefs. Among those frequently exposed, 27.5% reject the information outright, and 28.6% tend to ignore it, with 12.1% strongly open to reconsidering their beliefs. For those never exposed to conflicting information, a notable 32.7% are strongly open to reconsidering their beliefs, and 23.1% are somewhat open to reconsidering their beliefs. Individuals occasionally exposed show that 31.6% reject the information outright, and 26.3% feel challenged but consider it, with only 9.2% strongly open to reconsidering their beliefs. Among those rarely exposed, 32.8% tend to ignore conflicting

information, and 25.9% reject it outright, with only 6.9% strongly open to reconsidering their beliefs.

## **Implications and Discussion of Key Findings**

The analysis of how individuals react to contradictory information, as delineated in the crosstabulation data, provides critical insights into the current state of political information consumption and its implications for public discourse. Below, we explore the broader implications of these findings and discuss what they could mean for various stakeholders in the political and media landscape.

### **Heightened Defensive Reactions in Frequent Exposure:**

The high rates at which individuals who are always or frequently exposed to contradictory information ignore or reject it outright suggest a vulnerability to cognitive dissonance. This defensive stance may undermine the potential for these individuals to engage with diverse perspectives. For policymakers and media developers, this highlights the need for strategies that encourage open-mindedness and critical engagement with information.

### **Openness to Reconsidering Beliefs in Rare Exposure:**

The findings show that individuals who rarely or never encounter contradictory information are more open to reconsidering their beliefs when they do. This openness could be leveraged in educational programs designed to gradually increase exposure to diverse perspectives, thereby reducing defensiveness over time.

### **Cognitive Dissonance and Selective Exposure:**

The results support selective exposure theory and cognitive dissonance, where individuals prefer information that aligns with their beliefs to avoid discomfort. This has significant implications for media literacy programs, which need to address these cognitive biases. Media literacy initiatives should focus on teaching individuals to recognize and manage their cognitive biases, promoting a more balanced consumption of political information.



**Formation of Echo Chambers:**

The tendency to ignore or reject conflicting information contributes to the formation of echo chambers, where individuals are insulated from diverse perspectives. This behavior exacerbates political polarization, making it challenging to foster a more inclusive and balanced public discourse. Media organizations and educational institutions should work towards breaking these echo chambers by promoting diverse content and encouraging dialogue across different viewpoints.

**Educational Initiatives on Media Literacy:**

The varying degrees of openness to contradictory information highlight the critical need for comprehensive media literacy education. Such education should equip individuals with skills to critically evaluate information, understand biases, and engage constructively with opposing viewpoints. Educational institutions and civil society organizations play a pivotal role in designing and disseminating these programs.

**Enhanced Public Engagement and Dialogue:**

Encouraging public engagement and dialogue about the nature of political information consumption can foster a more discerning audience. Media outlets and educational forums should facilitate discussions on how "political information" is generated and consumed, accentuating the significance of "critical thinking" and receptivity to a variety of "perspectives." Such transparency can build public confidence and reduce polarization.

**Need for Cross-Platform Collaborations:**

Addressing the challenges of selective exposure and cognitive dissonance requires collaboration across media platforms. Joint efforts could include shared fact-checking services, cross-publishing of diverse content, and public education campaigns about the importance of engaging with opposing viewpoints. These collaborations can leverage the strengths of different platforms to promote a more balanced and "informed public discourse."

The key findings from the crosstabulation of reactions to contradictory information reveal a complex landscape of political information consumption that is fraught with challenges but also opportunities for improvement. By understanding the nuances of how individuals react to conflicting information, stakeholders can better strategize interventions aimed at enhancing the accuracy, reliability, and inclusivity of political discourse. This is crucial not just for maintaining public trust but also for ensuring the healthy functioning of democratic societies.

*Table 4.2. 2 Chi-Square Test Results for Reaction to Contradictory Information and Exposure Frequency*

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	45.367 <sup>a</sup>	16	.000
Likelihood Ratio	40.456	16	.001
N of Valid Cases	395		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.06.

The Chi-Square test results presented in Table 2 provide a statistical analysis of the association between the frequency of exposure to contradictory political information and individuals' reactions to such information.

#### Chi-Square Test Results:

- Pearson Chi-Square Value: 45.367
- Degrees of Freedom (df): 16
- Asymptotic Significance (p-value): 0.000

#### Likelihood Ratio:

- Value: 40.456
- Degrees of Freedom (df): 16
- Asymptotic Significance (p-value): 0.001

### Interpretation of Chi-Square Test Results

The Pearson Chi-Square value of 45.367 with 16 degrees of freedom and an asymptotic significance (p-value) of 0.000 indicates a highly significant result. Similarly, the likelihood

ratio of 40.456 with 16 degrees of freedom and a p-value of 0.001 supports this finding. Both tests indicate that the observed association between the frequency of exposure to contradictory political information and individuals' reactions is statistically significant.

### ***Hypothesis Testing***

**Null Hypothesis (H0):** There is no significant association between the frequency of exposure to information that contradicts political beliefs and individuals' reactions to such information.

**Alternative Hypothesis (H1):** There is a significant association between the frequency of exposure to information that contradicts political beliefs and individuals' reactions to such information.

### ***Decision***

Based on the Chi-Square test results; the p-value is significantly less than the conventional significance level of 0.05. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis (H0) and accept the alternative hypothesis (H1). This indicates that there is a significant association between the frequency of exposure to contradictory political information and individuals' reactions to such information.

### **Implications and Discussion**

The rejection of the null hypothesis and acceptance of the alternative hypothesis have several important implications

#### **Confirmation of Selective Exposure Theory:**

The substantial "association" reinforces the "selective exposure theory," which suggests that individuals gravitate towards "information" that corroborates their pre-existing "beliefs" while typically avoiding or disregarding contradictory "information." This outcome is pivotal in comprehending how "cognitive biases" shape the process of "information consumption."

#### **Impact on Public Discourse:**

The significant association between exposure frequency and reactions to contradictory information highlights the challenge of fostering a balanced and informed public discourse. Individuals' defensive reactions to conflicting information “can lead to the formation of echo chambers,” where they are insulated from diverse perspectives, thereby exacerbating political polarization.

### **Media Literacy and Critical Thinking:**

The findings highlight the importance of media literacy programs that address cognitive biases and promote critical thinking. Such programs should aim to help individuals recognize their biases, evaluate information sources critically, and be open to diverse viewpoints. Enhancing media literacy can mitigate the effects of selective exposure and contribute to a more informed and balanced public.

### **Strategies for Media Outlets:**

Media outlets should consider strategies to present information in ways that reduce defensiveness and encourage engagement with diverse perspectives. This could involve framing conflicting information in a way that is less confrontational and more conducive to thoughtful consideration.

### **Policy Implications:**

Policymakers and regulatory bodies might explore interventions that encourage exposure to a variety of political perspectives. This could include promoting diversity in media content and supporting initiatives that foster dialogue across different viewpoints.

The Chi-Square test results confirm a significant association between the frequency of exposure to contradictory political information and individuals' reactions. This finding provides valuable insights into the dynamics of information consumption and highlights the need for targeted interventions to promote a more informed and balanced public discourse.

*Table 4.2. 2 Symmetric Measures for Reaction to Contradictory Information and Exposure Frequency*

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Phi		.339	.000
Nominal by Nominal	Cramer's V	.169	.000
N of Valid Cases		395	

### **Interpretation of Symmetric Measures**

#### **Phi Coefficient**

The "Phi coefficient" stands at 0.339, accompanied by a "significance level" (p-value) of 0.000. The "Phi coefficient" quantifies the strength of association between two "categorical variables," with a range from 0 to 1, where:

- A value of 0 denotes no association.
- "Values closer to 1 reflect a stronger association."

In this instance, a "Phi coefficient" of 0.339 suggests a "moderate association" between the frequency of exposure to "contradictory political information" and individuals' responses to such content. The p-value of 0.000 confirms the "statistical significance" of this association.

#### ***Cramer's V:***

"Cramer's V" is calculated at 0.169, also with a "significance level" (p-value) of 0.000. As another measure of association for "nominal variables," "Cramer's V" adjusts for the number of "categories" and "degrees of freedom." Like the "Phi coefficient," "Cramer's V" ranges from 0 to 1:

- "A value of 0 signifies no association."
- "Values approaching 1 suggest a stronger association."

Here, a "Cramer's V" value of 0.169 indicates a "moderate association," aligning with the findings from the "Phi coefficient." The p-value of 0.000 further reinforces the robustness of this relationship.

### ***Data Interpretation:***

The "moderate association" suggested by both the "Phi coefficient" and "Cramer's V" indicates a meaningful connection between the frequency with which individuals encounter "contradictory political information" and how they respond to such information.

*Table 4.2. 3 Conscious Diversification of Media Consumption \* Media Consumption Behaviour, Crosstabulation*

			Media Consumption Behaviour					Total
			Always	Alw	Occasi	Often	Oft	
			s	ays	onally	diversi	en	
			diversi	stic	diversif	fy to	stic	
			fy to	k to	y but	include	k to	
			include	sour	mostly	differe	sour	
			all	ces	stick to	nt	ces	
			politic	that	aligned	politic	that	
			al	alig	views	al	alig	
			perspe	n		perspe	n	
			ctives	with		ctives	wit	
				my			h	
				vie			my	
				ws			vie	
							ws	
Conscio	Always	Count	12	23	7	13	8	63
us								
Diversifi								
cation of		Expecte	11.5	17.7	7.7	14.7	11	63
		d Count					5	
Media		% within	19.00%	36.5	11.10%	20.60%	12	100
Consum		Conscio		%			7%	0%
ption		us						
		Diversifi						
		cation of						
		Media						
		Consum						
		ption						
	Freque	Count	10	17	6	12	18	63
	ntly	Expecte	11.5	17.7	7.7	14.7	11	63
		d Count					5	
		% within	15.90%	27	9.50%	19.00%	28	100
		Conscio		%			6%	0%

		us						
		Diversifi						
		cation of						
		Media						
		Consum						
		ption						
	Never	Count	21	23	20	26	17	107
		Expecte	19.5	30.1	13	24.9	19	107
		d Count					5	0
		% within	19.60%	21.5	18.70%	24.30%	15	100
		Conscio		%			9%	0%
		us						
		Diversifi						
		cation of						
		Media						
		Consum						
		ption						
	Occasi	Count	9	18	7	10	9	53
	onally							
		Expecte	9.7	14.9	6.4	12.3	9.7	53
		d Count						
		% within	17.00%	34	13.20%	18.90%	17	100
		Conscio		%			0%	0%
		us						
		Diversifi						
		cation of						
		Media						
		Consum						
		ption						
	Rarely	Count	20	30	8	31	20	109
		Expecte	19.9	30.6	13.2	25.4	19	109
		d Count					9	0
		% within	18.30%	27.5	7.30%	28.40%	18	100
		Conscio		%			3%	0%
		us						
		Diversifi						
		cation of						
		Media						
		Consum						
		ption						
Total		Count	72	111	48	92	72	395
		Expecte	72	111	48	92	72	395
		d Count		0			0	0
		% within	18.20%	28.1	12.20%	23.30%	18	100
		Conscio		%			2%	0%
		us						
		Diversifi						
		cation of						
		Media						
		Consum						
		ption						

The crosstabulation data reveals significant insights into media consumption behavior based on the frequency of conscious diversification efforts. Among the 63 individuals who always make a conscious effort to diversify their media consumption, a substantial 36.5% always stick to sources that align with their views, while 20.6% often diversify to include different perspectives, and 19.0% always diversify to include all political perspectives. Similarly, for the 63 individuals who frequently attempt to diversify, 28.6% often stick to sources that align with their views, 27.0% always stick to aligned sources, and only 19.0% often diversify to include different perspectives. In contrast, the 107 individuals who never consciously diversify show a more varied distribution, with 24.3% often diversifying to include different perspectives and 21.5% always sticking to aligned sources. Among the 53 individuals who occasionally diversify, a notable 34.0% always stick to sources that align with their views, and 18.9% often diversify to include different perspectives. Finally, the 109 individuals who rarely attempt to diversify their media sources reveal that 28.4% often diversify to include different perspectives, while 27.5% always stick to sources that align with their views.

### **Key Findings:**

#### **Always Consciously Diversify:**

Among the 63 individuals who always make a conscious effort to diversify their media consumption, a substantial 36.5% still always stick to sources that align with their views. Meanwhile, 20.6% often diversify to include different perspectives, and 19.0% always diversify to include all political perspectives.

#### **Frequently Consciously Diversify:**

For the 63 individuals who frequently attempt to diversify their media consumption, 28.6% often stick to sources that align with their views. Additionally, 27.0% always stick to aligned sources, and only 19.0% often diversify to include different perspectives.

#### **Never Consciously Diversify:**



Among the 107 individuals who never consciously diversify, there is a more varied distribution. About 24.3% often diversify to include different perspectives, while 21.5% always stick to aligned sources.

### **Occasionally Consciously Diversify:**

Of the 53 individuals who occasionally diversify their media sources, 34.0% always stick to sources that align with their views, and 18.9% often diversify to include different perspectives.

### **Rarely Consciously Diversify:**

The 109 individuals who rarely attempt to diversify show that 28.4% often diversify to include different perspectives, whereas 27.5% always stick to sources that align with their views.

Implications

### **Persistence of Selective Exposure:**

The persistence of selective exposure behavior, even among those who consciously try to diversify their media consumption, highlights the strong influence of cognitive biases. This suggests that individuals may find it challenging to break away from their established media consumption patterns despite their intentions.

### **Challenges in Changing Media Consumption Habits:**

The findings suggest that simply being aware of the need to diversify media consumption is not sufficient to change actual behavior. There may be underlying psychological factors and habits that prevent individuals from effectively diversifying their media sources.

### **Need for Enhanced Media Literacy Programs:**

The data highlights the importance of media literacy programs that go beyond raising awareness. These programs may focus on developing “critical thinking” skills and strategies to help individuals recognize and overcome their cognitive biases and habitual media consumption patterns.

## Policy and Educational Interventions:

Policymakers and educators should consider designing interventions that address the deeper cognitive and psychological barriers to media diversification. These interventions could include exercises in critical self-reflection, exposure to diverse viewpoints, and discussions on the benefits of engaging with a variety of sources.

The crosstabulation data reveals that conscious efforts to diversify media consumption do not necessarily translate into actual diversified media behavior. A significant portion of individuals, regardless of their efforts, continue to stick to sources that align with their pre-existing beliefs. This persistence of selective exposure behaviours highlights the need for comprehensive media literacy programs and targeted interventions that address the underlying cognitive and psychological barriers to media diversification. By understanding and mitigating these barriers, stakeholders can promote a more balanced and informed media consumption landscape.

*Table 4.2. 4 Chi-Square Test Results for Media Consumption Behavior and Conscious Diversification Efforts*

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	18.149 <sup>a</sup>	16	.315
Likelihood Ratio	17.545	16	.351
N of Valid Cases	395		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.44.

## *Hypothesis*

**Null Hypothesis (H0):** Conscious diversification of media consumption does not significantly influence media consumption behaviour.

**Alternative Hypothesis (H1):** Conscious diversification of media consumption significantly influences media consumption behaviour.

The "Chi-Square" test results reveal that no statistically significant relationship exists between the "conscious diversification" of "media consumption" and the "media consumption behavior." The "Pearson Chi-Square" statistic is 18.149, with 16 degrees of freedom, and an "asymptotic significance" (p-value) of 0.315, which exceeds the conventional threshold of 0.05. This outcome suggests that the null hypothesis cannot be rejected, implying that the variables do not exhibit a meaningful association in this context meaning that any observed differences in media consumption behaviour based on conscious diversification efforts are likely due to chance. Similarly, the likelihood ratio, with a value of 17.545 and the same degrees of freedom, further supports this finding with a p-value of 0.351.

*Table 4.2. 5 Symmetric Measures for Media Consumption Behaviour and Conscious Diversification Efforts*

	Value	Approx. Sig.
Phi	.214	.315
Nominal by Nominal Cramer's V	.107	.315
N of Valid Cases	395	

The symmetric measures, including the "Phi value" of 0.214 and "Cramer's V" of 0.107, also indicate a "weak association" between the variables, with both measures having an approximate significance of 0.315. This weak association implies that even though there is some relationship between the variables, it is not strong enough to be considered statistically significant. Therefore, the data suggests that conscious efforts to diversify media consumption do not significantly alter actual media consumption behaviours among the individuals surveyed.

*Table 4.2. 6 Discussing Political Information with Different Viewpoints \* Frequency of Discussion Crosstabulation*

			Frequency of Discussion					Total
			Alw ays	Freque ntly	Nev er	Occasio nally	Rar ely	
Discuss ing	Always	Count	21	13	13	15	20	82
Political Informa tion		Expecte d Count	16.8	14.1	15.6	17	18.5	82
		%	25.6	15.90%	15.9	18.30%	24.4	100

with		within	%		%		%	0%
Differ		Discuss						
nt		ing						
Viewpo		Political						
ints		Informa						
		tion						
		with						
		Differ						
		nt						
		Viewpo						
		ints						
		Count	14	12	13	18	13	70
	Frequent	Expecte	14.4	12.1	13.3	14.5	15.8	70
	ly	d Count						
		%	20	17.10%	18.6	25.70%	18.6	100
		within	%		%		%	0%
		Discuss						
		ing						
		Political						
		Informa						
		tion						
		with						
		Differ						
		nt						
		Viewpo						
		ints						
	Never	Count	10	10	19	9	12	60
		Expecte	12.3	10.3	11.4	12.5	13.5	60
		d Count						
		%	16.7	16.70%	31.7	15.00%	20	100
		within	%		%		%	0%
		Discuss						
		ing						
		Political						
		Informa						
		tion						
		with						
		Differ						
	nt							
	Viewpo							
	ints							
	Occasio	Count	15	12	14	23	15	79
	nally							
		Expecte	16.2	13.6	15	16.4	17.8	79
		d Count						
		%	19	15.20%	17.7	29.10%	19	100
		within	%		%		%	0%
		Discuss						
		ing						
		Political						
		Informa						
		tion						
		with						
		Differ						
		nt						
		Viewpo						
		ints						
	Rarely	Count	21	21	16	17	29	104

		Expected Count	21.3	17.9	19.7	21.6	23.4	104
		%	20.2	20.20%	15.4	16.30%	27.9	100
		within	%		%		%	0%
		Discussing						
		Political						
		Information						
		with						
		Different						
		Viewpoints						
Total		Count	81	68	75	82	89	395
		Expected Count	81	68	75	82	89	395
		%	20.5	17.20%	19	20.80%	22.5	100
		within	%		%		%	0%
		Discussing						
		Political						
		Information						
		with						
		Different						
		Viewpoints						

The crosstabulation analysis explores the relationship between discussing political information with different viewpoints and the frequency of these discussions among 395 individuals. Among those who always engage in discussions with differing viewpoints (82 individuals), 25.6% always discuss political information, while 24.4% rarely discuss it. A smaller portion, 18.3%, occasionally discuss political information, with 15.9% each for both frequently and never discussing political information. For the 70 individuals who frequently discuss political information with different viewpoints, the distribution is more balanced: 25.7% occasionally discuss political information, 20.0% always discuss it, and 18.6% each for both never and frequently discussing political information, with another 18.6% rarely discussing it.

For the 60 individuals who never discuss political information with different viewpoints, 31.7% never discuss political information at all, highlighting a significant avoidance of political discourse. Meanwhile, 20.0% rarely discuss political information, and 16.7% each for both always and frequently discussing it, with only 15.0% occasionally discussing it. Among those who occasionally discuss political information with different viewpoints (79 individuals),

29.1% occasionally discuss political information, while 19.0% each for both always and rarely discussing political information. For those who rarely discuss political information with different viewpoints (104 individuals), the distribution shows 27.9% rarely discuss political information, 20.2% each for both always and frequently discussing political information, 16.3% occasionally discuss it, and 15.4% never discuss it.

### **Key Findings:**

#### **Always Discussing Political Information with Different Viewpoints:**

Among the 82 individuals who always engage in discussions with differing viewpoints, 25.6% always discuss political information. Interestingly, a similar proportion (24.4%) rarely discuss it, indicating a varied approach to political discourse even among those who consistently seek out different perspectives. Additionally, 18.3% occasionally discuss political information, while 15.9% each frequently and never discuss it.

#### **Frequently Discussing Political Information with Different Viewpoints:**

For the 70 individuals who frequently discuss political information with different viewpoints, the distribution is more balanced. About 25.7% occasionally discuss political information, while 20.0% always discuss it. Additionally, 18.6% each never and frequently discuss political information, with another 18.6% rarely discussing it. This suggests a moderate engagement level in political discussions with differing viewpoints.

#### **Never Discussing Political Information with Different Viewpoints:**

Among the 60 individuals who never discuss political information with different viewpoints, 31.7% never discuss political information at all, highlighting a significant avoidance of political discourse. Meanwhile, 20.0% rarely discuss political information, and 16.7% each for both always and frequently discussing it, with only 15.0% occasionally discussing it. This group shows a pronounced reluctance to engage in political discussions, possibly due to a preference for homogenous viewpoints.

#### **Discussing Political Information with Different Viewpoints:**

Of the 79 individuals who occasionally discuss political information with different viewpoints, 29.1% occasionally discuss political information, while 19.0% each always and rarely discuss it. This group appears to engage in political discussions sporadically, balancing between consistent and infrequent engagement.

### **Rarely Discussing Political Information with Different Viewpoints:**

The 104 individuals who rarely discuss political information with different viewpoints show that 27.9% rarely discuss political information, indicating a preference for limited engagement. Additionally, 20.2% each always and frequently discuss political information, 16.3% occasionally discuss it, and 15.4% never discuss it.

### **Implications**

#### **Inconsistent Engagement Patterns:**

The findings indicate that even among individuals who regularly engage with differing viewpoints, there is significant variation in how often they discuss political information. This inconsistency suggests that other factors, such as the topic's relevance or personal interest, may play a more significant role in determining discussion frequency.

#### **Avoidance of Political Discourse:**

A considerable portion of individuals who never or rarely discuss political information with different viewpoints also tend to avoid political discussions altogether. This avoidance may stem from discomfort with confrontation or a preference for echo chambers where their views are reinforced.

#### **Challenges in Promoting Diverse Dialogue:**

The data highlights the challenge of fostering diverse political dialogue. Even among those open to different viewpoints, the frequency of discussions varies widely, suggesting that simply

promoting exposure to differing views may not be sufficient to encourage consistent engagement.

### **Need for Structured Interventions:**

To promote more frequent and meaningful political discussions across differing viewpoints, structured interventions such as facilitated dialogues or debate forums could be beneficial. These settings can provide a safe space for individuals to explore and understand differing perspectives without the risk of confrontation.

### **Impact on Public Discourse**

The findings highlight the complexity of public discourse in a polarized environment. Efforts to enhance political dialogue should focus on creating environments that encourage open, respectful, and consistent engagement with diverse perspectives.

The crosstabulation data reveals that while some individuals frequently engage in discussions with differing viewpoints, the overall frequency of political discussions varies significantly. This variation highlights the need for targeted interventions to foster more consistent and meaningful political discourse. By understanding and addressing the underlying factors influencing discussion habits, stakeholders can promote a healthier, more inclusive public dialogue.

*Table 4.2. 7 Chi-Square Test Results for Frequency of Political Discussions and Different Viewpoints*

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	16.892 <sup>a</sup>	16	.393
Likelihood Ratio	15.847	16	.464
N of Valid Cases	395		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 10.33.



## Interpretation of Chi-Square Test Results: Frequency of Political Discussions and Different Viewpoints

### ***Hypothesis:***

- **Null Hypothesis (H0):** There is no significant association between the frequency of discussing political information with different viewpoints and the frequency of these discussions.
- **Alternative Hypothesis (H1):** There is a significant association between the frequency of discussing political information with different viewpoints and the frequency of these discussions.

### ***Chi-Square Test Results:***

The results of the "Chi-Square" test are detailed in "Table 4.2.8." The "Pearson Chi-Square" value is 16.892 with 16 "degrees of freedom," and the "asymptotic significance" (p-value) stands at 0.393. In parallel, the "likelihood ratio" is 15.847, also with 16 "degrees of freedom," and a p-value of 0.464. Both p-values exceed the conventional significance threshold of 0.05, indicating that no statistically significant association is present.

### ***Interpretation of Results:***

The high p-values (0.393 and 0.464) indicate that there is no statistically significant association between the frequency of discussing political information with different viewpoints and the frequency of these discussions.

### ***Implications:***

#### **Stability of Discussion Patterns:**

The lack of significant association suggests that the frequency with which individuals engage in political discussions with different viewpoints does not significantly influence how often they discuss political information overall. This indicates a stability in discussion patterns, irrespective of exposure to differing perspectives.

#### **Independence of Variables:**

The findings imply that discussing political information with different viewpoints and the overall frequency of political discussions are independent variables. One does not necessarily predict the other.

### **Challenges in Encouraging Diverse Dialogue:**

The results highlight the challenge of promoting diverse political dialogue. Efforts to increase the frequency of political discussions with different viewpoints may not automatically lead to more frequent political discussions overall.

### **Need for Targeted Interventions:**

To foster more frequent and diverse political discussions, interventions may need to go beyond simply encouraging exposure to different viewpoints. Structured programs that provide incentives or frameworks for regular and meaningful political discourse may be required.

### **Educational and Social Strategies:**

Educational initiatives that emphasize the value of diverse political dialogue and provide skills for effective communication can help individuals feel more comfortable and willing to engage in discussions with those holding different views.

The Chi-Square test results demonstrate no significant association between the frequency of discussing political information with different viewpoints and the overall frequency of these discussions. This finding suggests that individual discussion habits are relatively stable and not significantly influenced by exposure to differing viewpoints. To promote more frequent and diverse political dialogue, targeted interventions and structured educational programs are essential to address the underlying factors influencing political discussion habits. Given that the p-values (0.393 for Pearson Chi-Square and 0.464 for Likelihood Ratio) are greater than the conventional significance level of 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ). Therefore, we conclude that there is no significant association between the frequency of discussing political information with different viewpoints and the frequency of these discussions.

*Table 4.2. 8 Symmetric Measures for Frequency of Political Discussions and Different Viewpoints*

		Value	Approx. Sig.
	Phi	.207	.393
Nominal by Nominal	Cramer's V	.103	.393
N of Valid Cases		395	

The symmetric measures, including the “Phi value” of 0.207 and “Cramer's V” of 0.103, indicate a “weak association” between the variables, further confirmed by the approximate significance of 0.393. These results suggest that discussing political information with different viewpoints does not significantly influence how frequently individuals engage in such discussions, reflecting a consistency in discussion habits regardless of exposure to differing political opinions. This highlights the challenge of promoting diverse political dialogue, as habitual discussion patterns appear relatively unaffected by exposure to differing viewpoints.

*Table 4.2. 9 Exposure to a Variety of Political Perspectives \* Belief in the Enhancement of Understanding Crosstabulation*

			Belief in the Enhancement of Understanding					
			Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Agree	Strongly Disagree	
Exposure to a Variety of Political Perspectives	Always	Count	28	20	14	34	23	
		Expected Count	31.9	21.1	17.5	26.2	22.3	
		% within Exposure to a Variety of Political Perspectives	23.5%	16.8%	11.8%	28.6%	19.3%	100%
	Frequently	Count	15	15	17	19	13	
		Expected Count	21.2	14	11.6	17.4	14.8	79
		% within Exposure to a Variety of Political Perspectives	19%	19%	21.5%	24.1%	16.5%	100%

		Perspectives						
	Never	Count	17	15	3	17	9	
		Expected Count	16.4	10.8	9	13.4	11.4	
		% within	27.9	24.6	4.90%	27.9	14.8	100
		Exposure to a	%	%		%	%	0%
		Variety of						
		Political Perspectives						
	Occasionally	Count	29	11	12	9	14	75
		Expected Count	20.1	13.3	11	16.5	14.1	
		% within	38.7	14.7	16	12	18.7	100
		Exposure to a	%	%	%	%	%	0%
		Variety of						
		Political Perspectives						
		Variety of						
		Political Perspectives						
	Rarely	Count	17	9	12	8	15	61
		Expected Count	16.4	10.8	9	13.4	11.4	61
		% within	27.9	14.8	19.7	13.1	24.6	
		Exposure to a	%	%	%	%	%	
		Variety of						
		Political Perspectives						
Total		Count	106	70	58	87	74	
		Expected Count	106	70	58	87	74	
		% within	26.8	17.7	14.7	22	18.7	100
		Exposure to a	%	%	%	%	%	0%
		Variety of						
		Political Perspectives						

The crosstabulation analysis examines the relationship between exposure to a variety of political perspectives and the belief in the enhancement of understanding among 395 individuals. For those who are always exposed to a variety of political perspectives (119 individuals), 28.6% strongly agree that such exposure enhances understanding, while 23.5% agree. In contrast, 19.3% strongly disagree, 16.8% disagree, and 11.8% remain neutral. Among

those frequently exposed (79 individuals), 24.1% strongly agree with the enhancement of understanding, 21.5% remain neutral, 19.0% each agree and disagree, and 16.5% strongly disagree.

For the 61 individuals who never experience varied political perspectives, 27.9% each strongly agree and agree, while 24.6% disagree, 14.8% strongly disagree, and only 4.9% remain neutral. Those who occasionally expose themselves to diverse political views (75 individuals) show that 38.7% agree with the enhancement of understanding, while 16.0% remain neutral, 14.7% disagree, and 12.0% strongly agree. Finally, among those who rarely expose themselves to different political perspectives (61 individuals), 27.9% agree with the enhancement of understanding, 24.6% strongly disagree, 19.7% remain neutral, 14.8% disagree, and 13.1% strongly agree.

### **Implications:**

The data suggests that exposure to a variety of political perspectives does influence individuals' beliefs about the enhancement of their understanding. Those who are always or frequently exposed to diverse viewpoints tend to agree more with the enhancement of understanding, although there is also a substantial portion that disagrees. This indicates that while many see the value in diverse perspectives, others remain skeptical.

### **Key Findings and Their Meaning:**

#### **Positive Perception of Exposure:**

A significant number of individuals who are consistently exposed to diverse political perspectives believe that it enhances their understanding, supporting the idea that diversity in media consumption can broaden one's perspective.

**Mixed Opinions:** The presence of a notable percentage of individuals who disagree with the enhancement of understanding, even among those frequently exposed to diverse viewpoints, highlights the complexity of media consumption behavior and the influence of pre-existing beliefs.

#### **Potential for Media Literacy Programs:**

The findings highlight the importance of media literacy programs that not only encourage exposure to diverse perspectives but also address the cognitive biases that lead to resistance in recognizing the benefits of such exposure.

### **Targeted Interventions:**

Interventions aimed at promoting the benefits of diverse media exposure should consider these mixed opinions and focus on creating awareness about how diverse perspectives can lead to a more informed and balanced understanding of political issues.

The crosstabulation data illustrates the nuanced relationship between media consumption habits and beliefs about the enhancement of understanding, emphasizing the need for tailored approaches to foster more open and critical engagement with diverse political information.

*Table 4.2. 10 Chi-Square Test Results for Belief in Enhancement of Understanding and Exposure to Political Perspectives*

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	27.900 <sup>a</sup>	16	.033
Likelihood Ratio	29.271	16	.022
N of Valid Cases	395		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 8.96.

### **Hypothesis**

**Null Hypothesis (H0):** There is no significant association between exposure to a variety of political perspectives and the belief in the enhancement of understanding.

**Alternative Hypothesis (H1):** There is a significant association between exposure to a variety of political perspectives and the belief in the enhancement of understanding.

The results of the "Chi-Square" test reveal a statistically significant correlation between exposure to diverse "political perspectives" and the belief in the enhancement of "understanding." The "Pearson Chi-Square" value is 27.900, with 16 "degrees of freedom," and an "asymptotic significance" (p-value) of 0.033, which falls below the conventional significance threshold of 0.05. Consequently, the null hypothesis is rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis, suggesting that the observed differences are not attributable to random chance. The "likelihood ratio," valued at 29.271 with identical degrees of freedom, further corroborates this conclusion, with a p-value of 0.022.

*Table 4.2. 11 Symmetric Measures for Belief in Enhancement of Understanding and Exposure to Political Perspectives*

		Value	Approx. Sig.
	Phi	.266	.033
Nominal by Nominal	Cramer's V	.133	.033
N of Valid Cases		395	

The symmetric measures, including the "Phi value" of 0.266 and "Cramer's V" of 0.133, indicate a "moderate association" between the variables, further confirmed by the approximate significance of 0.033. These results imply that individuals' exposure to a variety of political perspectives significantly influences their belief in whether such exposure enhances their understanding of political issues. The data suggests that those who are always or frequently exposed to diverse political views are more likely to believe that their understanding is enhanced, whereas those who rarely or never expose themselves to different viewpoints show a mixed belief in the enhancement of understanding. This finding highlights the importance of promoting diverse media consumption to foster a more informed and balanced understanding of political issues. The moderate association highlighted by the symmetric measures indicates that while the relationship is significant, other factors may also play a role in shaping individuals' beliefs about the benefits of diverse political exposure.

*Table 4.2. 12 Overall Hypothesis Results*

TABL E NO.4.2 .13	HYPOTHESIS DESCRIPTION	CHI- SQU AR E VAL UE	P- VA LU E	DECISION (ACCEPT/RE JECT H0)
2	Reaction to Contradictory Information and Exposure Frequency		0	Reject H0
5	Conscious Diversification of Media Consumption and Behavior		0.31 5	Accept H0
8	Frequency of Political Discussions and Different Viewpoints		0.39 3	Accept H0
11	Belief in Enhancement of Understanding and Exposure to Political Perspectives	27.9	0.03 3	Reject H0

### **Interpretation Of Results:**

- TABLE 2: The hypothesis that there is a significant association between the frequency of exposure to contradictory political information and individuals' reactions is supported.
- TABLE 5: The hypothesis that conscious diversification of media consumption significantly influences media consumption behaviours is not supported.
- TABLE 8: The hypothesis that the frequency of discussing political information with different viewpoints significantly influences the frequency of these discussions is not supported.
- TABLE 11: The hypothesis that exposure to a variety of political perspectives significantly influences the belief in the enhancement of understanding is supported.

The analyses reveal mixed support for the hypothesis that individuals exhibit selective exposure behaviours in consuming political information. While “there is a significant association” between exposure to contradictory “information” and reactions, as well as



between exposure to diverse political perspectives and belief in the enhancement of understanding, there is no significant association between conscious diversification efforts and actual media consumption behaviours, or between discussing political information with different viewpoints and the frequency of these discussions. This suggests that while selective exposure behaviour's exist, they are complex and influenced by various factors.

#### **4.2.6 Summary**

Overall conclusion as per hypothesis in the introduction and objective of this chapter

The primary objective of this study was to examine “selective exposure” behavior in the consumption of “political information” and its effects on public perception, trust in political institutions, and overall political discourse. This analysis is particularly pertinent in an era marked by post-truth narratives and widespread misinformation. By scrutinizing how individuals engage with political information, the study aimed to uncover the underlying mechanisms driving selective exposure and its broader implications.

#### ***Hypothesis***

Individuals exhibit selective exposure behavior in consuming political information.

#### ***Analysis And Findings***

##### **Analysis 1: Exposure to Contradictory Information and Reactions**

The first analysis focused on how individuals react to information that contradicts their political beliefs. The crosstabulation data revealed distinct patterns based on the frequency of exposure to contradictory information:

##### **Always Exposed:**

36.4% of individuals tend to ignore it, while 22.9% reject it outright. Only 6.8% are strongly open to reconsidering their beliefs.

**Frequently Exposed:**

27.5% reject the information outright, and 28.6% tend to ignore it. A smaller percentage (12.1%) are strongly open to reconsidering their beliefs.

**Never Exposed:**

A notable 32.7% are strongly open to reconsidering their beliefs. This group also has a relatively high percentage (23.1%) of individuals, somewhat open to reconsidering their beliefs.

**Occasionally Exposed:**

31.6% reject the information outright, and 26.3% feel challenged but consider it. Only 9.2% are strongly open to reconsidering their beliefs.

**Rarely Exposed:**

32.8% tend to ignore the conflicting information, and 25.9% reject it outright. Only 6.9% are strongly open to reconsidering their beliefs.

**Chi-Square Test Results:**

- Pearson “Chi-Square value”: 45.367 with 16 “degrees of freedom” “p-value”: 0.000.
- Likelihood ratio: similar “p-value” of 0.001.
- Symmetric measures: “Phi value” of 0.339 and “Cramer's V” of 0.169 indicate a moderate association between the variables.

## **Implications:**

These findings strongly support the hypothesis that individuals exhibit selective exposure behavior in consuming political information. The significant association suggests that frequent exposure to contradictory information leads to defensive reactions such as ignoring or rejecting the information outright. This behavior aligns with cognitive dissonance theory, where individuals tend to avoid or discredit information that conflicts with their pre-existing beliefs to maintain cognitive consistency. This tendency contributes to the formation of echo chambers, exacerbates political polarization, and reduces openness to dialogue and understanding. Media literacy programs need to address these cognitive biases, promoting critical thinking and encouraging openness to diverse perspectives.

## **Analysis 2: Conscious Diversification Of Media Consumption And Behavior**

The second analysis explored the relationship between conscious diversification of media consumption and actual media consumption behavior. The crosstabulation data highlighted key trends:

### **Always Consciously Diversify:**

36.5% always stick to sources that align with their views. 20.6% often diversify to include different perspectives, and 19.0% always diversify to include all political perspectives.

### **Frequently Consciously Diversify:**

28.6% often stick to sources that align with their views, 27.0% always stick to aligned sources, and only 19.0% often diversify to include different perspectives.

### **Never Consciously Diversify:**

A varied distribution, with 24.3% often diversifying to include different perspectives and 21.5% always sticking to aligned sources.

### **Occasionally Consciously Diversify:**

34.0% always stick to sources that align with their views, and 18.9% often diversify to include different perspectives.

### **Rarely Consciously Diversify:**

28.4% often diversify to include different perspectives, while 27.5% always stick to sources that align with their views.

### **Chi-Square Test Results:**

- Pearson “Chi-Square value”: 18.149 with 16 “degrees of freedom” “p-value”: 0.315.
- Likelihood ratio: “p-value” of 0.351.
- Symmetric measures: “Phi value” of 0.214 and “Cramer's V” of 0.107 indicate a “weak association” between the variables.

### **Implications:**

The lack of statistical significance suggests that conscious efforts to diversify media consumption do not significantly alter actual media consumption behavior. This finding implies that despite individuals' intentions to diversify their media sources, many still gravitate towards content that aligns with their pre-existing beliefs. This highlights the persistence of selective exposure behavior, where cognitive biases and habitual consumption patterns override conscious efforts to engage with diverse perspectives. Media literacy programs should incorporate strategies that address underlying cognitive biases and provide tools for critical evaluation of diverse sources to foster a more balanced and informed public discourse.

### **Analysis 3: Discussing Political Information With Different Viewpoints**

The third analysis examined the relationship between discussing political information with different viewpoints and the frequency of such discussions. The crosstabulation data provided insights into discussion patterns

### **Always Discussing Political Information with Different Viewpoints:**

25.6% always discuss political information, while 24.4% rarely discuss it. 18.3% occasionally discuss political information, with 15.9% each for both frequently and never discussing political information.

### **Frequently Discussing Political Information with Different Viewpoints:**

A balanced distribution: 25.7% occasionally discuss political information, 20.0% always discuss it, and 18.6% each for both never and frequently discussing political information, with another 18.6% rarely discussing it.

### **Never Discussing Political Information with Different Viewpoints:**

31.7% never discuss political information at all, highlighting a significant avoidance of political discourse. 20.0% rarely discuss political information, and 16.7% each for both always and frequently discussing it, with only 15.0% occasionally discussing it.

### **Occasionally Discussing Political Information with Different Viewpoints:**

29.1% occasionally discuss political information, while 19.0% each for both always and rarely discussing political information.

### **Rarely Discussing Political Information with Different Viewpoints:**

27.9% rarely discuss political information, 20.2% each for both always and frequently discussing political information, 16.3% occasionally discuss it, and 15.4% never discuss it.

### **Chi-Square Test Results:**

- Pearson “Chi-Square value”: 16.892 with 16 “degrees of freedom” “p-value”: 0.393.
- Likelihood ratio: “p-value” of 0.464.
- Symmetric measures: “Phi value” of 0.207 and “Cramer's V” of 0.103 indicate a “weak association” between the variables.

### **Implications:**

The lack of significant association suggests that the frequency of discussing political information with different viewpoints does not significantly influence how frequently individuals engage in such discussions. This indicates a consistency in discussion habits regardless of exposure to differing political opinions. The findings highlight the challenge of promoting diverse political dialogue, as habitual discussion patterns appear relatively unaffected by exposure to differing viewpoints. Interventions to encourage political discussions among individuals with different viewpoints need to address deeper social and psychological factors, such as building trust, reducing polarization, and creating safe spaces for constructive dialogue.

### **Analysis 4: Exposure to Various Political Perspectives and Belief in Enhancement of Understand and Exposure to Political Perspectives**

The final analysis examined the relationship between exposure to a variety of political perspectives and the belief in the enhancement of understanding. The crosstabulation data revealed the following patterns:

#### **Always Exposed:**

28.6% strongly agree that such exposure enhances understanding, while 23.5% agree. 19.3% strongly disagree, 16.8% disagree, and 11.8% remain neutral.

#### **Frequently Exposed:**

24.1% strongly agree with the enhancement of understanding, 21.5% remain neutral, 19.0% each agree and disagree, and 16.5% strongly disagree.

#### **Never Exposed:**

27.9% each strongly agree and agree, while 24.6% disagree, 14.8% strongly disagree, and only 4.9% remain neutral.

### **Occasionally Exposed:**

38.7% agree with the enhancement of understanding, while 16.0% remain neutral, 14.7% disagree, and 12.0% strongly agree.

### **Rarely Exposed:**

27.9% agree with the enhancement of understanding, 24.6% strongly disagree, 19.7% remain neutral, 14.8% disagree, and 13.1% strongly agree.

### **Chi-Square Test Results:**

- Pearson Chi-Square value: 27.900 with 16 degrees of freedom, p-value: 0.033.
- Likelihood ratio: p-value of 0.022.
- Symmetric measures: Phi value of 0.266 and Cramer's V of 0.133 indicate a moderate association between the variables.

### **Implications:**

These results imply that individuals' exposure to a variety of political perspectives significantly influences their belief in whether such exposure enhances their understanding of political issues. The data suggests that those who are always or frequently exposed to diverse political views are more likely to believe that their understanding is enhanced, whereas those who rarely or never expose themselves to different viewpoints show a mixed belief in the enhancement of understanding. This finding highlights the importance of promoting diverse media consumption to foster a more informed and balanced understanding of political issues. Educational and media literacy programs should emphasize the value of engaging with diverse perspectives to enhance critical thinking and deepen understanding of complex political issues.

### **Hypothesis Acceptance Or Rejection**

Based on the comprehensive analysis, the general hypothesis that individuals exhibit selective exposure behaviours in consuming political information is strongly supported. The findings from the various analyses demonstrate that selective exposure behaviours is prevalent and

significantly influences how individuals engage with political information. This behaviour contributes to the formation of echo chambers, increased political polarization, and a reluctance to engage with diverse perspectives.

### **Objective Fulfilment And Implications**

The primary objective of this study was to examine selective exposure behavior in the consumption of political information and its effects on public perception, trust in political institutions, and overall political discourse. This objective was fulfilled through multiple analyses that highlighted how individuals react to contradictory information, the impact of conscious diversification efforts on media consumption behavior, the frequency of discussing political information with different viewpoints, and the relationship between exposure to diverse political perspectives and the belief in the enhancement of understanding. Each analysis provided valuable insights into the mechanisms driving selective exposure and its broader implications.

### **Implications:**

#### **Media Literacy Programs:**

The findings highlight the importance of media literacy programs that highlight the benefits of engaging with diverse political perspectives. These programs can educate individuals on how exposure to varied viewpoints can enhance their understanding and critical thinking.

#### **Targeted Interventions:**

Interventions should address the cognitive biases and resistance among those who are skeptical about the benefits of diverse media exposure. Tailored strategies can help individuals recognize and appreciate the value of multiple perspectives.

#### **Policy and Regulation:**

Policymakers could consider promoting guidelines that encourage media platforms to present a diversity of viewpoints, thereby supporting a more informed public.



**Public Engagement:**

Encouraging public dialogue about the benefits of diverse media consumption can foster a more open and inclusive information environment. Media outlets can play a key role by transparently sharing their sources and methodologies.

**Collaborative Efforts:**

Media organizations and educational institutions can collaborate to create content and programs that expose audiences to a wide range of political perspectives, thereby enhancing public understanding and reducing polarization.

The analysis highlights the difficulty of media consumption behavior and the challenges of promoting diverse political dialogue in a polarized and post-truth era. The findings highlight the need for multifaceted approaches that address both cognitive and social factors to encourage balanced and informed engagement with political information. Efforts to mitigate the negative impacts of selective exposure behavior should focus on promoting media literacy, encouraging critical evaluation of information sources, and fostering open and inclusive political dialogue. By addressing the underlying cognitive and social factors that drive selective exposure, these interventions can help create a more informed and balanced public discourse, ultimately supporting the democratic process and mitigating the adverse effects of misinformation in a post-truth era.

## **CHAPTER 4.3**

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

#### **IMPACT OF POST-TRUTH ON PUBLIC PERCEPTION**

## INTRODUCTION

The advent of the post-truth era, characterized by the widespread dissemination of misinformation and the diminishing role of factual reporting in shaping public opinion, has had profound implications on public trust and political polarization. This chapter investigates the of post-truth narratives on public perception, particularly focusing on how these narratives influence trust in political information and institutions and contribute to increased polarization. The primary objective of this Chapter is to examine the ways in which exposure to misleading or false information affects public trust in political institutions and contributes to political polarization. By analysing the relationship between perceptions of media bias, trust in political institutions, and the belief in media-induced polarization, this study aims to uncover the underlying mechanisms that drive these phenomena. The general hypothesis guiding this research is that exposure to post-truth narratives negatively influences public trust in political information and institutions, thereby contributing to increased polarization.

### 4.3.2 variables

#### **Belief in Increased Polarization Due to Media Influence and Perception of Political Information Bias**

##### **Independent Variable:**

- Perception of Political Information Bias

##### **Dependent Variable:**

- Belief in Increased Polarization Due to Media Influence

#### **Effects of Exposure to Misleading or False Information on Trust in Political Institutions**

##### **Independent Variable:**

- Effects of Exposure to Misleading or False Information on Trust

##### **Dependent Variable:**

- Level of Trust in Political Institutions and Mainstream Media

#### 4.3.3 Objective

- To evaluate the Impact of Post-Truth on Public Perception

#### 4.3.4 Hypothesis

Exposure to post-truth narratives negatively influences public trust in political information and institutions, contributing to increased polarization.

This chapter presents a comprehensive analysis based on these hypotheses, exploring two critical aspects of the impact of post-truth narratives on public perception.

**Belief in Increased Polarization Due to Media Influence and Perception of Political Information Bias:** This analysis examines how individuals' perceptions of media bias correlate with their beliefs about media-induced polarization.

**Effects of Exposure to Misleading or False Information on Trust in Political Institutions:** This section evaluates the relationship between exposure to misleading or false information and the level of trust in political institutions and mainstream media. The findings from these analyses provide crucial insights into the selective exposure behaviour of individuals and its implications for public trust and political polarization in a post-truth era. By addressing cognitive biases and promoting media literacy, there is potential to foster a more balanced and informed public, contributing to healthier political dialogue and engagement. The succeeding sections will research into these analyses in detail, providing a thorough examination of the impact of post-truth narratives on public perception, trust in political institutions, and political polarization.

#### 4.3.5 Statistical Test Results and Discussion

*Table 4.3. 1 Belief in increased polarization due to media influence / Perception of political information bias, Crosstabulation*

			Perception of political information bias					Total
			Alw a ys	Freque nt ly	Nev e r	Occasion al ly	Rare l y	
Belief in increased polarizati	Agree	Count	47	48	26	12	45	178
		Expecte d Count	45.1	52.3	21.2	20.7	38.8	178. 0
on due to media influence		% within Belief in increased polarizati on due to media influence	26.4%	27.0%	14.6 %	6.7%	25.3 %	100. 0 %
Disa gr ee		Count	13	17	0	15	9	54
		Expecte d Count	13.7	15.9	6.4	6.3	11.8	54.0
		% within Belief in increased polarizati on due to media influence	24.1%	31.5%	0.0%	27.8%	16.7 %	100. 0 %
Neutral		Count	10	19	7	5	15	56
		Expecte d Count	14.2	16.4	6.7	6.5	12.2	56.0
		% within Belief in increased polarizati on due	17.9%	33.9%	12.5 %	8.9%	26.8 %	100. 0 %

	to media influence						
	Count	14	22	11	9	7	63
Strongly Agree	Expected Count	15.9	18.5	7.5	7.3	13.7	63.0
	% within Belief in increased polarization due to media influence	22.2%	34.9%	17.5%	14.3%	11.1%	100.0%
Strongly Disagree	Count	16	10	3	5	10	44
	Expected Count	11.1	12.9	5.2	5.1	9.6	44.0
	% within Belief in increased polarization due to media influence	36.4%	22.7%	6.8%	11.4%	22.7%	100.0%
Total	Count	100	116	47	46	86	395
	Expected Count	100.0	116.0	47.0	46.0	86.0	395.0
	% within Belief in increased polarization due to media influence	25.3%	29.4%	11.9%	11.6%	21.8%	100.0%

Starting with the crosstabulation, the belief in increased polarization due to media influence is divided into five categories: Agree, Disagree, Neutral, Strongly Agree, and Strongly Disagree. Each category is further subdivided based on the perception of political information bias: Always, Frequently, Never, Occasionally, and Rarely.

For those who Agree that media influence has increased polarization, 47 respondents perceive political information as Always biased, 48 as Frequently biased, 26 as Never biased, 12 as Occasionally biased, and 45 as Rarely biased. The expected counts for these categories are 45.1, 52.3, 21.2, 20.7, and 38.8, respectively, indicating that the observed counts are close to the expected ones. Within this group, the percentage distribution shows that 26.4% perceive bias Always, 27.0% Frequently, 14.6% Never, 6.7% Occasionally, and 25.3% Rarely.

For respondents who Disagree, 13 perceive political information as Always biased, 17 as Frequently biased, none as Never biased, 15 as Occasionally biased, and 9 as Rarely biased. The expected counts are 13.7, 15.9, 6.4, 6.3, and 11.8, respectively. The percentage distribution shows 24.1% Always, 31.5% Frequently, 0% Never, 27.8% Occasionally, and 16.7% Rarely.

Among those who are Neutral, the counts are 10 for Always, 19 for Frequently, 7 for Never, 5 for Occasionally, and 15 for Rarely. The expected counts are 14.2, 16.4, 6.7, 6.5, and 12.2, respectively. The percentage distribution is 17.9% Always, 33.9% Frequently, 12.5% Never, 8.9% Occasionally, and 26.8% Rarely.

For respondents who Strongly Agree, 14 perceive bias as Always, 22 as Frequently, 11 as Never, 9 as Occasionally, and 7 as Rarely. The expected counts are 15.9, 18.5, 7.5, 7.3, and 13.7, respectively. The percentages are 22.2% Always, 34.9% Frequently, 17.5% Never, 14.3% Occasionally, and 11.1% Rarely.

Lastly, for those who Strongly Disagree, the counts are 16 for Always, 10 for Frequently, 3 for Never, 5 for Occasionally, and 10 for Rarely. The expected counts are 11.1, 12.9, 5.2, 5.1, and

9.6, respectively. The percentages within this category are 36.4% Always, 22.7% Frequently, 6.8% Never, 11.4% Occasionally, and 22.7% Rarely.

## **Implications and Discussion**

### **Key Implications**

#### **Heightened Perception of Bias Among Agreement**

Among those who agree that media influence increases polarization, there is a significant perception of political information being biased, with the majority perceiving it as Always or Frequently biased. This highlights the role of media in shaping public opinion and contributing to polarization.

#### **Differing Views on Bias:**

Those who disagree with the idea of media-induced polarization still perceive political information as biased, but the distribution is more varied. This suggests that while they do not attribute polarization to media influence, they still recognize biases in political information.

#### **Neutral and Strongly Agree Categories:**

Respondents in these categories also show a high perception of bias, especially frequently. This suggests that the perception of media bias is prevalent regardless of strong beliefs about media's role in polarization.

#### **Strongly Disagree Category:**

A significant portion of this group perceives political information as always biased, indicating that even those who strongly disagree with the idea of media-induced polarization still recognize biases in political information.

The analysis highlights the composite relationship between the belief in media-induced polarization and the perception of political information bias. While there is a significant



perception of bias among those who agree with increased polarization due to media influence, the findings also reveal varied views among those who disagree or are neutral. These insights emphasize the need for targeted interventions, media literacy programs, and policy measures to address biases and promote a more informed public discourse.

*Table 4.3. 2 **Table** Chi-Square Test Results for Belief in Increased Polarization Due to Media Influence and Perception of Political Information Bias*

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	38.074 <sup>a</sup>	16	.001
Likelihood Ratio	42.242	16	.000
N of Valid Cases	395		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.12.

**Null Hypothesis (H0):** There is no significant association between the belief in increased polarization due to media influence and the perception of political information bias.

**Alternative Hypothesis (H1):** There is a significant association between the belief in increased polarization due to media influence and the perception of political information bias.

The “Chi-Square test” results indicate a “significant association” between the belief in increased polarization due to media influence and the perception of political information bias ( $\chi^2 = 38.074$ ,  $df = 16$ ,  $p = .001$ ). This significance is supported by the Likelihood Ratio test ( $\chi^2 = 42.242$ ,  $df = 16$ ,  $p = .000$ ).

The results of the Chi-Square test suggest that there is a statistically significant association between the belief in increased polarization due to media influence and the perception of political information bias. Specifically:

- who perceive political information as frequently biased are more likely to believe that media influence increases polarization.
- Conversely, those who see political information as rarely or never biased are less

likely to believe that media influence contributes to increased polarization.

- The p-value (.001) is less than the common significance level ( $\alpha$ ) of .05.
- This means we reject the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ).

These findings suggest that individuals' perceptions of media bias are closely linked to their beliefs about the media's role in societal polarization. This could imply that efforts to improve media literacy and reduce perceived bias might influence public perceptions of polarization.

*Table 4.3. 3 Symmetric Measures for Belief in Increased Polarization Due to Media Influence and Perception of Political Information Bias*

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.310	.001
	Cramer's V	.155	.001
N of Valid Cases		395	

The “Phi coefficient” (.310) and “Cramer's V” (.155) also suggest a “moderate association” between the variables, further confirming the strength of the relationship. These tests demonstrate that perceptions of political information bias are significantly related to beliefs about media-induced polarization, with different distributions of bias perception corresponding to different levels of agreement or disagreement with the polarization statement. The analysis includes data from 395 valid cases, ensuring a robust sample size for these conclusions.

*Table 4.3. 4 Effects of exposure to misleading or false information on trust in political institutions / Level of trust in political institutions and mainstream media Crosstabulation*

			Level of trust in political institutions and mainstream media					Total
			High trust	Low trust	Moderate trust	No trust at all	Very high trust	
Effects of exposure to misleading or false information on trust in political institutions	No change in my trust	Count	2	26	30	17	4	79
		Expected Count	10.8	27.0	14.2	18.2	8.8	79.0
		% within Effects of exposure to misleading or false information on trust in political institutions	2.5%	32.9%	38.0%	21.5%	5.1%	100.0%
	Significantly decreased my trust	Count	7	42	12	18	4	83
		Expected Count	11.3	28.4	14.9	19.1	9.2	83.0
		% within Effects of exposure to misleading or false information on trust	8.4%	50.6%	14.5%	21.7%	4.8%	100.0%

		in political institution s						
	Significantl y increased my trust	Count	22	11	2	8	22	65
		Expecte d Count	8.9	22.2	11.7	15.0	7.2	65.0
		% within Effects of exposure to misleadin g or false informatio n on trust in political institution s	33.8 %	16.9 %	3.1%	12.3 %	33.8 %	100.0 %
	Somewha t decreased my trust	Count	10	43	18	44	7	122
		Expecte d Count	16.7	41.7	21.9	28.1	13.6	122.0
		% within Effects of exposure to misleadin g or false informatio n on trust in political institution s	8.2%	35.2 %	14.8%	36.1 %	5.7%	100.0 %
	Somewha t	Count	13	13	9	4	7	46
		Expecte d Count	6.3	15.7	8.3	10.6	5.1	46.0

	increased my trust	% within Effects of exposure to misleading or false information on trust in political institutions	28.3 %	28.3 %	19.6%	8.7%	15.2 %	100.0 %
Total		Count	54	135	71	91	44	395
		Expected Count	54.0	135.0	71.0	91.0	44.0	395.0
		% within Effects of exposure to misleading or false information on trust in political institutions	13.7 %	34.2 %	18.0%	23.0 %	11.1 %	100.0 %

Starting with crosstabulation, the level of trust in political institutions and mainstream media is divided into five categories: High trust, Low trust, Moderate trust, No trust at all, and Very high trust. Each category is further subdivided based on the effects of exposure to misleading or false information on trust in political institutions: No change in my trust, Significantly decreased my trust, significantly increased my trust, somewhat decreased my trust, and somewhat increased my trust.

For those who experienced no change in their trust due to exposure to misleading or false information, 2 respondents have High trust, 26 have Low trust, 30 have Moderate trust, 17 have No trust at all, and 4 have Very high trust. The expected counts for these categories are 10.8, 27.0, 14.2, 18.2, and 8.8, respectively, indicating some deviations between observed and expected counts. Within this group, the percentage distribution shows that 2.5% have High trust, 32.9% have Low trust, 38.0% have Moderate trust, 21.5% have No trust at all, and 5.1% have Very high trust.

For respondents whose trust was significantly decreased, 7 have High trust, 42 have Low trust, 12 have Moderate trust, 18 have No trust at all, and 4 have Very high trust. The expected counts are 11.3, 28.4, 14.9, 19.1, and 9.2, respectively. The percentage distribution shows 8.4% have High trust, 50.6% have Low trust, 14.5% have Moderate trust, 21.7% have No trust at all, and 4.8% have Very high trust.

Among those whose trust was significantly increased, the counts are 22 for High trust, 11 for Low trust, 2 for Moderate trust, 8 for No trust at all, and 22 for Very high trust. The expected counts are 8.9, 22.2, 11.7, 15.0, and 7.2, respectively. The percentage distribution is 33.8% for High trust, 16.9% for Low trust, 3.1% for Moderate trust, 12.3% for No trust at all, and 33.8% for Very high trust.

For respondents whose trust was somewhat decreased, the counts are 10 for High trust, 43 for Low trust, 18 for Moderate trust, 44 for No trust at all, and 7 for Very high trust. The expected counts are 16.7, 41.7, 21.9, 28.1, and 13.6, respectively. The percentage distribution is 8.2% for High trust, 35.2% for Low trust, 14.8% for Moderate trust, 36.1% for No trust at all, and 5.7% for Very high trust.

Lastly, for those whose trust was somewhat increased, the counts are 13 for High trust, 13 for Low trust, 9 for Moderate trust, 4 for No trust at all, and 7 for Very high trust. The expected counts are 6.3, 15.7, 8.3, 10.6, and 5.1, respectively. The percentage distribution within this category is 28.3% for both High trust and Low trust, 19.6% for Moderate trust, 8.7% for No trust at all, and 15.2% for Very high trust.

## **Key Findings and Implications**

**Stability of Trust Levels:**

Respondents reporting no change in trust indicate that misinformation does not affect everyone's trust levels equally. This group maintains a stable trust level, potentially due to strong pre-existing beliefs or effective critical thinking skills.

**Decrease in Trust:**

Respondents whose trust significantly decreased exhibit lower trust levels, indicating that misinformation has a substantial negative impact. This highlights the importance of combating misinformation to preserve public trust in political institutions.

**Increase in Trust:**

Some respondents report increased trust after exposure to misinformation, suggesting that misinformation can prompt verification and scrutiny, leading to reinforced trust in reliable sources. This highlights the potential for misinformation to have a counterintuitive effect on trust.

**Mixed Reactions:**

The varying responses to misinformation exposure, from increased to decreased trust, reflect the complexity of public trust dynamics. This suggests the need for tailored interventions that address individual differences in media consumption and trust-building processes.

The findings highlight the significant impact of exposure to misleading or false information on trust in political institutions and mainstream media. They emphasize the need for comprehensive strategies to address misinformation, promote media literacy, and support critical evaluation of information. By understanding and addressing the complexities of public trust dynamics, stakeholders can foster a more resilient and informed public, ultimately enhancing trust in political institutions and the democratic process.

*Table 4.3. 5 Chi-Square Test Results for Effects of Exposure to Misleading or False Information on Trust in Political Institutions*

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	133.786 <sup>a</sup>	16	.000
Likelihood Ratio	123.376	16	.000
N of Valid Cases	395		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.12.

### ***Hypothesis:***

**Null Hypothesis (H0):** There is no significant association between the effects of exposure to misleading or false information and the level of trust in political institutions and mainstream media.

**Alternative Hypothesis (H1):** There is a significant association between the effects of exposure to misleading or false information and the level of trust in political institutions and mainstream media.

### ***Chi-Square Test Results:***

- Pearson Chi-Square value: 133.786
- Degrees of freedom (df): 16
- Asymptotic significance (p-value): .000

Given the “p-value” of .000, which is less than the common significance level of 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis (H0). This result indicates that there is a significant association between the effects of exposure to misleading or false information and the level of trust in political institutions and mainstream media.

### ***Symmetric Measures:***



Phi coefficient and Cramer's V both suggest a strong association between the two variables. The significant p-value further confirms this strong relationship.

***Conclusion:***

- The analysis shows that the effects of exposure to misleading or false information significantly Phi coefficient: .582
- Cramer's V: .291
- Approximate significance: .000

The impact the level of trust in political institutions and mainstream media. Therefore, we accept the alternative hypothesis (H1) and conclude that there is a significant association between these variables.

*Table 4.3. 6 Symmetric Measures for Effects of Exposure to Misleading or False Information on Trust in Political Institutions*

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.582	.000
	Cramer's V	.291	.000
N of Valid Cases		395	

The “Phi coefficient” (.582) and “Cramer's V” (.291) suggest a strong association between the variables, further confirming the strength of the relationship. These tests demonstrate that the level of trust in political institutions is significantly related to how exposure to misleading or false information affects trust, with different distributions of trust levels corresponding to varying impacts of such exposure.

The analysis shows that the effects of exposure to misleading or false information significantly impact the level of trust in political institutions and mainstream media. Therefore, we accept

the alternative hypothesis (H1) and conclude that there is a significant association between these variables.

*Table 4.3. 7 Chi-Square Test Results for the Impact of Post-Truth on Public Perception*

Table No.	Hypothesis Description	Chi-Square Value	Degrees of Freedom (df)	P-Value	Decision (Accept/Reject H0)
2	Belief in Increased Polarization Due to Media Influence and Perception of Political Information Bias	38.074	16	0.001	Reject H0
5	Effects of Exposure to Misleading or False Information on Trust in Political Institutions	133.786	16	0	Reject H0

The chi-square test results presented in Table 4.3.7 provide strong evidence of significant associations between key variables examined in Chapter 4.3. For the hypothesis concerning the belief in increased polarization due to media influence and the perception of political information bias, the chi-square value of 38.074 with a p-value of 0.001 led to the rejection of the null hypothesis, indicating a significant relationship. Similarly, the hypothesis regarding the effects of exposure to misleading or false information on trust in political institutions yielded a chi-square value of 133.786 with a p-value of 0.000, also resulting in the rejection of the null hypothesis. These findings confirm that post-truth narratives significantly influence public perception, particularly in terms of media bias and trust in political institutions, contributing to political polarization.

#### **4.3.6 Summary**

#### **Objective fulfilment and Hypothesis Evaluation**

The primary objective of this study was to examine the impact of post-truth narratives on public trust in political information and institutions, and how these narratives contribute to increased political polarization. This objective was comprehensively addressed through the analyses of two critical aspects: the belief in increased polarization due to media influence and the perception of political information bias, as well as the effects of exposure to misleading or false information on trust in political institutions and mainstream media.

The first analysis focused on the relationship between the belief in increased polarization due to media influence and the perception of political information bias. The crosstabulation results indicated distinct patterns based on the perception of political information bias across different levels of agreement with the statement that media influence has increased polarization. Among individuals who agreed that media influence has increased polarization, a significant proportion perceived political information as always or frequently biased. In contrast, those who disagreed with the statement still perceived political information as biased but with more varied distribution. The Chi-Square test results confirmed a statistically significant association between these variables, with a Pearson Chi-Square value of 38.074 ( $p = 0.001$ ) and a Likelihood Ratio of 42.242 ( $p = 0.000$ ). Symmetric measures, including a Phi value of 0.310 and Cramer's V of 0.155, indicated a moderate association between these variables.

The second analysis examined the relationship between exposure to misleading or false information and the level of trust in political institutions and mainstream media. The crosstabulation data revealed significant patterns in trust levels based on the effects of exposure to misleading information. Respondents who reported no change in trust levels showed a relatively stable distribution, whereas those whose trust significantly decreased exhibited much lower trust levels. Conversely, respondents whose trust significantly increased after exposure to misinformation tended to have high or very high trust levels. The Chi-Square test results indicated a significant association between these variables, with a Pearson Chi-Square value of 133.786 ( $p = 0.000$ ) and a Likelihood Ratio of 123.376 ( $p = 0.000$ ). Symmetric measures, including a Phi value of 0.582 and Cramer's V of 0.291, suggested a strong association between these variables.

## **Implications of Crosstabulation Results, Key Results, and Statistical Findings**

The implications of these findings are profound and multifaceted. The significant association between perceived media bias and beliefs about media-induced polarization highlights the critical role of media in shaping public opinion. Individuals who perceive higher levels of bias in political information are more likely to believe that media influence contributes to increased polarization. This relationship highlights the potential for biased information to exacerbate political divides, leading to increased skepticism and distrust in media sources. This skepticism contributes to the formation of echo chambers, where individuals are insulated from diverse perspectives and become more entrenched in their views, furthering political polarization.

The impact of exposure to misleading or false information on trust in political institutions reveals another layer of complexity in public perception. Misinformation can severely erode trust in political institutions, leading to increased cynicism and potential disengagement from political processes. However, some individuals report increased trust after exposure to misinformation, suggesting a counterintuitive effect where misinformation prompts verification and scrutiny, reinforcing trust in reliable sources. This dual impact highlights the need for tailored interventions that address individual differences in media consumption and trust-building processes.

The significant findings from the Chi-Square tests and symmetric measures confirm the robustness of these associations. The strong association between exposure to misleading information and trust levels in political institutions, as indicated by the Phi coefficient and Cramer's V, emphasizes the profound impact of misinformation on public trust. These statistical results validate the hypothesis that exposure to post-truth narratives negatively influences public trust in political information and institutions, contributing to increased polarization.

### ***Hypothesis Evaluation***

The comprehensive analysis presented in this chapter provides healthy evidence supporting the hypothesis that exposure to post-truth narratives negatively influences public trust in political

information and institutions, contributing to increased polarization. The findings from multiple crosstabulations, Chi-Square tests, and symmetric measures collectively demonstrate that individuals' perceptions of media bias and the impact of misleading information significantly affect their trust in political institutions and their beliefs about media-induced polarization.

The primary objective of this study was successfully fulfilled by uncovering the underlying mechanisms driving these phenomena. The analyses highlight the critical need for targeted interventions to promote media literacy, encourage critical evaluation of information sources, and foster open and inclusive political dialogue. Addressing cognitive biases and habitual consumption patterns is essential to counter selective exposure behaviours and reduce political polarization.

Efforts to mitigate the negative impacts of post-truth narratives should focus on promoting critical thinking and media literacy. Media literacy programs should emphasize the importance of engaging with diverse perspectives and provide tools for evaluating the credibility of information sources. Additionally, fostering a culture of open dialogue and constructive debate can help individuals feel more comfortable considering viewpoints that differ from their own. By understanding and addressing the complexities of public trust dynamics, stakeholders can foster a more resilient and informed public, ultimately enhancing trust in political institutions and the democratic process. The findings highlight the importance of accuracy, transparency, and diversity in media reporting to build and maintain public trust and confidence. In the face of a post-truth era, these efforts are crucial for supporting the democratic process and mitigating the adverse effects of misinformation.

## **CHAPTER 4.4**

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

#### **ROLE OF MEDIA IN PROMOTING OBJECTIVITY IN POLITICAL PERSPECTIVES**

## INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary media landscape, the rise of post-truth narratives has significantly impacted public trust in political information and institutions. This chapter aims to explore the role of media outlets in promoting objectivity and how their efforts to provide balanced, accurate, and diverse political perspectives influence public perception. By examining the relationship between media practices and public trust, confidence, understanding, and the prevention of misinformation, this study seeks to uncover the mechanisms by which media can mitigate the negative impacts of post-truth narratives and foster healthier democratic discourse. The primary objective of this study is to evaluate the impact of media outlets' efforts in promoting accuracy, transparency, and diverse representation of political perspectives on public perception. This evaluation helps to understand how these efforts influence public trust, confidence, understanding of political issues, and the prevention of misinformation, contributing to a more informed public and a healthier democratic discourse.

### 4.4.2 Variables

#### **Media Outlets' Efforts to Provide Balanced Political Perspectives and Public Trust**

##### **Independent Variable:**

- Media Outlets' Efforts to Provide Balanced Political Perspectives

##### **Dependent Variable:**

- Public Trust

#### **Inclusion of Diverse Political Viewpoints by Media Outlets and Public Confidence**

- **Independent Variable:**

Inclusion of Diverse Political Viewpoints by Media Outlets

**Dependent Variable:**

- Public Confidence

**Media Outlets' Accuracy and Fact-Checking and Public Understanding of Political Issues**

**Independent Variable:**

- Media Outlets' Accuracy and Fact-Checking

**Dependent Variable:**

- Public Understanding of Political Issues

**Media Outlets' Accuracy and Fact-Checking and Prevention of Misinformation**

**Independent Variable:**

- Media Outlets' Accuracy and Fact-Checking

**Dependent Variable:**

- Prevention of Misinformation

**4.4.3 Objective**

- To study the role of media in promoting objectivity in political perspectives

**4.4.4 Hypothesis (H4):**

- Media outlets that prioritize accuracy, transparency, and diverse representation enhance public trust, confidence, understanding, and prevent misinformation



#### 4.4.5 Statistical Analysis Results and Discussion

*Table 4.4. Media Outlets' Efforts to Provide Balanced Political Perspectives \* Public Trust Crosstabulation*

			Public Trust					Total
			Extremely	Moderately	Not at all	Slightly	Very	
Media	Extremely	Count	2	13	11	10	15	51
Outlets'	ely	Expected Count	6.7	10.6	8.1	9.6	16.0	51.0
Efforts to								
Provide		%	3.9%	25.5%	21.6	19.6	29.4	100
Balance		within			%	%	%	0%
d		Media						
Political		Outlets'						
Perspect		Efforts						
ives		to						
		Provide						
		Balance						
		d						
		Political						
		Perspect						
		ives						
	Moderately	Count	7	13	4	6	21	51
	tely	Expected	6.7	10.6	8.1	9.6	16.0	51.0
		d Count						
		%	13.7%	25.5%	7.8	11.8	41.2	100
		within			%	%	%	0%
		Media						
		Outlets'						
		Efforts						

		to						
		Provide						
		Balance						
		d						
		Political						
		Perspect						
		ives						
	Not at	Count	18	6	6	9	13	52
	all							
		Expecte	6.8	10.8	8.3	9.7	16.3	52.0
		d Count						
		%	34.6%	11.5%	11.5	17.3	25.0	100.
		within			%	%	%	0%
		Media						
		Outlets'						
		Efforts						
		to						
		Provide						
		Balance						
		d						
		Political						
		Perspect						
		ives						
	Slightly	Count	6	20	11	18	21	76
		Expecte	10.0	15.8	12.1	14.2	23.9	76.0
		d Count						
		%	7.9%	26.3%	14.5	23.7	27.6	100.
		within			%	%	%	0%
		Media						
		Outlets'						
		Efforts						
		to						
		Provide						
		Balance						
		d						
		Political						
		Perspect						
		ives						
	Very	Count	19	30	31	31	54	165

		Expected	21.7	34.3	26.3	30.9	51.8	165.
		Count						0
		%	11.5%	18.2%	18.8	18.8	32.7	100.
		within			%	%	%	0%
		Media						
		Outlets'						
		Efforts to						
		Provide						
		Balanced						
		Political						
		Perspectives						
Total		Count	52	82	63	74	124	395
		Expected	52.0	82.0	63.0	74.0	124.	395.
		Count					0	0
		%	13.2%	20.8%	15.9	18.7	31.4	100.
		within			%	%	%	0%
		Media						
		Outlets'						
		Efforts						
		to						
		Provide						
		Balanced						
		d						
		Political						
		Perspectives						
		ives						

The crosstabulation data between media outlets' efforts to provide balanced political perspectives and public trust offers interesting insights into how these two variables interact. The distribution of public trust levels within different levels of perceived media balance reveals some notable patterns.

Firstly, among respondents who perceive media outlets' efforts to provide balanced political perspectives as "extremely" effective, 29.4% exhibit a "very" high level of trust, while 25.5% show moderate trust, and 21.6% report no trust at all. This category also has a relatively high percentage (19.6%) who are "slightly" trusting. Notably, only 3.9% of this group shows

extreme trust, suggesting that even the highest perceived efforts do not significantly elevate trust to the highest level. For those who view media efforts as "moderate," a substantial 41.2% have "very" high trust, the highest among all categories, indicating that moderate efforts are perceived more favourably in terms of trust than extreme efforts. However, only 7.8% exhibit no trust at all in this group, showing a lesser degree of skepticism compared to other groups. Respondents who believe that media efforts to balance perspectives are "not at all" effective show a contrasting trend. In this group, 34.6% express no trust at all, which is the highest percentage of distrust across all categories. Interestingly, 25% of this group still show very high trust, indicating a polarized perception.

Those who rate media efforts as "slightly" balanced show a diverse distribution of trust levels, with the highest percentage (27.6%) reporting very high trust. However, a significant portion (26.3%) have moderate trust, and 23.7% have slight trust, indicating a generally more moderate trust level overall.

Finally, respondents who believe media efforts are "very" balanced show the highest levels of trust, with 32.7% reporting very high trust and a relatively balanced distribution across other trust levels. This suggests that when media balance is perceived as very effective, it strongly correlates with higher public trust.

### **Implications of Key Findings:**

The statistical analysis reveals significant insights into the relationship between media outlets' efforts to provide balanced political perspectives and public trust levels. Here are the key implications and interpretations of these findings

### **Effectiveness of Media Balance and Trust Levels:**

#### **High Trust with Extreme Balance Perception:**

Among respondents who perceive media outlets efforts to provide balanced political perspectives as "extremely" effective, a notable 29.4% exhibit a "very" high level of trust. This finding suggests that when the public believes media is making an extraordinary effort to balance political perspectives, their trust in media is significantly elevated. However, the fact that only

3.9% show extreme trust indicates there might be a limit to how much trust can be increased, even with perceived extreme efforts.

### **Moderate Efforts Perceived More Favourably:**

Interestingly, a substantial 41.2% of those who view media efforts as "moderate" have "very" high trust, which is the highest among all categories. This suggests that moderate efforts to provide balanced perspectives are more favourably perceived in terms of building trust than extreme efforts. It could mean that audiences appreciate balanced reporting that doesn't appear forced or overly assertive.

### **High Distrust with Perceived Ineffectiveness**

#### **Perception of No Balance and High Distrust:**

Respondents who believe that media efforts to balance perspectives are "not at all" effective show the highest percentage of distrust, with 34.6% expressing no trust at all. This significant distrust in the media indicates that perceived ineffectiveness in providing balanced political perspectives can severely damage public trust. However, the fact that 25% still show very high trust suggests a polarized perception where some individuals may hold strong beliefs regardless of media efforts.

#### **Diverse Trust Levels with Slight Balance Perception:**

Those who rate media efforts as "slightly" balanced show a diverse distribution of trust levels. The highest percentage (27.6%) reporting very high trust suggests that even minimal perceived efforts to balance perspectives can positively influence trust. However, the significant portion (26.3%) with moderate trust and 23.7% with slight trust indicates a generally more moderate trust level overall, highlighting that perceived slight balance can have varying impacts on trust.

High Trust with Very Effective Balance Perception:

#### **Highest Trust with Very Effective Balance:**

Respondents who believe media efforts are "very" balanced show the highest levels of trust, with 32.7% reporting very high trust and a relatively balanced distribution across other trust

levels. This finding suggests that when media balance is perceived as very effective, it strongly correlates with higher public trust. It highlights the importance of media outlets striving for high but not necessarily extreme levels of balance in their reporting.

### **Elaborating on the Findings:**

The analysis highlights the critical role that perceived efforts by media outlets to provide balanced political perspectives play in shaping public trust. The following points elaborate on these findings:

#### **Moderate Balance Perceived More Positively:**

Moderate efforts to balance perspectives are perceived more positively than extreme efforts suggests that audiences may value a balanced approach that doesn't come across as overly aggressive or contrived. Media outlets might benefit from presenting balanced perspectives in a way that feels natural and integrated rather than forced.

#### **Impact of Perceived Ineffectiveness:**

The high level of distrust among respondents who perceive no balance in media efforts indicates the importance of at least minimal attempts at balance. Media organizations should be aware that a complete lack of perceived balance can erode trust significantly.

#### **Diverse Perceptions with Slight Balance:**

The varied trust levels among those perceiving slight balance indicate that even minimal efforts can make a difference. However, it also highlights that trust is a complex construct influenced by multiple factors. Media outlets should recognize that small steps towards balance can still positively impact trust.

#### **Strong Correlation with High Effectiveness:**

The strong correlation between perceived very effective balance and high trust emphasizes the need for media outlets to consistently strive for high standards in balanced reporting. This

consistency can build and maintain trust over time.

### **Implications for Media Outlets**

#### **Focus on Moderate, Natural Balance:**

Media outlets should aim for a moderate, naturally integrated approach to balancing political perspectives. This can be more effective in building trust than extreme efforts which may appear forced.

#### **Avoid Complete Neglect of Balance:**

Ensuring that there is at least some effort towards balance is crucial. Complete neglect can lead to significant distrust, as seen in the high percentage of respondents with no trust in perceived ineffective media.

#### **Consistency in High-Quality Balance:**

Striving for consistently high-quality balanced reporting can significantly boost public trust. Media organizations should prioritize accuracy, transparency, and the inclusion of diverse perspectives to foster a trustworthy relationship with their audience.

*Table 4.4. 2 Chi-Square Test Results for Media Outlets' Efforts to Provide Balanced Political Perspectives and Public Trust*

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	38.138 <sup>a</sup>	16	.001
Likelihood Ratio	34.755	16	.004
N of Valid Cases	395		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.71.

The chi-square test results reveal a statistically significant relationship between media outlets' efforts to provide balanced political perspectives and public trust levels. The “Pearson Chi-Square” value is 38.138 with a “p-value” of 0.001, indicating that the observed distribution of

trust levels across different perceived efforts of media balance is not due to random chance. Additionally, the “Likelihood Ratio” “Chi-Square” is 34.755 with a “p-value” of 0.004, further supporting the significance of this relationship.

**Null Hypothesis (H0):** There is no significant association between media outlets' efforts to provide balanced political perspectives and public trust levels.

**Alternative Hypothesis (H1):** There is a significant association between media outlets' efforts to provide balanced political perspectives and public trust levels.

*Table 4.4. 3 Symmetric Measures for Media Outlets' Efforts to Provide Balanced Political Perspectives and Public Trust*

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.311	.001
	Cramer's V	.155	.001
N of Valid Cases		395	

The symmetric measures provide additional insight into the strength and nature of this association. The “Phi coefficient” is 0.311, which suggests a “moderate association” between the variables. “Cramer's V”, which adjusts for the size of the contingency table, is 0.155, also indicating a moderate relationship. Both measures have a significance level of 0.001, confirming that the association is statistically significant

The null hypothesis in this analysis is that there is no relationship between media outlets' efforts to provide balanced political perspectives and public trust levels. Given the chi-square test results and the symmetric measures indicating a significant association, we reject the null hypothesis. This rejection is based on the low p-values (0.001 for both Pearson Chi-Square and Cramer's V), which are well below the conventional threshold of 0.05, suggesting strong evidence against the null hypothesis.

The analysis confirms that media outlets' efforts to provide balanced political perspectives significantly impact public trust. The moderate association measured by Phi and Cramer's V indicates that while the relationship is significant, other factors may also influence public trust.



The crosstabulation data between the inclusion of diverse political viewpoints by media outlets and public confidence reveals significant patterns and relationships between these variables. Among respondents who perceive media outlets as "extremely" inclusive of diverse political viewpoints, 26.9% are "very confident" in the media, while 21.2% are both "extremely confident" and "moderately confident." However, 13.5% of this group are "not at all confident," showing some degree of skepticism even at the highest level of perceived inclusivity.

For those who view media efforts as "moderate" in terms of inclusion, the highest percentage of respondents (36.3%) are "extremely confident," indicating strong confidence in media efforts. Additionally, 31.9% are "very confident," while only 9.9% are "not at all confident," suggesting that moderate inclusivity is well-regarded in terms of building public confidence. Respondents who believe that media outlets do "not at all" include diverse political viewpoints exhibit a different trend. This group shows the highest level of distrust, with 21.8% reporting no confidence at all, and the majority (35.6%) being only "moderately confident." Despite this, 17.8% of the group still remain "very confident," indicating some level of trust among skeptics.

*Table 4.4. 4 Inclusion of Diverse Political Viewpoints by Media Outlets \* Public Confidence Crosstabulation*

			Public Confidence					Total
			Extremely confident	Moderately confident	Not at all confident	Slightly confident	Very confident	
		Count	11	11	7	9	14	52
Inclusion of Diverse Political	Extremely	Expected Count	9.7	12.0	7.4	7.4	15.5	52.0
Viewpoints		%	21.2%	21.2%	13.5%	17.3%	26.9%	100%
by		within						
		Inclusion						

Media		on of						
Outlets		Diverse						
		Politica						
		l						
		Viewp						
		oints						
		by						
		Media						
		Outlets						
	Modera	Count	33	14	9	6	29	91
	tely	Expect	17.0	21.0	12.9	12.9	27.2	91.0
		ed						
		Count						
		%	36.3%	15.4%	9.9%	6.6%	31.9	100.
		within					%	0%
		Inclusi						
		on of						
		Diverse						
		Politica						
		l						
		Viewp						
		oints						
		by						
		Media						
		Outlets						
		Count	13	36	22	12	18	101
	Not at	Expect	18.9	23.3	14.3	14.3	30.2	101.
	all	ed						0
		Count						
		%	12.9%	35.6%	21.8	11.9	17.8	100.
		within			%	%	%	0%
		Inclusi						
		on of						
		Diverse						
		Politica						
		l						
		Viewp						
		oints						

		by						
		Media						
		Outlets						
	Slightl	Count	8	20	9	23	39	99
	y	Expect	18.5	22.8	14.0	14.0	29.6	99.0
		ed						
		Count						
		%	8.1%	20.2%	9.1%	23.2	39.4	100.
		within				%	%	0%
		Inclusi						
		on of						
		Diverse						
		Politica						
		l						
		Viewp						
		oints						
		by						
		Media						
		Outlets						
	Very	Count	9	10	9	6	18	52
		Expect	9.7	12.0	7.4	7.4	15.5	52.0
		ed						
		Count						
		%	17.3%	19.2%	17.3	11.5	34.6	100.
		within			%	%	%	0%
Total		Inclusi on of Divers e Politic a l Viewp oints by Media Outlet s						
		Count	74	91	56	56	118	395

	Expect	74.0	91.0	56.0	56.0	118.0	395.
	ed						0
	Count						
	%	18.7%	23.0%	14.2	14.2	29.9	100.
	within			%	%	%	0%
	Inclusi						
	on of						
	Diverse						
	Politica						
	l						
	Viewp						
	oints						
	by						
	Media						
	Outlets						

Those who rate the inclusion of diverse viewpoints as "slightly" balanced have the highest percentage (39.4%) of "very confident" respondents, while 23.2% are "slightly confident." This category also has a notable 20.2% who are "moderately confident," indicating a more moderate overall confidence level.

At the end, respondents who perceive media inclusivity as "very" effective have a relatively balanced distribution of confidence levels, with 34.6% being "very confident" and 19.2% being "moderately confident." However, 17.3% are both "extremely confident" and "not at all confident," showing a mix of high confidence and scepticism.

### **Implications of Key Findings**

The statistical analysis reveals significant insights into the relationship between the inclusion of diverse political viewpoints by media outlets and public confidence levels. Here are the key implications and interpretations of these findings:

#### **High Confidence with Perceived Extreme Inclusivity**

#### **Diverse Views and High Confidence:**

Among respondents who perceive media outlets as "extremely" inclusive of diverse political viewpoints, 26.9% are "very confident" in the media. This suggests that when media is perceived as highly inclusive, a significant portion of the public gains strong confidence in the media. However, the fact that 13.5% of this group are "not at all confident" indicates that there is still skepticism even at high levels of perceived inclusivity.

### **Moderate Efforts and Strong Confidence**

**Moderate Inclusivity Favors Confidence:** For respondents who view media efforts as "moderate" in terms of inclusion, the highest percentage (36.3%) are "extremely confident," indicating strong confidence in media efforts. Additionally, 31.9% are "very confident," while only 9.9% are "not at all confident." This suggests that moderate inclusivity efforts are well-regarded and effective in building public confidence. It may imply that audiences value a balanced approach to inclusivity without perceiving it as overemphasized.

### **High Distrust with Perceived Lack of Inclusivity**

**Lack of Inclusivity and Distrust:** Respondents who believe that media outlets do "not at all" include diverse political viewpoints show the highest level of distrust, with 21.8% reporting no confidence at all, and 35.6% being only "moderately confident." Despite this, 17.8% of the group remain "very confident," indicating that while a lack of inclusivity can erode trust, some individuals still maintain high confidence levels, potentially due to other influencing factors.

### **Slight Balance and Mixed Confidence Levels:**

**Slight Inclusivity and Mixed Confidence:** Those who rate the inclusion of diverse viewpoints as "slightly" balanced have the highest percentage (39.4%) of "very confident" respondents. However, this category also has a notable 20.2% who are "moderately confident," and 23.2% who are "slightly confident." This indicates that slight inclusivity efforts can have varying impacts on confidence levels, with a significant portion of the audience responding positively.

### **Balanced Distribution with High Effectiveness Perception:**

**Balanced Inclusivity and Confidence:** Respondents who perceive media inclusivity as "very" effective have a relatively balanced distribution of confidence levels, with 34.6% being "very confident" and 19.2% being "moderately confident." This suggests that when inclusivity is perceived as highly effective, it positively correlates with higher public confidence. However, the presence of 17.3% who are both "extremely confident" and "not at all confident" indicates mixed perceptions even at high levels of perceived effectiveness.

### **Elaborating on the Findings:**

The analysis highlights the crucial role that perceived inclusivity of diverse political viewpoints by media outlets plays in shaping public confidence. The following points elaborate on these findings:

### **Moderate Inclusivity Efforts:**

The finding that moderate efforts to include diverse viewpoints result in the highest levels of extreme confidence (36.3%) suggests that audiences appreciate efforts to include diverse perspectives without feeling overwhelmed. Media outlets might benefit from striking a balance in their inclusivity efforts to build and maintain public confidence.

### **Impact of Perceived Lack of Inclusivity:**

The high level of distrust among respondents who perceive no inclusivity in media efforts indicates the importance of at least some effort towards inclusivity. Media organizations should recognize that a perceived lack of inclusivity can significantly erode public confidence.

### **Diverse Perceptions with Slight Inclusivity:**

The varied confidence levels among those perceiving slight inclusivity indicate that even minimal efforts can positively impact confidence. However, the diverse responses suggest that trust and confidence are influenced by multiple factors, and slight inclusivity alone may not be sufficient to build strong confidence.

### **Effective Inclusivity Efforts:**

The strong correlation between perceived highly effective inclusivity and high confidence levels emphasizes the need for media outlets to consistently strive for effective inclusivity. This consistency can help build and sustain public confidence over time.

### **Implications for Media Outlets:**

#### **Focus on Moderate, Balanced Inclusivity:**

Media outlets should aim for moderate, balanced efforts in including diverse political viewpoints. This approach is likely to be perceived positively and build stronger public confidence than extreme inclusivity efforts.

#### **Avoid Complete Neglect of Inclusivity:**

Ensuring at least some level of inclusivity is crucial, as a complete lack of perceived inclusivity can lead to significant distrust. Media organizations should prioritize efforts to include diverse perspectives to maintain public confidence.

#### **Consistency in High-Quality Inclusivity:**

Striving for consistently high-quality inclusivity efforts can significantly boost public confidence. Media organizations should prioritize transparency and the inclusion of diverse viewpoints to foster a trustworthy relationship with their audience.

The findings from the crosstabulation and chi-square test results highlight the importance of inclusivity of diverse political viewpoints in media reporting. Media outlets that prioritize balanced and moderate efforts in presenting diverse perspectives are likely to see higher levels of public confidence. Consistency in these efforts can help mitigate the negative impacts of post-truth narratives and foster healthier democratic discourse.

*Table 4.4. 5 Chi-Square Test Results for Inclusion of Diverse Political Viewpoints by Media Outlets and Public Confidence*

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	59.500 <sup>a</sup>	16	.000
Likelihood Ratio	57.816	16	.000
N of Valid Cases	395		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 7.37.

**Null Hypothesis (H0):** There is no significant association between the inclusion of diverse political viewpoints by media outlets and public confidence levels.

**Alternative Hypothesis (H1):** There is a significant association between the inclusion of diverse political viewpoints by media outlets and public confidence levels.

The “chi-square test” results, with both “Pearson Chi-Square” (59.500,  $p = 0.000$ ) and “Likelihood Ratio Chi-Square” (57.816,  $p = 0.000$ ), indicate a strong and statistically significant relationship between the inclusion of diverse political viewpoints by media outlets and public confidence levels. These findings reject the null hypothesis (H0) that there is no significant association between these variables, thus supporting the alternative hypothesis (H1) that a significant association exists.

### **Implications of the Results:**

These results highlight the critical importance of media inclusivity in shaping public confidence. Media outlets that actively include diverse political viewpoints are more likely to foster higher levels of public confidence in their reporting. This suggests that strategic efforts to diversify perspectives can enhance media credibility and trustworthiness among their audience. By recognizing and addressing diverse viewpoints, media organizations can contribute positively to public perception and engagement with political discourse. Moreover, these findings highlight the potential for media outlets to mitigate the negative impacts of



misinformation and enhance democratic participation by ensuring inclusive coverage. Moving forward, media organizations should prioritize inclusivity in their editorial policies and practices to uphold journalistic integrity and strengthen their relationship with the public.

*Table 4.4. 6 Symmetric Measures for Inclusion of Diverse Political Viewpoints by Media Outlets and Public Confidence*

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.388	.000
	Cramer's V	.194	.000
N of Valid Cases		395	

The symmetric measures provide added insight into the strength and nature of this association. The “Phi coefficient” is 0.388, suggesting a moderate to strong association between the variables. “Cramer's V”, which adjusts for the size of the contingency table, is 0.194, also indicating a moderate relationship. Both measures have a significance level of 0.000, confirming that the association is statistically significant.

*Table 4.4. 7 Media Outlets' Accuracy and Fact-Checking / Public Understanding of Political Issues Crosstabulation*

			Public Understanding of Political Issues					Total
			Do not improve at all	Highly improve	Improve	Neutral	Slightly improve	
Media	Accuracy	Count	16	30	37	15	16	114
Outlets' Accuracy and Fact-Checking		Expected Count	17.9	25.7	36.1	16.7	17.6	114.0
		%	14.0%	26.3%	32.5%	13.2	14.0%	100

								.0
ng		within				%		%
		Media						
		Outlets'						
		Accura						
		cy and						
		Fact-						
		Checki						
		ng						
		Count	9	18	27	13	14	81
	Highly	Expect	12.7	18.3	25.6	11.1%	17.3%	81.0
	accurat	ed						
	e	Count						
		%	11.1%	22.2%	33.3%	16.0%	100.0	
		within				%		%
		Media						
		Outlets'						
		Accura						
		cy and						
		Fact-						
		Checki						
		ng						
	Low	Count	15	14	9	6	6	50
	accura							
	cy	Expec t ed	7.8	11.3	15.8	7.3	7.7	50.0
		Count						
		%	30.0%	28.0%	18.0%	12.0%	100.0	
		within				%		%

		Media						
		Outlets'						
		Accura						
		cy and						
		Fact-						
		Checki						
		ng						
	Neutra	Count	8	19	35		1	90
	l						5	
		Expect	14.1	20.3	28.5	13.2	13.9	90.0
		ed						
		Count						
		%	8.9%	21.1%	38.9%	14.4	16.7%	100.0
		within				%		%
		Media						
		Outlets'						
		Accura						
		cy and						
		Fact-						
		Checki						
		ng						
	No	Count	14	8	17	11	10	60
	accura							
	cy	Expec	9.4	13.5	19.0	8.8	9.3	60.0
		t ed						
		Count						
		%	23.3%	13.3	28.3%	18.3	16.7%	100.0
		within				%		%
		Media						
		Outlets'						
		Accura						
		cy and						
		Fact-						

		Checki						
		ng						
Total		Count	62	89	125	58	61	395
		Expect	62.0	89.0	125.0	58.0	61.0	395.0
		ed						
		Count						
		%	15.7%	22.5	31.6%	14.7	15.4%	100.0
		within				%		%
		Media						
		Outlets'						
		Accura						
		cy and						
		Fact-						
		Checki						
		ng						

The crosstabulation data between media outlets' accuracy and fact-checking and public understanding of political issues presents stimulating insights into how these factors are interconnected.

Among respondents who perceive media outlets as "accurate," 32.5% report that their understanding of political issues "improves," while 26.3% indicate it "highly improves." Another 14.0% each state that their understanding either "does not improve at all" or "slightly improves," showing a generally positive influence of accuracy on public understanding. For those who view media outlets as "highly accurate," 33.3% report that their understanding "improves," with 22.2% indicating it "highly improves." Interestingly, a notable 17.3% believe their understanding "slightly improves," and 16.0% remain "neutral," suggesting a strong but not overwhelming impact of high accuracy on understanding.

Respondents who consider media outlets to have "low accuracy" show a different trend. Here, 30.0% report that their understanding "does not improve at all," while 28.0% believe it "highly improves." This group also has a relatively low percentage (18.0%) reporting improvement in understanding, reflecting the mixed perceptions about low accuracy.

For those who perceive media accuracy as "neutral," the highest percentage (38.9%) report that their understanding "improves." However, 21.1% indicate it "highly improves," while 14.4% are "neutral," and 16.7% feel their understanding "slightly improves," suggesting a moderate but positive impact.

Lastly, respondents who perceive media outlets as having "no accuracy" display varied responses. Here, 28.3% report that their understanding "improves," while 23.3% state it "does not improve at all," and 18.3% are "neutral." Interestingly, 16.7% report a slight improvement, reflecting mixed perceptions in this category.

### **Interpretation of Results:**

#### **Accurate Media Outlets:**

Among respondents who perceive media outlets as "accurate," a significant proportion (58.8%) report that their understanding of political issues either "improves" (32.5%) or "highly improves" (26.3%). This suggests that accurate reporting positively influences public understanding, with a minority feeling that their understanding "does not improve at all" or "slightly improves."

#### **Highly Accurate Media Outlets:**

For those who view media outlets as "highly accurate," a similar trend is observed, with 55.5% indicating improved understanding (33.3% "improves" and 22.2% "highly improves"). However, there is also a notable proportion (33.3%) who remain "neutral" or perceive only slight improvements, indicating that while high accuracy is beneficial, it does not universally guarantee enhanced understanding.

#### **Low Accuracy Media Outlets:**

Respondents who consider media outlets to have "low accuracy" show mixed responses. While 28.0% believe their understanding "highly improves," a significant 30.0% feel that their understanding "does not improve at all." This suggests that low accuracy can lead to substantial scepticism and may hinder public understanding, despite some finding some benefit.

**Neutral Media Accuracy:**

Those who perceive media accuracy as "neutral" demonstrate a strong association with improved understanding (38.9% "improves" and 21.1% "highly improves"), indicating that even moderate accuracy can positively influence public perception. However, a minority (14.4%) remain "neutral," suggesting room for improvement in clarity and factual reporting.

**No Accuracy in Media Outlets:**

Respondents who perceive media outlets as having "no accuracy" exhibit diverse responses. While 28.3% report improved understanding, a substantial 23.3% feel their understanding "does not improve at all." This category also reflects uncertainty, with 18.3% feeling "neutral," indicating a lack of confidence in media accuracy.

**Implications of the Results:**

These findings feature the critical role of media accuracy and fact-checking in shaping public understanding of political issues. Accurate reporting significantly enhances public trust and comprehension, fostering a more informed electorate and supporting democratic processes. Conversely, low accuracy can lead to distrust and misinformation, potentially undermining public confidence in media institutions.

**Possible Implications:****Media Responsibility:**

Media organizations should prioritize rigorous fact-checking and accuracy standards to maintain credibility and effectively serve their audience. This includes transparent corrections of errors and clear sourcing of information.

**Public Engagement:**

Enhancing media accuracy can contribute to greater civic engagement and informed decision-

making among the public. It empowers individuals to participate meaningfully in democratic processes by making well-informed choices.

### **Policy and Regulation:**

Policymakers and regulators can consider promoting policies that incentivize accurate reporting and penalize misinformation. This could involve supporting media literacy programs and strengthening regulatory frameworks to ensure journalistic integrity.

### **Media Literacy:**

Educating the public about media literacy can help individuals discern between accurate reporting and misinformation. This includes teaching critical thinking skills and promoting awareness of bias in media coverage.

These insights highlight the development relationship between media accuracy and public understanding, emphasizing the importance of responsible journalism in fostering a well-informed society.

*Table 4.4. 8 Chi-Square Test Results for Media Outlets' Accuracy and Fact-Checking and Public Understanding of Political Issues*

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi- Square	23.083 <sup>a</sup>	16	.112
Likelihood Ratio	22.797	16	.119
N of Valid Cases	395		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 7.34.

**Null Hypothesis (H0):** There is no significant association between media outlets' accuracy and fact-checking and public understanding of political issues.

**Alternative Hypothesis (H1):** There is a significant association between media outlets' accuracy and fact-checking and public understanding of political issues.

The “chi-square” test results indicate that the relationship between media outlets' accuracy and fact-checking and public understanding of political issues is not statistically significant (Pearson Chi-Square value = 23.083,  $p = 0.112$ ). The “Likelihood Ratio Chi-Square” is 22.797 with a  $p$ -value of 0.119, further supporting the lack of a significant relationship.

These findings suggest that while accurate reporting and robust fact-checking are fundamental journalistic practices, they alone may not be sufficient to significantly influence public understanding of political issues. Other factors beyond media accuracy, such as media literacy, political polarization, and broader societal trust in media institutions, likely play significant roles in shaping how the public perceives and comprehends political information.

Therefore, while media accuracy remains crucial for maintaining journalistic credibility and fostering public trust, efforts to enhance public understanding of political issues may need to consider a more comprehensive approach that addresses these broader contextual factors. Future research could explore additional variables or interactions that might elucidate the complex dynamics between media accuracy and public perception of political issues.

*Table 4.4. 9 Symmetric Measures for Media Outlets' Accuracy and Fact-Checking and Public Understanding of Political Issues*

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.242	.112
	Cramer's V	.121	.112
N of Valid Cases		395	

The symmetric measures provide additional insight into the strength of this association. The “Phi coefficient” is 0.242, suggesting a weak association between the variables. “Cramer's V”, which adjusts for the size of the contingency table, is 0.121, also indicating a weak relationship. Both measures have a significance level of 0.112, confirming that the association is not statistically significant.

The null hypothesis in this analysis is that there is no relationship between media outlets' accuracy and fact-checking and public understanding of political issues. Given the chi-square



test results and the symmetric measures indicating no significant association, we accept the null hypothesis. This acceptance is based on the high “p-values” (0.112 for both “Pearson Chi-Square” and “Cramer's V”), which are above the conventional threshold of 0.05, suggesting insufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis.

The analysis indicates that media outlets' accuracy and fact-checking do not have a significant impact on public understanding of political issues. The weak association measured by Phi and Cramer's V suggests that while accuracy and fact-checking are important, other factors likely play a more significant role in shaping public understanding.

*Table 4.4. 10 Media Outlets' Accuracy and Fact-Checking \* Prevention of Misinformation Crosstabulation*

			Prevention of Misinformation					Total
			Extremely	Modestly	Not at all	Slightly	Very	
Media Outlets' Accuracy and Fact-Checking	Accuracy	Count	17	23	17	19	38	114
		Expected Count	12.1	22.8	21.1	22.8	35.2	114.0
		% within Media Outlets' Accuracy and Fact-Checking	14.9%	20.2%	14.9%	16.7%	33.3%	100.0%
	Highly accurate	Count	11	15	13	14	28	81
		Expected Count	8.6	16.2	15.0	16.2	25.0	81.0
		%	13.6%	18.5%	16.0%	17.3%	34.6%	100.0%

		withi n Medi a Outlet s ' Accur a cy and Fact- Chec ki ng			%	%	%	%
	Low accur a cy	Count	2	12	13	14	9	50
		Expe ct ed Coun t	5.3	10.0	9.2	10.0	15.4	50.0
		% withi n Medi a Outlet s ' Accur a cy and Fact- Chec ki ng	4.0%	24.0%	26.0 %	28.0 %	18.0 %	100.0 %
	Neutr a l	Count	9	22	13	14	32	90
		Expe ct ed Coun t	9.6	18.0	16.6	18.0	27.8	90.0
		% withi n Medi a	10.0%	24.4%	14.4 %	15.6 %	35.6 %	100.0 %

		Outlet s ,						
		Accura cy and Fact- Checki ng						
	No accura cy	Count	3	7	17	18	15	60
		Expect ed Count	6.4	12.0	11.1	12.0	18.5	60.0
		% within Media Outlets ,  Accura cy and Fact- Checki ng	5.0%	11.7%	28.3 %	30.0 %	25.0 %	100.0 %
Total		Count	42	79	73	79	122	395
		Expect ed Count	42.0	79.0	73.0	79.0	122. 0	395.0
		% within Media Outlets ,  Accura cy and	10.6%	20.0%	18.5 %	20.0 %	30.9 %	100.0 %

	Fact- Checki ng						
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The crosstabulation data between media outlets' accuracy and fact-checking and the prevention of misinformation provides valuable insights into the relationship between these variables. Among respondents who perceive media outlets as "accurate," 33.3% believe that such accuracy "very" prevents misinformation, and 20.2% feel it "moderately" prevents misinformation. Additionally, 16.7% believe it "slightly" prevents misinformation, and 14.9% each feel it either "extremely" or "not at all" prevents misinformation. This indicates a generally positive influence of perceived accuracy on the prevention of misinformation.

For those who view media outlets as "highly accurate," 34.6% believe this "very" prevents misinformation, and 18.5% think it "moderately" prevents misinformation. A significant 17.3% feel it "slightly" prevents misinformation, while 16.0% believe it "does not at all" prevent misinformation. This group shows a strong perception that high accuracy is effective in preventing misinformation.

Respondents who consider media outlets to have "low accuracy" present a different trend. Here, 28.0% believe low accuracy "slightly" prevents misinformation, and 26.0% think it "does not at all" prevent misinformation. Only 18.0% feel low accuracy "very" prevents misinformation, reflecting a more skeptical view of low accuracy's effectiveness in preventing misinformation. For those who perceive media accuracy as "neutral," 35.6% believe it "very" prevents misinformation, and 24.4% feel it "moderately" prevents misinformation. However, 15.6% believe it "slightly" prevents misinformation, and 14.4% think it "does not at all" prevent misinformation, indicating a moderate but generally positive impact.

Finally, respondents who perceive media outlets as having "no accuracy" display mixed responses. Here, 30.0% believe it "slightly" prevents misinformation, and 28.3% think it "does not at all" prevent misinformation. Only 25.0% feel it "very" prevents misinformation, showing a high degree of skepticism.

## Key Findings

### **Accurate Media Outlets:**

Among those who perceive media outlets as "accurate," 33.3% believe that accuracy "very" effectively prevents misinformation, and 20.2% think it "moderately" prevents misinformation. This indicates a strong positive correlation between perceived accuracy and the effectiveness in preventing misinformation.

### **Highly Accurate Media Outlets:**

Respondents who view media outlets as "highly accurate" show even stronger beliefs about their ability to prevent misinformation. A significant 34.6% feel that highly accurate media outlets "very" prevent misinformation, and 18.5% believe it "moderately" prevents it. This suggests that high levels of perceived accuracy correlate with heightened confidence in preventing misinformation.

### **Low Accuracy Media Outlets:**

Conversely, perceptions differ significantly for those who perceive media outlets as having "low accuracy." Here, only 18.0% believe that low accuracy "very" prevents misinformation, and 26.0% think it "does not at all" prevent it. This indicates skepticism and a lack of confidence in media outlets with perceived low accuracy to effectively combat misinformation.

### **Neutral and No Accuracy Media Outlets:**

For respondents who view media outlets as "neutral" in accuracy, 35.6% believe they "very" prevent misinformation, and 24.4% think they "moderately" prevent it. However, those who perceive media outlets as having "no accuracy" express high skepticism, with only 25.0% believing they "very" prevent misinformation, and 28.3% indicating they "do not at all" prevent it.

### **Implications and Potential Findings' Meanings:**

#### **Perceived Accuracy and Trust:**

Higher perceived accuracy is strongly associated with greater trust in media outlets' ability to prevent misinformation. This trust likely stems from confidence in rigorous fact-checking and reliable reporting practices.

### **Impact on Public Trust and Behavior:**

Public perceptions of media accuracy can significantly influence trust levels and subsequent behaviors, such as sharing information or engaging with news sources. Media outlets seen as inaccurate may struggle to maintain public trust, affecting their role in combating misinformation effectively.

### **Need for Robust Fact-Checking:**

Strengthening fact-checking processes and ensuring accuracy in reporting are critical for media outlets aiming to mitigate misinformation. These efforts not only bolster credibility but also enhance public confidence in the reliability of news sources.

### **Educational and Informational Campaigns:**

Strategies to educate the public about media literacy and critical thinking skills can complement efforts to improve media accuracy. Empowering individuals to discern credible information from misinformation can reduce susceptibility to false narratives.

While perceived media accuracy plays a crucial role in mitigating misinformation, perceptions vary widely based on the perceived accuracy level of media outlets. Addressing these perceptions through transparent reporting practices and robust fact-checking measures can strengthen media credibility and enhance public trust in the information ecosystem.

*Table 4.4. 11 Chi-Square Test Results for Media Outlets' Accuracy and Fact-Checking and Prevention of Misinformation*

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	27.494 <sup>a</sup>	16	.036
Likelihood Ratio	28.142	16	.030
N of Valid Cases	395		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.32.

**Null Hypothesis (H0):** There is no significant association between media outlets' accuracy and fact-checking and the prevention of misinformation.

**Alternative Hypothesis (H1):** There is a significant association between media outlets' accuracy and fact-checking and the prevention of misinformation.

The chi-square test results indicate a statistically significant relationship between media outlets' accuracy and fact-checking and the prevention of misinformation (“Pearson Chi- Square value” = 27.494,  $p = 0.036$ ). The “Likelihood Ratio Chi-Square” is 28.142 with a “p- value” of 0.030, further supporting the significance of this relationship.

### ***Interpretation And Discussion***

The chi-square test results reveal a significant relationship between media outlets' accuracy and fact-checking and the prevention of misinformation, highlighting important implications for media practices and public perception. The findings suggest that how media outlets are perceived in terms of accuracy directly impacts their effectiveness in combating misinformation. Media perceived as accurate or highly accurate tend to be associated with stronger beliefs among the public that they effectively prevent misinformation. This correlation highlights the critical role of rigorous fact-checking and transparent reporting in building public trust and countering the spread of false information.

These results have significant implications for media organizations aiming to enhance their credibility and influence in the current information landscape. Strengthening efforts in accuracy and fact-checking could not only bolster public trust but also mitigate the harmful effects of misinformation on societal discourse and decision-making. Moreover, the findings emphasize the need for continuous improvement in media practices, including transparency about sources and methodologies, to foster informed public engagement and combat misinformation effectively.

From a broader perspective, these findings feature the interconnected nature of media integrity and societal resilience against misinformation. Addressing public concerns about media accuracy through robust fact checking mechanisms and clear communication of editorial standards could contribute to a more trustworthy media environment. Ultimately, these efforts may help safeguard democratic processes by promoting informed civic participation and reducing the influence of false narratives.

*Table 4.4. 12 Symmetric Measures for Media Outlets' Accuracy and Fact-Checking and Prevention of Misinformation*

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.264	.036
	Cramer's V	.132	.036
N of Valid Cases		395	

The symmetric measures provide additional insight into the strength and nature of this association. The “Phi coefficient” is 0.264, suggesting a “moderate association” between the variables. “Cramer's V” which adjusts for the size of the contingency table, is 0.132, indicating a moderate relationship. Both measures have a significance level of 0.036, confirming that the association is statistically significant.



The null hypothesis in this analysis is that there is no relationship between media outlets' accuracy and fact-checking and the prevention of misinformation. Given the chi-square test results and the symmetric measures indicating a significant association, we reject the null hypothesis. This rejection is based on the “p-values” (0.036 for Pearson “Chi-Square” and “Cramer's V”), which are below the conventional threshold of 0.05, suggesting strong evidence against the null hypothesis.

The analysis confirms that media outlets' accuracy and fact-checking significantly impact the prevention of misinformation. The moderate association measured by Phi and Cramer's V suggests that while accuracy and fact-checking are important, other factors likely also contribute to the effectiveness in preventing misinformation

*Table 4.4. 13 Summary of Chi-Square Test Results*

Analysis	Pearson Chi-Square Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Likelihood Ratio Chi-Square	Phi Coefficient	Cramer's V	Decision
Media Outlets' Efforts to Provide Balanced Political Perspectives * Public Trust	38.138	16	0.001	34.755	0.311	0.155	Reject Null Hypothesis (H0)
Inclusion of Diverse Political Viewpoints by Media Outlets * Public Confidence	59.500	16	0.000	57.816	0.388	0.194	Reject Null Hypothesis (H0)
Media Outlets' Accuracy and Fact-Checking * Public Understanding of Political Issues	23.083	16	0.112	22.797	0.242	0.121	Accept Null Hypothesis (H0)
Media Outlets' Accuracy and Fact-Checking *	27.494	16	0.036	28.142	0.264	0.132	Reject Null

Prevention of Misinformation							Hypothesis is (H0)
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#### 4.4.6 Summary

##### **Media Outlets' Efforts to Provide Balanced Political Perspectives \* Public Trust:**

The chi-square test reveals a statistically significant relationship between media outlets' efforts to provide balanced political perspectives and public trust levels. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H0) that there is no significant association is rejected.

##### **Inclusion of Diverse Political Viewpoints by Media Outlets \* Public Confidence:**

The chi-square test indicates a strong and statistically significant relationship between the inclusion of diverse political viewpoints by media outlets and public confidence levels. Consequently, the null hypothesis (H0) is rejected.

##### **Media Outlets' Accuracy and Fact-Checking \* Public Understanding of Political Issues:**

The chi-square test results suggest that there is no statistically significant relationship between media outlets' accuracy and fact-checking and public understanding of political issues. Hence, the null hypothesis (H0) is accepted.

##### **Media Outlets' Accuracy and Fact-Checking \* Prevention of Misinformation:**

The chi-square test results demonstrate a statistically significant relationship between media outlets' accuracy and fact-checking and the prevention of misinformation. Thus, the null hypothesis (H0) is rejected.

#### **Objective And Hypothesis Recap**

The primary objective of this chapter was to evaluate the impact of media outlets' efforts in promoting accuracy, transparency, and diverse representation of political perspectives on public perception. This included examining how these efforts influence public trust, confidence, understanding of political issues, and the prevention of misinformation. The

hypothesis (H4) posited that media outlets prioritizing these values contribute to a more informed public perception, mitigating the negative impact of post-truth narratives and fostering healthier democratic discourse.

### **Fulfillment of Objectives:**

#### **Balanced Political Perspectives and Public Trust:**

The impact of balanced political reporting on public trust.

#### ***Results:***

The chi-square test ( $\chi^2 = 38.138$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ) and moderate association ( $\Phi = 0.311$ , Cramer's  $V = 0.155$ ) indicate a significant relationship.

#### ***Implications:***

Balanced political perspectives by media outlets significantly enhance public trust, confirming that perceived efforts in balance positively correlate with higher trust levels. Media should aim for moderate, naturally integrated balanced reporting to build and maintain trust.

The results show that when media outlets make concerted efforts to provide balanced political perspectives, the public is more likely to trust them. Specifically, those who perceive the media as extremely effective in providing balanced perspectives exhibit high levels of trust. However, the finding that moderate efforts are perceived more favourably than extreme efforts suggests that audiences may prefer balanced reporting that does not appear forced or overly assertive. This indicates that media outlets need to find a balance in their reporting style to maintain and build public trust effectively. By doing so, they can contribute to healthier democratic discourse and mitigate the negative impacts of post-truth narratives.

#### **Inclusion of Diverse Political Viewpoints and Public Confidence:**

how inclusivity in political viewpoints influences public confidence.

***Results:***

The chi-square test ( $\chi^2 = 59.500$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) and moderate to strong association (Phi = 0.388, Cramer's  $V = 0.194$ ) highlight a significant relationship.

***Implications:***

Inclusive reporting significantly boosts public confidence. Media outlets must ensure diverse representation in their coverage to enhance credibility and foster a well-informed public. The data reveals that the inclusion of diverse political viewpoints by media outlets plays a crucial role in building public confidence. Respondents who perceive the media as extremely inclusive of diverse political viewpoints exhibit higher levels of confidence in the media. This suggests that when the public sees that media outlets are making efforts to include a variety of perspectives, they are more likely to trust and have confidence in these outlets. This is particularly important in a diverse society where different groups may have varying viewpoints. By ensuring diverse representation, media outlets can enhance their credibility and foster a more informed and engaged public.

**Accuracy and Fact-Checking and Public Understanding of Political Issues:**

The role of media accuracy and fact-checking in public understanding of political issues.

***Results:***

The chi-square test ( $\chi^2 = 23.083$ ,  $p = 0.112$ ) and weak association (Phi = 0.242, Cramer's  $V = 0.121$ ) suggest no significant relationship.

***Implications:***

While accuracy and fact-checking are essential for media integrity, other factors likely play a more significant role in shaping public understanding of political issues. Media organizations should consider integrating educational content and contextual analysis to enhance public comprehension. This finding implies that simply presenting accurate information is not

enough; the way information is communicated and contextualized is equally important in helping the public understand complex political issues.

The analysis indicates that while accuracy and fact-checking are important, they alone do not significantly impact public understanding of political issues. This suggests that media outlets need to do more than just present accurate information. They should focus on how information is communicated and ensure that it is contextualized in a way that helps the public understand complex issues. This could involve providing background information, explaining the significance of events, and offering analysis that helps the audience connect the dots. By doing so, media outlets can enhance public understanding and contribute to a more informed public discourse.

### **Accuracy and Fact-Checking and Prevention of Misinformation:**

how media accuracy and fact-checking contribute to preventing misinformation.

#### ***Results:***

The chi-square test ( $\chi^2 = 27.494$ ,  $p = 0.036$ ) and moderate association (Phi = 0.264, Cramer's  $V = 0.132$ ) confirm a significant relationship.

#### ***Implications:***

Accurate and fact-checked reporting is crucial for preventing misinformation. Media outlets need to maintain high standards of accuracy and rigorous fact-checking processes to mitigate misinformation and support a well-informed public. This finding emphasizes the need for media outlets to maintain high standards of accuracy to prevent the spread of false information, which is crucial in the post-truth era.

The significant association between media outlets' accuracy and fact-checking and the prevention of misinformation stresses the importance of rigorous journalistic practices. Accurate and fact-checked reporting helps prevent the spread of misinformation, thereby supporting a well-informed public. This is particularly important in the post-truth era, where false information can spread rapidly and have significant impacts on public perception and

behaviour. Media outlets must prioritize accuracy and fact-checking to build and maintain credibility and trust with their audience.

### ***Implications of Findings:***

The analyses confirm the hypothesis that media efforts in promoting accuracy, transparency, and diverse representation positively impact public perception. However, the varying degrees of impact highlight the complexity of media influence on public trust, confidence, understanding, and misinformation prevention. The significant associations found in balanced perspectives and inclusivity feature the importance of these practices in fostering trust and confidence. Conversely, the weaker association in public understanding suggests that additional factors must be addressed to enhance comprehension of political issues.

### **Balanced Political Perspectives and Public Trust:**

The significant relationship between balanced political perspectives and public trust highlights the importance of balanced reporting. Media outlets should aim to provide balanced perspectives in a way that feels natural and integrated to build and maintain public trust effectively.

### **Inclusion of Diverse Political Viewpoints and Public Confidence:**

The strong association between the inclusion of diverse political viewpoints and public confidence suggests that media outlets should prioritize inclusive reporting to enhance their credibility and foster a well-informed public. Ensuring diverse representation in their coverage can significantly boost public confidence in media outlets.

### **Accuracy and Fact-Checking and Public Understanding:**

The weak association between accuracy and fact-checking and public understanding indicates that media outlets need to do more than just present accurate information. They should focus on how information is communicated and contextualized to help the public understand complex issues better.

## **Accuracy and Fact-Checking and Prevention of Misinformation:**

The significant relationship between accuracy and fact-checking and the prevention of misinformation emphasizes the importance of rigorous journalistic practices. Media outlets should prioritize accuracy and fact-checking to prevent the spread of misinformation and build and maintain credibility and trust with their audience.

This chapter point out the pivotal role media plays in shaping public perception and mitigating the effects of post-truth narratives. By prioritizing balanced, accurate, and inclusive reporting, media outlets can build and maintain public trust and confidence, support a well-informed public, and contribute to healthier democratic discourse. Future efforts should focus on continuous improvement in media practices, promoting media literacy, and fostering an environment of open and diverse political dialogue.

The collective results from the analyses provide comprehensive evidence supporting the hypothesis that media outlets' efforts in accuracy, transparency, and diverse representation contribute to mitigating the negative impacts of post-truth narratives. The significant associations between perceived media bias, inclusion of diverse viewpoints, accuracy, and fact-checking with public trust and confidence highlights the critical role of media in shaping public opinion.

Efforts to mitigate the negative impacts of post-truth narratives should focus on promoting media literacy, encouraging critical evaluation of information sources, and fostering open and diverse political dialogue. Addressing cognitive biases and habitual consumption patterns is essential to counter selective exposure behavior and reduce political polarization.

The findings emphasize the difficulty of media consumption behaviour and the challenges of fostering balanced and informed public discourse in a post-truth era. By promoting critical thinking and encouraging engagement with diverse perspectives, media literacy programs can help individuals navigate the information landscape more effectively, eventually contributing to a healthier and more vibrant public discourse. Media organizations should prioritize accuracy, transparency, and diversity in their reporting to build and maintain public trust and confidence, thereby supporting the democratic process and mitigating the adverse effects of misinformation.





## **CHAPTER 5**

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

#### **INTERVIEWS DISCUSSION**

## INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of post-truth narratives has become increasingly prevalent in contemporary political discourse, fundamentally altering the landscape of public opinion and trust in institutions. Post-truth politics, characterized by the prioritization of emotion and personal belief over factual accuracy, poses significant challenges to informed decision-making and democratic processes (McIntyre, 2018). The rapid dissemination of information through various media channels, particularly social media, has amplified the reach and impact of these narratives, often at the expense of objective truth (Vosoughi, Roy, & Aral, 2018).

This chapter seeks to explore the multidimensional nature of post-truth narratives by examining their prevalence across different media channels, the psychological mechanisms that influence their acceptance, and their broader implications for public trust in political information and institutions. Through a thematic analysis of expert interviews, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics that drive post-truth narratives and the strategies necessary to counteract their adverse effects.

The expert interviews conducted for this study reveal a consensus on the critical role of social media in propagating post-truth narratives, highlighting the lack of editorial oversight and the influence of algorithms designed to prioritize engagement over accuracy (Expert 1; Expert 3). The experts also stress the psychological mechanisms, such as confirmation bias, cognitive dissonance, and motivated reasoning, that make individuals more susceptible to accepting post-truth narratives (Expert 2; Expert 5). These insights are triangulated with existing literature, which supports the notion that selective exposure and the creation of echo chambers further entrench ideological divides and diminish public trust (Sunstein, 2009; Pariser, 2011).

Additionally, the experts emphasize the erosion of trust in political information and institutions as a significant consequence of post-truth narratives. This erosion is driven by the strategic use of misinformation by political actors and the increasing skepticism towards traditional sources of information (Expert 3; Expert 6). The study discusses the role of media in promoting objectivity and counteracting post-truth narratives, highlighting the need for rigorous fact-checking, transparency, and diverse representation of viewpoints (Expert 4; Expert 6).

This research contributes to the broader understanding of post-truth politics by integrating expert opinions with findings from the literature, providing a valuable analysis of the challenges posed by post-truth narratives and offering practical recommendations for media practices that can foster a healthier democratic discourse.

### **Theme 1: Prevalence of Post-Truth Narratives in Contemporary Political Discourse**

*"Post-truth narratives are increasingly prevalent in contemporary political discourse across various media channels, posing challenges to objective truth and informed decision-making." (Expert 1)*

This statement highlights the omnipresence of post-truth narratives in modern political discussions, emphasizing their widespread distribution across different media channels. It suggests that these narratives are a significant impediment to the public's ability to discern objective truth and make informed decisions. The emphasis here is on the erosion of trust in factual reporting and the shift towards emotionally driven narratives.

*"The tendency of information being presented in a one-sided bigoted way is higher, leading to the distortion of objective reality and the rise of conspiracies and propaganda." (Expert 2)*

This observation points to the selective presentation of information, which often results in a biased or one-sided view that distorts reality. This selective presentation fosters the rise of conspiracies and propaganda, further undermining the objective assessment of political realities.

*"The rapid dissemination of information through online platforms, particularly social media, has facilitated the spread of these narratives, which often lack rigorous editorial oversight." (Expert 3)*

Expert 3 emphasizes the role of online platforms, particularly social media, in the rapid spread of post-truth narratives. The lack of rigorous editorial oversight on these platforms allows misinformation to proliferate unchecked, contributing significantly to the post-truth phenomenon.

*"Post-truth narratives thrive in environments where sensationalism and emotional engagement are prioritized over factual accuracy."(Expert 4)*

This statement highlights the conditions under which post-truth narratives flourish—namely, environments that prioritize sensationalism and emotional engagement over factual accuracy. Such environments are fertile ground for misleading or exaggerated claims that appeal to emotions rather than reason.

*"Traditional media channels, although more restrained, sometimes prioritize sensational stories to attract higher viewership, indirectly contributing to the post-truth phenomenon."(Expert 5)*

Here, Expert 5 acknowledges that even traditional media channels are not immune to the allure of sensationalism. While they are generally more restrained due to professional norms and accountability mechanisms, the competitive nature of the news industry can lead them to prioritize sensational stories to attract viewership, thus indirectly contributing to the post-truth phenomenon.

*"In India, political parties and actors use media channels to propagate their agendas, leading to a high prevalence of misinformation during elections." (Expert 6)*

Expert 6 provides a specific example from India, where political actors use media channels to spread misinformation and manipulate public opinion, especially during elections. This practice leads to a high prevalence of post-truth narratives, which can significantly impact democratic processes.

## **Discussion**

The prevalence of post-truth narratives in contemporary political discourse is well-documented in the literature. McIntyre (2018) argues that the post-truth era is characterized by a political culture in which debate is framed largely by appeals to emotion disconnected from the details of policy, and by the repeated assertion of talking points to which factual rebuttals are ignored.

This aligns with Expert 1 and Expert 4's observations about the role of emotional engagement and sensationalism in fostering post-truth narratives.

The role of social media, highlighted by Expert 3, is also corroborated by various studies. Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) found that social media played a significant role in spreading misinformation during the 2016 US presidential election, facilitating the rapid dissemination of false stories that influenced public perception and voting behavior.

Triangulating these expert opinions with academic research emphasizes the importance of understanding the mechanisms and environments that allow post-truth narratives to thrive. The selective presentation of information, as noted by Expert 2, can lead to a distorted understanding of reality, which is a common theme in the literature on media bias and selective exposure (Iyengar & Hahn, 2009).

In the Indian context, the use of media by political actors to spread misinformation, as described by Expert 6, has been documented by (Sharma & Sivakumar, 2023; Mir, (2022) who found that social media platforms were used extensively to spread false information during the 2019 Indian general elections.

## **Theme 2: Characteristics and Mechanisms of Post-Truth Narratives**

*"Post-truth narratives often rely on emotional appeals and subjective interpretations rather than objective facts and analysis." (Expert 1)*

This statement highlights a fundamental characteristic of post-truth narratives, their reliance on emotional appeals and subjective interpretations over objective facts. This approach is designed to resonate more with audiences on an emotional level, which can be more compelling than factual arguments.

*"These narratives tend to disregard and discredit empirical information, focusing on emotional beliefs or ideological agendas instead." (Expert 2)*

Expert 2 elaborates on the tendency of post-truth narratives to discredit empirical information, focusing instead on emotional beliefs and ideological agendas. This strategy undermines the

credibility of factual information and shifts the focus to emotionally charged, often divisive, issues.

*"Key characteristics of post-truth narratives include emotional appeal, disregard for factual accuracy, simplistic explanations, and targeting confirmation biases." (Expert 3)*

This comprehensive description by Expert 3 outlines several key characteristics of post-truth narratives: emotional appeal, disregard for factual accuracy, simplistic explanations, and targeting confirmation biases. These elements work together to make post-truth narratives particularly effective in influencing public opinion.

*"The most defining feature of post-truth narratives is their disregard for factual accuracy, often relying on unverified and speculative claims." (Expert 4)*

Expert 4 emphasizes that the most defining feature of post-truth narratives is their disregard for factual accuracy. This disregard often manifests in the reliance on unverified and speculative claims, which can be more sensational and engaging than verified information.

*"Post-truth narratives offer simplistic explanations for complex issues, making them more digestible and appealing to a broad audience." (Expert 5)*

According to Expert 5, post-truth narratives simplify complex issues, making them more digestible and appealing to a broad audience. This oversimplification can lead to a distorted understanding of these issues, but it also makes the narratives more accessible and shareable.

*"These narratives exploit confirmation bias, reinforcing existing views and making individuals less likely to question the information." (Expert 6)*

Expert 6 highlights the role of confirmation bias in the effectiveness of post-truth narratives. By reinforcing existing views, these narratives make individuals less likely to question the information, creating a feedback loop that strengthens their impact.

## **Discussion**

The characteristics and mechanisms of post-truth narratives, as described by the experts, align with findings from the literature. Lewandowsky et al. (2017) argue that post-truth narratives often exploit cognitive biases, such as confirmation bias, to enhance their persuasiveness. This aligns with Expert 6's observation about the role of confirmation bias in reinforcing existing views.

The reliance on emotional appeals and subjective interpretations, noted by Experts 1 and 2, is also well-documented. Hochschild & Einstein, (2015) found that emotionally charged narratives are more likely to be shared and believed, regardless of their factual accuracy. This emotional engagement is a key factor in the spread of misinformation on social media (Pennycook & Rand, 2018).

Simplistic explanations for complex issues, highlighted by Expert 5, are a common feature of post-truth narratives. Kahneman (2011) explains that people are more likely to accept simple, coherent stories that fit their existing beliefs, even if those stories are inaccurate. This preference for simplicity over complexity makes post-truth narratives particularly effective.

### **Theme 3: Impact of Post-Truth Narratives on Public Perception and Polarization**

*"Post-truth narratives contribute to polarization, as individuals become increasingly entrenched in their ideological bubbles." (Expert 1)*

Expert 1 highlights the role of post-truth narratives in contributing to societal polarization. By reinforcing existing beliefs and creating ideological bubbles, these narratives make it difficult for individuals to engage with opposing viewpoints.

*"Self-segmentation, or confirmation bias, leads to the formation of filter bubbles where individuals avoid information that contradicts their beliefs." (Expert 2)*

This statement by Expert 2 emphasizes the role of confirmation bias in creating filter bubbles, where individuals selectively expose themselves to information that confirms their pre-existing

beliefs. This self-segmentation reinforces ideological divides and reduces exposure to diverse perspectives

*"Selective exposure through social media algorithms creates echo chambers, reinforcing ideological divides." (Expert 3)*

Expert 3 focuses on the role of social media algorithms in selective exposure, creating echo chambers that reinforce ideological divides. These algorithms prioritize content that aligns with users' preferences, further entrenching their existing beliefs.

*"The choice of news sources also contributes to selective exposure, with individuals gravitating towards media outlets that reflect their political leanings." (Expert 4)*

This observation by Expert 4 highlights how the choice of news sources contributes to selective exposure. Individuals often prefer media outlets that reflect their political leanings, which reinforces their ideological perspectives and deepens societal divides.

*"Selective exposure extends to other forms of media consumption, such as blogs and podcasts, reinforcing political beliefs." (Expert 5)*

Expert 5 notes that selective exposure is not limited to news consumption but extends to other forms of media, such as blogs and podcasts. This broadens the scope of selective exposure and its impact on reinforcing political beliefs.

*"Selective exposure reduces the likelihood of encountering diverse perspectives, fostering polarization and a fragmented information environment." (Expert 6)*

Expert 6 concludes that selective exposure reduces the likelihood of encountering diverse perspectives, fostering polarization and creating a fragmented information environment. This fragmentation makes it difficult for individuals to engage in constructive dialogue across ideological divides.



## Discussion

The impact of post-truth narratives on public perception and polarization is a critical area of concern. Sunstein (2009) describes the phenomenon of "cyberbalkanization," where individuals are increasingly isolated in their ideological bubbles due to selective exposure and confirmation bias. This aligns with the observations of Experts 1, 2, and 3 about the role of social media algorithms in creating echo chambers and reinforcing ideological divides.

The literature also supports the idea that selective exposure extends to various forms of media consumption, as noted by Expert 5. Garrett (2009) found that individuals who consume politically aligned media are more likely to avoid content that contradicts their beliefs, reinforcing their existing perspectives.

Triangulating these findings with the experts' observations highlights the significant impact of post-truth narratives on societal polarization. The reduction in exposure to diverse perspectives, as described by Expert 6, is a key factor in the deepening of ideological divides and the fragmentation of the information environment.

### **Theme 4: Psychological Mechanisms Influencing Acceptance of Post-Truth Narratives**

*"Confirmation bias, cognitive dissonance, and motivated reasoning are the primary psychological mechanisms influencing the public's acceptance or rejection of post-truth narratives." (Expert 4)*

Expert 1 identifies confirmation bias, cognitive dissonance, and motivated reasoning as key psychological mechanisms that influence how individuals accept or reject post-truth narratives. These cognitive biases shape the way people process information and form beliefs.

*"Post-truth narratives tap into core anxieties and prejudices, exploiting psychological vulnerabilities through confirmation bias and motivated reasoning." (Expert 2)*

This statement by Expert 2 emphasizes how post-truth narratives exploit psychological vulnerabilities, such as core anxieties and prejudices, through confirmation bias and motivated reasoning. These mechanisms make individuals more susceptible to accepting emotionally resonant, albeit inaccurate, narratives.

*"Cognitive biases, emotional engagement, and social identity significantly influence the acceptance of post-truth narratives." (Expert 3)*

Expert 3 expands on the influence of cognitive biases, emotional engagement, and social identity on the acceptance of post-truth narratives. These factors interact to shape individuals' perceptions and make them more likely to accept information that aligns with their beliefs.

*"Emotional engagement makes post-truth narratives more memorable and persuasive, leading to their widespread acceptance. (Expert 4)*

According to Expert 4, emotional engagement plays a crucial role in making post-truth narratives more memorable and persuasive. This emotional resonance enhances the spread and acceptance of these narratives.

*"Motivated reasoning leads individuals to process information in a way that serves their goals or desires, reinforcing existing beliefs." (Expert 5)*

Expert 5 highlights motivated reasoning as a mechanism that leads individuals to process information in a way that serves their goals or desires. This reinforcement of existing beliefs further entrenches individuals' perspectives.

*"Heuristics and information overload lead to the acceptance of simple, emotionally appealing narratives without critical evaluation." (Expert 6)*

Expert 6 points out that heuristics and information overload contribute to the acceptance of simple, emotionally appealing narratives. These cognitive shortcuts help individuals cope with vast amounts of information but also make them more susceptible to misinformation.

## **Discussion**

The psychological mechanisms influencing the acceptance of post-truth narratives are well-supported by the literature. Confirmation bias, as discussed by Nickerson (1998), leads individuals to seek out and favor information that confirms their pre-existing beliefs. This bias is a central factor in the acceptance of post-truth narratives.

Cognitive dissonance, described by Festinger (1957), occurs when individuals experience discomfort from holding contradictory beliefs. To reduce this discomfort, they may reject or rationalize conflicting information, aligning with Expert 1's observation.

Motivated reasoning, as explained by Kunda (1990), involves processing information in a way that supports one's goals and desires. This mechanism reinforces existing beliefs and makes individuals more resistant to changing their views, aligning with Expert 5's statement.

Emotional engagement, highlighted by Experts 2 and 4, is also a critical factor. Emotionally charged narratives are more likely to be remembered and shared, as found by Berger and Milkman (2012). This emotional resonance enhances the spread and acceptance of post-truth narratives.

Heuristics and information overload, noted by Expert 6, lead individuals to rely on cognitive shortcuts to process information. Tversky and Kahneman (1974) describe how heuristics can simplify decision-making but also introduce biases, making individuals more susceptible to simple, emotionally appealing narratives.

## **Theme 5: Erosion of Trust in Political Information and Institutions**

*"Post-truth narratives diminish public trust in political information and institutions by blurring factual accuracy and fostering scepticism." (Expert 4)*

Expert 1 highlights the erosion of trust in political information and institutions caused by post-truth narratives. By blurring factual accuracy and fostering scepticism, these narratives undermine public confidence in traditional information sources.

*"The culture of post-truth undermines trust in political institutions by exploiting psychological vulnerabilities and reinforcing false narratives." (Expert 2)*

This statement by Expert 2 emphasizes how the culture of post-truth undermines trust in political institutions. By exploiting psychological vulnerabilities and reinforcing false narratives, this culture erodes the foundation of trust that is essential for democratic governance.

*"Misinformation and the strategic use of false narratives by political actors erode trust in traditional information sources and institutions." (Expert 3)*

Expert 3 points out that the strategic use of misinformation by political actors erodes trust in traditional information sources and institutions. This erosion is driven by the pervasive nature of misinformation and the deliberate spread of false narratives.

*"Post-truth narratives exacerbate polarization and confirmation bias, deepening ideological divides and reducing constructive dialogue." (Expert 4)*

Expert 4 notes that post-truth narratives exacerbate polarization and confirmation bias, deepening ideological divides and reducing the likelihood of constructive dialogue. This polarization undermines the ability of individuals to engage with opposing viewpoints and find common ground.

*"The erosion of trust in political information poses a significant threat to democratic processes, undermining informed citizen participation." (Expert 5)*

According to Expert 5, the erosion of trust in political information poses a significant threat to democratic processes. When trust in information sources is compromised, citizens are less likely to engage in the democratic process and make informed decisions.

*"The crisis of expertise, where individuals question the authority and credibility of experts, further diminishes trust in political institutions." (Expert 6)*

Expert 6 highlights the crisis of expertise, where individuals question the authority and credibility of experts. This crisis further diminishes trust in political institutions and undermines the role of experts in informing public policy and decision-making.

## **Discussion**

The erosion of trust in political information and institutions due to post-truth narratives is a critical issue. Nyhan and Reifler (2010) found that exposure to misinformation can lead to a "backfire effect," where individuals become more entrenched in their beliefs despite factual corrections. This effect aligns with the observations of Experts 1 and 3 about the erosion of trust in traditional information sources.

The strategic use of misinformation by political actors, as noted by Expert 3, has been documented in various contexts. Marwick and Lewis (2017) describe how misinformation campaigns are used to manipulate public opinion and discredit opponents, contributing to the erosion of trust in political institutions.

The exacerbation of polarization and confirmation bias, highlighted by Experts 4 and 5, is supported by research on media consumption and political behavior. Stroud (2010) found that partisan media consumption reinforces ideological divides and reduces exposure to opposing viewpoints, deepening polarization and reducing constructive dialogue.

The crisis of expertise, mentioned by Expert 6, has significant implications for public trust in political institutions. Collins and Evans (2007) argue that the erosion of trust in experts undermines the ability of societies to address complex issues that require specialized knowledge. This crisis is further exacerbated by the spread of post-truth narratives that challenge the credibility of experts.

## **Theme 6: Role of Media in Promoting Objectivity and Counteracting Post-Truth Narratives**

*"Media outlets should prioritize factual accuracy, transparency, and diverse representation of viewpoints." (Expert 1)*

Expert 1 emphasizes the need for media outlets to prioritize factual accuracy, transparency, and diverse representation of viewpoints. These principles are essential for promoting objectivity and counteracting post-truth narratives.

*"Commitment to fact-checking and investigative reporting is essential to uphold media integrity and credibility." (Expert 2)*

This statement by Expert 2 highlights the importance of fact-checking and investigative reporting in maintaining media integrity and credibility. A rigorous commitment to these practices is necessary to counteract misinformation and promote trust in media.

*"Media organizations must implement rigorous fact-checking protocols and collaborate with independent fact-checking organizations." (Expert 3)*

Expert 3 highlights the need for media organizations to implement rigorous fact-checking protocols and collaborate with independent fact-checking organizations. These measures enhance the credibility of reporting and help prevent the spread of false information.

*"Transparency in sourcing and editorial decisions is crucial for building trust with audiences." (Expert 4)*

According to Expert 4, transparency in sourcing and editorial decisions is crucial for building trust with audiences. Providing insight into how information is gathered and reported fosters a better understanding of the journalistic process and enhances credibility.

*"Media literacy programs are vital for helping the public critically evaluate information and recognize misinformation." (Expert 5)*

Expert 5 emphasizes the importance of media literacy programs in helping the public critically evaluate information and recognize misinformation. These programs equip individuals with the skills needed to navigate the complex information landscape.

*"Collaborative journalism, regulatory measures, and the use of AI to detect misinformation can enhance the accuracy and transparency of media practices." (Expert 4)*

Expert 6 points to collaborative journalism, regulatory measures, and the use of AI as strategies to enhance the accuracy and transparency of media practices. These approaches can help counteract misinformation and promote trust in media.

## **Discussion**

The role of media in promoting objectivity and counteracting post-truth narratives is well-documented in the literature. Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007) argue that the primary obligation of journalism is to the truth, emphasizing the importance of accuracy and verification in reporting. This is in line with the observations of Experts 1, 2, and 3 about the need for rigorous fact-checking and transparency.

Transparency in sourcing and editorial decisions, as highlighted by Expert 4, is crucial for building trust with audiences. Curry and Stroud (2021) found that transparency in journalism enhances credibility and fosters a more informed public. This principle is essential for counteracting post-truth narratives and promoting trust in media.

Media literacy programs, emphasized by Expert 5, are vital for helping the public critically evaluate information and recognize misinformation. Hobbs (2010) argues that media literacy education is essential for developing critical thinking skills and promoting informed citizenship.

The use of AI and collaborative journalism, mentioned by Expert 6, offers innovative approaches to enhance media accuracy and transparency. Diakopoulos (2016) describes how AI can be used to detect and flag misinformation, while collaborative journalism initiatives can pool resources and expertise to address complex issues.

Triangulating these expert opinions with findings from the literature highlights the importance of media practices that prioritize accuracy, transparency, and diversity. Implementing these practices can help counteract post-truth narratives and foster a healthier democratic discourse.

## **5.2 Summary**

The analysis of expert opinions and literature highlights the pervasive impact of post-truth narratives on contemporary political discourse, public perception, and media practices. The prevalence of post-truth narratives is facilitated by the rapid dissemination of information through social media, which often lacks editorial oversight and prioritizes sensationalism and emotional engagement. These narratives rely on psychological mechanisms such as

confirmation bias, cognitive dissonance, and motivated reasoning to influence public perception and deepen ideological divides.

The erosion of trust in political information and institutions poses a significant threat to democratic processes, as it undermines informed citizen participation and fosters polarization. To counteract these challenges, media outlets must prioritize factual accuracy, transparency, and diverse representation of viewpoints. Implementing rigorous fact-checking protocols, promoting media literacy, and leveraging technology and collaborative journalism are essential strategies for enhancing media accuracy and transparency.

By adopting these practices, media organizations can play a crucial role in mitigating the negative impact of post-truth narratives and promoting a healthier democratic discourse. The responsibility of media organizations to uphold these values is more critical than ever in an age where misinformation is pervasive and the public's trust in information sources is increasingly fragile.



## **CHAPTER 6**

## **CONCLUSION**

## INTRODUCTION

The primary objective of this thesis was to investigate the prevalence of post-truth narratives and their effects on public perception of political information, with a particular focus on the role of media in promoting objectivity. The research was guided by several hypotheses centered around the impact of post-truth narratives on public trust, the application of selective exposure theory, and the mechanisms through which media can counteract misinformation and foster informed democratic discourse.

### 6.2 Key Findings

The findings of this study highlight the widespread prevalence of post-truth narratives in contemporary political discourse. The rapid dissemination of information through social media and other online platforms has amplified the reach and impact of these narratives, often at the expense of objective truth. Experts emphasized that the lack of editorial oversight and the prioritization of engagement over accuracy have facilitated the spread of misinformation, contributing to the erosion of public trust in political information and institutions. The thematic analysis of expert interviews reinforced the notion that selective exposure and the creation of echo chambers significantly contribute to the entrenchment of ideological divides, diminishing the public's ability to engage with diverse perspectives.

In examining selective exposure theory within the context of post-truth narratives, this research revealed that individuals are more likely to seek out information that aligns with their pre-existing beliefs, thereby reinforcing cognitive biases such as confirmation bias and cognitive dissonance. These psychological mechanisms play a crucial role in the acceptance of post-truth narratives, as individuals tend to favor emotionally resonant and ideologically consistent information over factual accuracy. The empirical analyses, supported by chi-square tests, confirmed that selective exposure significantly impacts public perception and contributes to polarization. For instance, the chi-square test results indicated significant relationships between perceived media balance and public trust, as well as between the inclusion of diverse viewpoints and public confidence, highlighting the importance of balanced and inclusive reporting in mitigating the effects of post-truth narratives.

Furthermore, this study evaluated the broader impact of post-truth narratives on public perception, particularly focusing on the erosion of trust in political institutions. The strategic use of misinformation by political actors and the increasing skepticism towards traditional information sources were identified as significant factors contributing to this erosion. The thematic insights from expert interviews and the literature review consistently pointed to the detrimental effects of post-truth narratives on public trust and democratic engagement. Experts emphasized that the culture of post-truth undermines the credibility of political institutions by exploiting psychological vulnerabilities and reinforcing false narratives, leading to a fragmented information environment and deepening ideological divides.

The role of media in promoting objectivity and counteracting post-truth narratives was a critical focus of this research. The findings highlighted the need for media outlets to prioritize factual accuracy, transparency, and diverse representation of viewpoints. Rigorous fact-checking and investigative reporting were identified as essential practices for maintaining media integrity and credibility. The quantitative analyses demonstrated that accurate and fact-checked reporting significantly contributes to the prevention of misinformation, as evidenced by the chi-square test results indicating a significant relationship between media accuracy and the prevention of misinformation. Additionally, the qualitative insights from expert interviews highlighted the importance of media literacy programs in helping the public critically evaluate information and recognize misinformation. Collaborative journalism, regulatory measures, and the use of AI to detect misinformation were also suggested as strategies to enhance the accuracy and transparency of media practices.

This thesis provides a comprehensive analysis of the prevalence of post-truth narratives and their impact on public perception, using selective exposure theory to elucidate the mechanisms driving these phenomena. The findings highlight the critical role of media in promoting objectivity and mitigating the negative effects of post-truth narratives. By prioritizing accuracy, transparency, and inclusivity, media outlets can foster a more informed public and support democratic discourse. The integration of theoretical frameworks, empirical analyses, and expert insights offers a robust foundation for understanding the dynamics of post-truth politics and the strategies necessary to counteract its adverse effects. Future research should continue to explore the complex relationship between media practices, public perception, and the psychological mechanisms underpinning the acceptance of post-truth narratives, with an

emphasis on developing comprehensive approaches to enhance media literacy and foster critical thinking skills among the public.

### **6.3 Methodology and Theoretical Implications**

The methodology of this study integrated both quantitative and qualitative approaches to explore the impact of post-truth narratives on public perception of political information and the role of media, framed within the Selective Exposure Theory. A structured survey was used to collect data from 395 respondents, capturing media consumption behaviors, trust in media, and exposure to misinformation. Statistical analyses, including chi-square tests, were performed to examine associations between variables. Additionally, semi-structured interviews with six media experts provided qualitative insights into the role of media in the post-truth era. The integration of these methods allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena, ensuring the validity and reliability of the findings.

The theoretical framework combined selective exposure theory, which posits that individuals seek information aligning with their pre-existing beliefs, with the post-truth paradigm, characterized by the proliferation of misinformation and disinformation. This integration highlighted how selective exposure and the post-truth environment reinforce beliefs, erode trust in media and political institutions, and contribute to political polarization. The research emphasized the critical role of media practices—accuracy, transparency, and diverse representation—in mitigating these effects and fostering a more informed public discourse. This framework provided a robust foundation for examining the dynamics of media influence and guiding subsequent empirical analyses.

### **6.4 Fulfilment of Research Objectives**

This thesis was guided by four primary objectives: to investigate the prevalence of post-truth narratives, to examine selective exposure theory in the context of post-truth and its effects on public perception of political information, to evaluate the impact of post-truth on public perception, and to study the role of media in promoting objectivity in political perspectives. These objectives were comprehensively addressed through empirical analyses and thematic exploration in Chapters 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, and 5, respectively.

### **Objective 1: To Investigate the Prevalence of Post-Truth Narratives**

The first objective was to investigate the prevalence of post-truth narratives in contemporary political discourse. This was achieved through the analysis of survey data in Chapter 4.1, which revealed that a significant portion of the population frequently encounters biased political information. Crosstabulation results showed that individuals who frequently perceived political information as biased were more likely to believe that media influence increases polarization. Specifically, 27.0% of respondents who frequently perceived bias agreed that media influence heightens polarization. This finding was statistically validated by the chi-square test ( $\chi^2 = 38.074$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ), with symmetric measures (Phi = 0.310, Cramer's V = 0.155) indicating a moderate association. These results align with McIntyre's (2018) assertion that emotion-driven narratives are prevalent in political discourse, thereby confirming the prevalence of post-truth narratives.

### **Objective 2: To Examine Selective Exposure Theory in the Context of Post-Truth and Its Effects on Public Perception of Political Information**

The second objective focused on examining selective exposure theory in the context of post-truth and its effects on public perception of political information. This was explored in Chapter 4.2 through the analysis of how selective exposure behavior influenced trust in political institutions. Crosstabulation data indicated that individuals who sought information aligning with their beliefs exhibited higher trust in political institutions when the information confirmed their biases. The chi-square test results ( $\chi^2 = 133.786$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) and strong symmetric measures (Phi = 0.582, Cramer's V = 0.291) confirmed a robust relationship between selective exposure and trust levels. These findings support the selective exposure theory, as posited by Stroud (2010), that partisan media consumption reinforces ideological divides and affects public perception.

### **Objective 3: To Evaluate the Impact of Post-Truth on Public Perception**

The third objective was to evaluate the impact of post-truth narratives on public perception, particularly focusing on trust in political institutions and the extent of polarization. The analysis in Chapter 4.3 demonstrated that exposure to misleading information significantly lowers trust in political institutions. Crosstabulation showed that 50.6% of those who experienced

decreased trust cited exposure to false information as a major factor. The chi-square analysis ( $\chi^2 = 133.786$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) and high symmetric measures (Phi = 0.582, Cramer's V = 0.291) confirmed a strong association between exposure to misinformation and trust erosion. This finding is consistent with Nyhan and Reifler's (2010) research on the "backfire effect," where misinformation reinforces existing beliefs and reduces trust in corrective information.

#### **Objective 4: To Study the Role of Media in Promoting Objectivity in Political Perspectives**

The fourth objective aimed to study the role of media in promoting objectivity in political perspectives. Chapter 4.4 analyzed how media outlets' efforts to provide balanced, accurate, and diverse political perspectives influenced public perception. Crosstabulation results showed a significant correlation between perceived media balance and public trust, with 32.7% of respondents who viewed media efforts as very balanced exhibiting high trust levels. The chi-square test ( $\chi^2 = 38.138$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ) and moderate symmetric measures (Phi = 0.311, Cramer's V = 0.155) highlighted the importance of balanced reporting. These findings are supported by Kovach and Rosenstiel's (2007) emphasis on accuracy, transparency, and diversity in media reporting as crucial for maintaining public trust.

#### **Chapter 5: Interview Discussion and Thematic Analysis**

Chapter 5 provided a thematic analysis of expert interviews, complementing the empirical findings with qualitative insights. Experts highlighted the critical role of social media in propagating post-truth narratives and the psychological mechanisms, such as confirmation bias and cognitive dissonance, that influence their acceptance. They also stressed the importance of rigorous fact-checking, transparency, and diverse representation in media to counteract the negative effects of post-truth narratives. The expert interviews reinforced the quantitative findings, emphasizing that selective exposure and the strategic use of misinformation by political actors contribute to the erosion of trust in political institutions.

By triangulating expert insights with the empirical data, Chapter 5 confirmed that post-truth narratives significantly impact public perception and highlighted strategies necessary to mitigate these effects. The qualitative analysis highlighted the need for media literacy programs and collaborative journalism to enhance the accuracy and transparency of media practices, thereby supporting the thesis's overarching conclusions.

## **Summary of Objectives Fulfillment**

The objectives of this thesis were thoroughly addressed through a combination of quantitative analyses and qualitative insights. The findings revealed the pervasive impact of post-truth narratives on public perception, the reinforcing role of selective exposure in deepening ideological divides, the detrimental effects of misinformation on trust in political institutions, and the critical role of media in promoting objectivity and counteracting misinformation. These comprehensive analyses provide valuable recommendations for media practices that can foster a healthier democratic discourse in the post-truth era.

## **6.5 Hypothesis Evaluation**

### **Chapter 4.1: Investigating the Prevalence of Post-Truth Narratives**

Hypothesis (H1): The prevalence of post-truth narratives is significantly higher in online and social media compared to traditional news sources. The analysis in Chapter 4.1 supports the hypothesis that the prevalence of post-truth narratives is significantly higher in online and social media compared to traditional news sources. The crosstabulation data revealed that individuals who frequently encountered biased political information on social media platforms were more likely to believe that media influence increases polarization. Specifically, 27.0% of respondents who frequently perceived bias agreed that media influence heightens polarization. The chi-square test results ( $\chi^2 = 38.074$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ) confirmed a significant association between the perception of political information bias and the belief in increased polarization due to media influence. Symmetric measures such as Phi (0.310) and Cramer's V (0.155) indicated a moderate association between these variables. These findings align with McIntyre's (2018) assertions about the role of emotion-driven narratives in contemporary political discourse, reinforcing the idea that social media platforms, which prioritize engagement over accuracy, are fertile grounds for the spread of post-truth narratives.

### **Chapter 4.2: Examining Selective Exposure Theory in the Context of Post-Truth**

Hypothesis (H2): Individuals exhibit selective exposure behavior in consuming political information. The hypothesis that individuals exhibit selective exposure behavior in consuming

political information was validated through various statistical analyses, including chi-square tests and crosstabulations. The results indicate that individuals who seek information aligning with their pre-existing beliefs tend to exhibit higher trust in political institutions when the information confirms their biases. This aligns with the selective exposure theory, suggesting that partisan media consumption reinforces ideological divides and significantly impacts public perception. Specifically, the chi-square test results for Table 2 demonstrated a significant association between the reaction to contradictory information and the frequency of exposure ( $\chi^2 = 45.367$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ). This finding supports the hypothesis by showing that individuals who frequently encounter politically biased information are more likely to react strongly, indicating selective exposure behavior. However, not all results uniformly supported the hypothesis. The chi-square test for Table 5, which examined conscious diversification of media consumption, showed no significant association ( $\chi^2 = 18.149$ ,  $p = 0.315$ ), leading to the acceptance of  $H_0$ . This suggests that some individuals may not consciously diversify their media consumption, indicating that selective exposure behavior is not universal. Similarly, the test for Table 8, which looked at the frequency of political discussions and exposure to different viewpoints, also showed no significant association ( $\chi^2 = 16.892$ ,  $p = 0.393$ ), further suggesting that frequent political discussions do not necessarily lead to selective exposure behavior. In contrast, the findings for Table 11 provided strong support for the hypothesis. The significant association between the belief in the enhancement of understanding and exposure to various political perspectives ( $\chi^2 = 27.9$ ,  $p = 0.033$ ) indicates that individuals who believe their understanding is improved by diverse perspectives are more likely to exhibit selective exposure behavior. The overall analysis, including robust symmetric measures (Phi = 0.582, Cramer's V = 0.291), confirmed a strong relationship between selective exposure and trust levels, reinforcing the selective exposure theory as suggested by Stroud (2010). Thus, while selective exposure behavior is prevalent and significantly influences public perception, it is not a universal behavior across all contexts. Therefore, the hypothesis that individuals exhibit selective exposure behavior in consuming political information is partially supported by the empirical evidence presented.

### **Chapter 4.3: Evaluating the Impact of Post-Truth on Public Perception**

Hypothesis (H3): Exposure to post-truth narratives negatively influences public trust in political information and institutions, contributing to increased polarization. The findings in Chapter 4.3 supported this hypothesis. Crosstabulation data revealed that respondents exposed



to misleading information reported significantly lower trust in political institutions. Specifically, 50.6% of those who experienced decreased trust cited exposure to false information as a contributing factor. The chi-square test results further reinforced this relationship, with a chi-square value of 133.786 and a p-value of 0.000, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H0). The high symmetric measures, including a Phi coefficient of 0.582 and a Cramer's V of 0.291, indicated a strong association between exposure to misinformation and trust erosion. These results align with Nyhan and Reifler's (2010) findings on the "backfire effect," which suggests that misinformation can reinforce existing beliefs and reduce trust in corrective information. Consequently, the hypothesis (H3) that exposure to post-truth narratives negatively influences public trust in political information and institutions, contributing to increased polarization, was strongly supported and accepted.

#### **Chapter 4.4: Studying the Role of Media in Promoting Objectivity**

Hypothesis (H4): Media outlets that prioritize accuracy, transparency, and diverse representation enhance public trust, confidence, understanding, and prevent misinformation. The hypothesis was supported in Chapter 4.4. Crosstabulation results indicated that perceived media balance and inclusivity significantly correlated with higher public trust and confidence. Specifically, 32.7% of respondents who viewed media efforts as very balanced exhibited high trust levels. The chi-square test ( $\chi^2 = 38.138$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ) and moderate symmetric measures (Phi = 0.311, Cramer's V = 0.155) highlighted the importance of balanced reporting. The inclusion of diverse political viewpoints by media outlets also showed a strong correlation with public confidence. The chi-square test ( $\chi^2 = 59.500$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) and symmetric measures (Phi = 0.388, Cramer's V = 0.194) further reinforced this association, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H0). However, the relationship between media outlets' accuracy and fact-checking and public understanding of political issues was not statistically significant. The chi-square test ( $\chi^2 = 23.083$ ,  $p = 0.112$ ) and symmetric measures (Phi = 0.242, Cramer's V = 0.121) indicated that while accuracy and fact-checking are crucial, other factors may also play a significant role in shaping public understanding. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H0) was accepted in this context. In contrast, the prevention of misinformation was significantly associated with media outlets' accuracy and fact-checking efforts. The chi-square test ( $\chi^2 = 27.494$ ,  $p = 0.036$ ) and symmetric measures (Phi = 0.264, Cramer's V = 0.132) confirmed this relationship, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H0). These findings highlight the essential role of accurate and transparent media practices in preventing misinformation. The

hypothesis (H4) that media outlets that prioritize accuracy, transparency, and diverse representation enhance public trust, confidence, understanding, and prevent misinformation was supported. The empirical evidence from the chi-square tests and crosstabulation analyses align with theoretical perspectives emphasizing the importance of these media practices in maintaining public trust and promoting an informed democratic discourse. Thus, the hypothesis was accepted.

## **6.6 Addressing the Research Gap and Solving the Problem Statement**

The identified problem statement and research gaps in this study pertained to the impacts of post-truth narratives, selective exposure, media trust, misinformation prevalence, and media practices in the context of India. This research has successfully addressed these gaps and provided empirical evidence to fill the voids identified.

**Research Gap 1: Trust in Information Sources** The literature indicated a decline in trust in traditional media and a rising reliance on digital and social media for political information, yet lacked empirical comparisons, particularly in India. This study empirically evaluated trust levels in traditional news outlets versus online and social media platforms. Through the analysis presented in Chapter 4.1, it was revealed that social media platforms have a higher prevalence of post-truth narratives compared to traditional news sources. This was supported by crosstabulation and chi-square analyses, which showed a significant association between perceived bias in political information and increased polarization due to media influence. Thus, the research provided a comparative analysis that was previously missing in the literature.

**Research Gap 2: Encountering False or Misleading Information** While the spread of misinformation has been widely discussed, there was a lack of empirical data on the frequency with which individuals encounter false information across different media types in India. The survey data from this study filled this gap by showing that a significant portion of the population frequently encounters biased political information, particularly on social media. This was statistically validated by chi-square tests, indicating a higher prevalence of misinformation on online platforms, thus offering a clearer picture of how misinformation permeates different media types.

**Research Gap 3: Contribution to Post-Truth Narratives** There was a scarcity of empirical studies examining the perceived contribution of different media types to post-truth narratives in India. This research addressed this by surveying individuals on their perceptions of how different media contribute to post-truth narratives. The findings in Chapter 4.1 confirmed that online and social media platforms are perceived to have a greater tendency to spread post-truth narratives compared to traditional media, thus providing empirical evidence on the roles of various media in spreading misinformation.

**Research Gap 4: Reaction to Conflicting Information** Selective exposure theory is well-documented, but empirical research on how individuals react to information that contradicts their beliefs, particularly in India's post-truth context, was limited. This study surveyed individuals on their reactions to conflicting information. The results indicated that individuals tend to reject information that contradicts their beliefs, reinforcing their pre-existing biases. This was shown through significant chi-square test results, supporting the notion that selective exposure leads to entrenched ideological divides.

**Research Gap 5: Media Consumption and Diversification** Empirical data on how frequently individuals actively seek diverse perspectives, particularly in India, was limited. This study addressed this by surveying media consumption habits and efforts to diversify sources. The findings revealed that while selective exposure is prevalent, some individuals do not actively seek diverse perspectives, as shown by chi-square tests that indicated a lack of significant association in certain contexts.

**Research Gap 6: Engagement with Diverse Viewpoints** There was a lack of empirical studies on the frequency and impact of exposure to diverse perspectives in India. This research filled this gap by providing data on individuals' engagement with diverse viewpoints and the perceived benefits. The study found that those who believe in the enhancement of understanding through diverse perspectives are more likely to engage with a range of political views, supported by significant chi-square test results.

**Research Gap 7: Perceived Media Bias and Polarization** Empirical studies on public perceptions of media bias and its contribution to polarization were scarce in India. This study surveyed individuals on their perceptions of media bias and its impact on polarization. The findings, supported by crosstabulation and chi-square analyses, indicated that perceived media

bias significantly contributes to political polarization, aligning with existing literature and filling the empirical void.

**Research Gap 8: Trust in Political Institutions and Mainstream Media** There was limited empirical data quantifying the effect of post-truth narratives on trust in political institutions in India. This research provided such data, showing that exposure to false information significantly lowers trust in political institutions. The chi-square test results confirmed a strong association between exposure to misinformation and trust erosion, thus providing empirical evidence on the broader societal impact of post-truth narratives.

**Research Gap 9: Media Efforts in Providing Balanced Perspectives** Empirical data on public perceptions of media efforts to provide balanced perspectives were sparse. This study addressed this by surveying individuals on their perceptions of media balance and fact-checking. The findings showed that perceived media balance and inclusivity significantly correlate with higher public trust and confidence, supported by chi-square test results. This empirical evidence highlights the critical role of media in promoting objectivity and balanced reporting. In addressing these research gaps, this study has provided comprehensive empirical data on the prevalence and impact of post-truth narratives, selective exposure behavior, trust in media, and the role of media in promoting objectivity. The findings confirm the significant influence of post-truth narratives on public perception and the critical role of balanced and accurate media practices in counteracting misinformation. By bridging these gaps, the research offers valuable insights for media practices and public policy, contributing to the development of strategies that foster a more informed and balanced public discourse in India.

## **Summary**

This thesis examined the prevalence of post-truth narratives and their effects on public trust in political information, applying selective exposure theory as a guiding framework. The findings confirm that misinformation spreads more widely on social media than traditional outlets, with engagement-driven algorithms amplifying biased content. This contributes significantly to polarization, echo chambers, and declining trust in political institutions. Evidence from surveys and interviews highlighted that selective exposure reinforces existing biases, making individuals more receptive to emotionally charged narratives than to verified facts. At the same time, balanced reporting, fact-checking, and diverse representation of viewpoints emerged as vital tools to counter misinformation. Importantly, media outlets that practiced transparency

and inclusivity fostered higher public confidence, showing that objectivity still holds value in sustaining democratic discourse.

Overall, the research demonstrates that post-truth narratives are not only a challenge to information accuracy but also to the health of democracy itself. By prioritizing factual accuracy, promoting media literacy, and adopting inclusive communication strategies, both traditional and digital media can help rebuild trust. The study also underscores the need for collaborative journalism, regulatory measures, and public education to cultivate a media environment where truth prevails over distortion.

## **6.7 Recommendations Based on Research Findings and Implications**

The findings of this research, combined with the insights from expert interviews, suggest several key recommendations to address the challenges posed by post-truth narratives and their impact on public perception and trust. These recommendations focus on enhancing media practices, promoting media literacy, and fostering a more informed and balanced public discourse.

Firstly, it is imperative for media outlets to prioritize accuracy, transparency, and diverse representation of viewpoints. The research highlighted that media outlets' efforts to provide balanced and inclusive political perspectives significantly correlate with higher public trust and confidence. Therefore, media organizations should implement rigorous fact-checking protocols and collaborate with independent fact-checking organizations to ensure the veracity of their reporting. This practice not only enhances media credibility but also helps prevent the spread of misinformation. Additionally, transparency in sourcing and editorial decisions is crucial for building trust with audiences. Media outlets should openly disclose their sources and provide insights into their editorial processes, which can demystify the journalistic process and foster a better understanding among the public.

Moreover, media organizations should embrace and promote diverse perspectives to counteract the effects of selective exposure and echo chambers. The research found that individuals who are exposed to a variety of political viewpoints are more likely to exhibit higher trust levels and a better understanding of political issues. Thus, media outlets should strive to present a wide

range of perspectives and avoid overly partisan reporting. This approach can help mitigate polarization and encourage constructive dialogue across ideological divides. Furthermore, media outlets should invest in investigative journalism to uncover and expose false narratives and misinformation, thereby upholding their role as watchdogs of democracy.

The role of social media platforms in propagating post-truth narratives cannot be understated. The research and expert interviews highlighted the lack of editorial oversight and the influence of algorithms that prioritize engagement over accuracy. Social media companies should take proactive steps to combat misinformation by refining their algorithms to prioritize credible and fact-checked information. Additionally, these platforms should enhance their efforts to identify and remove false content, including deepfake videos and other forms of manipulated media. Collaborative initiatives with fact-checking organizations can further strengthen these efforts. Moreover, social media platforms should provide users with tools and resources to critically evaluate the information they encounter, thereby empowering them to make informed decisions.

Promoting media literacy is another critical recommendation emerging from this research. The findings indicated that media literacy programs are vital for helping the public critically evaluate information and recognize misinformation. Educational institutions and community organizations should develop and implement comprehensive media literacy curricula that equip individuals with the skills needed to navigate the complex information landscape. These programs should focus on critical thinking, source evaluation, and the ability to discern between credible information and misinformation. Furthermore, media literacy initiatives should be tailored to different age groups and cultural contexts to maximize their effectiveness.

In addition to formal education, public awareness campaigns can play a significant role in enhancing media literacy. Governments, non-governmental organizations, and media outlets should collaborate to create campaigns that raise awareness about the prevalence of misinformation and the importance of critical evaluation of information. These campaigns can utilize various media channels, including social media, traditional media, and community events, to reach a broad audience.

The research also highlighted the importance of fostering a culture of dialogue and open discussion. Encouraging individuals to engage with diverse viewpoints and participate in constructive political discussions can help break down echo chambers and reduce polarization. Community forums, debates, and discussion groups can provide platforms for individuals to exchange ideas and challenge their own beliefs in a respectful and informed manner. Media outlets can contribute to this effort by hosting debates and panel discussions that feature a wide range of perspectives and encourage civil discourse.

Furthermore, policymakers have a crucial role to play in addressing the challenges posed by post-truth narratives. The research findings suggest that regulatory measures can help enhance the accuracy and transparency of media practices. Governments should consider implementing regulations that require media organizations and social media platforms to adhere to strict standards of accuracy and transparency. Additionally, policies that promote the funding and support of public interest journalism can help ensure that high-quality, fact-checked information is available to the public. Policymakers should also support initiatives that promote media literacy and critical thinking skills, recognizing their importance in fostering a well-informed citizenry.

Collaboration between different stakeholders is essential for effectively addressing the impact of post-truth narratives. Media organizations, social media platforms, educational institutions, governments, and non-governmental organizations should work together to develop comprehensive strategies that combat misinformation and promote a more informed public discourse. Collaborative journalism initiatives, where multiple media organizations pool resources and expertise, can enhance investigative reporting and uncover complex issues that contribute to misinformation. Additionally, partnerships between social media companies and fact-checking organizations can improve the identification and removal of false content.

The research also highlights the need for continuous monitoring and evaluation of media practices and their impact on public perception. Media organizations and social media platforms should regularly assess the effectiveness of their fact-checking and transparency initiatives and make necessary adjustments to improve their accuracy and credibility. Academic researchers can contribute by conducting ongoing studies that examine the evolving dynamics of media consumption and the influence of post-truth narratives. These studies can

provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of different strategies and inform future efforts to combat misinformation.

Finally, future research may consider to continue to explore the complex relationship between media practices, public perception, and the psychological mechanisms that underpin the acceptance of post-truth narratives. Emphasis should be placed on developing comprehensive approaches to enhance media literacy and foster critical thinking skills among the public. Additionally, research may investigate the role of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence and deepfake videos, in shaping post-truth narratives and their impact on public trust. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for developing effective strategies to combat misinformation and promote a more informed and balanced public discourse.

The recommendations based on the research findings and expert insights emphasize the need for a multifaceted approach to address the challenges posed by post-truth narratives. Media organizations must prioritize accuracy, transparency, and diverse representation, while social media platforms should enhance their efforts to combat misinformation. Promoting media literacy through education and public awareness campaigns is essential for empowering individuals to critically evaluate information. Fostering a culture of dialogue and open discussion can help reduce polarization and encourage constructive political engagement. Policymakers should implement regulatory measures and support public interest journalism, while collaboration between different stakeholders is crucial for developing comprehensive strategies. Continuous monitoring and future research are necessary to understand the evolving dynamics of media consumption and the impact of post-truth narratives. By implementing these recommendations, society can work towards fostering a more informed and resilient democratic discourse in the face of the challenges posed by post-truth politics.

## **6.8 Limitations**

This thesis study, while comprehensive, is not without its limitations. One of the primary limitations is the reliance on self-reported data, which may be subject to biases such as social desirability or recall bias. The sample size, though adequate for statistical analysis, may not fully represent the diversity of the entire population, particularly in the context of varying media consumption habits and political views across different regions and demographics. Additionally, the cross-sectional nature of the survey limits the ability to establish causality



between exposure to post-truth narratives and changes in public perception and trust. The qualitative insights from expert interviews, while valuable, may also be influenced by the experts' individual perspectives and experiences, potentially limiting the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, the rapidly evolving media landscape means that the findings may quickly become outdated as new technologies and platforms emerge.

## **6.9 Future Research Scope**

Future investigations must endeavor to transcend the aforementioned constraints by incorporating longitudinal methodologies that more effectively elucidate the fluid and evolving dynamics of media consumption and its ramifications on public perception over extended temporal frameworks. Augmenting sample sizes and achieving a more equitable representation across diverse demographic strata would significantly bolster the external validity and applicability of the findings. Moreover, the integration of mixed-method paradigms—such as synthesizing quantitative data collection through surveys with qualitative methodologies like focus groups or ethnographic inquiry—could yield profound insights into the multifaceted particulars of media influence on societal cognition. Further scholarly endeavors should rigorously interrogate the implications of emergent technological phenomena, including artificial intelligence and the proliferation of deepfake media, in propagating post-truth paradigms and their subsequent erosion of public trust. Evaluating the efficacy of various media literacy frameworks and fact-checking mechanisms within divergent sociocultural and geopolitical milieus may proffer actionable strategies for policymakers and educators. Ultimately, the intricate interplay between media practices, collective perception, and the psychological substrates governing the assimilation of post-truth constructs warrants continued exploration to cultivate a more enlightened and resilient democratic polity.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **QUESTIONNAIRE**

#### Demographic Information:

1. Age:

18-24

25-34

35-44

45-54

55+

2. Gender:

Male

Female

3. Educational Background:

Below High School

High School

Bachelor's Degree

Master's Degree

M. Phil.

Doctorate/PhD

4. Political Affiliation:

Liberal

Conservative social

justice

communist

Other \_\_\_\_\_

5. Frequency of Social Media Usage:

Rarely

Occasionally

Frequently

Very Frequently

6. Main Source of Political Information:

Social Media

TV

Print Media

Radio

Alternative News

7. Which sources do you trust more for accurate political information – traditional news outlets or online/social media platforms

Traditional News Outlets

Social Media Both

Equally

Neither

8. How much do you trust traditional news outlets for accurate political information?

Strongly Trust

Trust

Neutral

Distrust

Strongly Distrust

9. How much do you trust social media platforms for accurate political information?

Strongly Trust

Trust

Neutral

Distrust

Strongly Distrust

10. How often do you encounter false or misleading information in traditional news sources?

Never

Rarely

Occasionally

Frequently

Always

11. How often do you encounter false or misleading information on online and social media platforms?

Never

Rarely

Occasionally

Frequently

Always

12. To what extent do you believe traditional news sources contribute to the spread of post-truth narratives? Not at all



Slightly

Moderately

Significantly

Very Significantly

13. To what extent do you believe online, and social media platforms contribute to the spread of post-truth narratives Not at all

Slightly

Moderately

Significantly

Very Significantly

14. How frequently do you encounter information that contradicts your political beliefs?

Open to reconsidering my beliefs

Feel challenged but consider it

Ignore conflicting information

Reject conflicting information outright

15. When exposed to information that contradicts your political beliefs, how do you react?

Strongly open to reconsidering my beliefs

Somewhat open to reconsidering my beliefs

Feel challenged but consider it

Tend to ignore conflicting information

Reject conflicting information outright

16. How often do you consciously diversify your media consumption to include a range of political perspectives?

Never

Rarely

Occasionally

Frequently

Always

17. How would you describe your media consumption behavior?

Always diversify to include all political perspectives

Often diversify to include different political perspectives

Occasionally diversify but mostly stick to aligned views

Often stick to sources that align with my views

Always stick to sources that align with my views

18. How often do you discuss political information with people who have different viewpoints?

Never

Rarely

Occasionally

Frequently

Always

19. How frequently do you engage in discussions about political information?

Never

Rarely

Occasionally

Frequently

Always

20. How often are you exposed to a variety of political perspectives?

Never

Rarely

Occasionally

Frequently

Always

21. Do you believe that exposure to a variety of political perspectives enhances your understanding of political issues?
- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
22. How often do you feel that political information is biased or manipulated in the media? Never
- Rarely
- Occasionally
- Frequently
- Always
23. Do you believe that polarization in political opinions has increased in recent years due to media influence?
- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
24. On a scale from 1 to 5, how much do you trust information from political institutions and mainstream media
- (No trust at all)
- (Low trust)
- (Moderate trust)
- (High trust)
- (Very high trust)
25. To what extent do you believe exposure to misleading or false information (post-truth narratives) has affected your trust in political institutions?

- (Significantly decreased my trust)
- (Somewhat decreased my trust)
- (No change in my trust)
- (Somewhat increased my trust)
- (Significantly increased my trust)

26. To what extent do you think media outlets are making efforts to provide balanced political perspectives in their reporting?

Not at all

Slightly

Moderately

Very

Extremely

27. How much confidence do you have in media outlets that include diverse political viewpoints in their reporting?

Not at all

Slightly

Moderately

Very

Extremely

28. How accurate and effective do you think media outlets are in their fact-checking efforts?

No accuracy

Low accuracy

Neutral

Accurate

Highly accurate

29. How much do you agree that the accuracy and fact-checking efforts of media outlets improve your understanding of political issues?

Do not improve at all

Slightly improve

Neutral

Improve

Highly improve

30. To what extent do you believe that fact-checking by media outlets prevents the spread of misinformation?

Not at all

Slightly

Moderately

Very

Extremely