

Mis/Disinformation in Sub-Saharan Africa: Evidence from Four Comparative Studies



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This poster presents findings from four collaborative research projects examining how mis/disinformation is experienced, understood and countered across Sub-Saharan Africa. Working with research teams spanning twelve countries, these studies combine surveys, focus groups, and in-depth interviews to examine how audiences, media professionals, civil society organisations, and policymakers encounter and respond to false and misleading information.

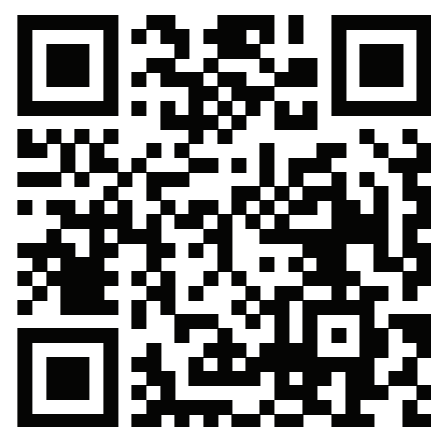
Disinformation and Digital Inequalities

■ This study uses 24 focus groups data to show how multilayered digital inequalities around access and skills shape, but do not fully determine, how younger/older and rural/urban media users encounter and engage with misinformation.



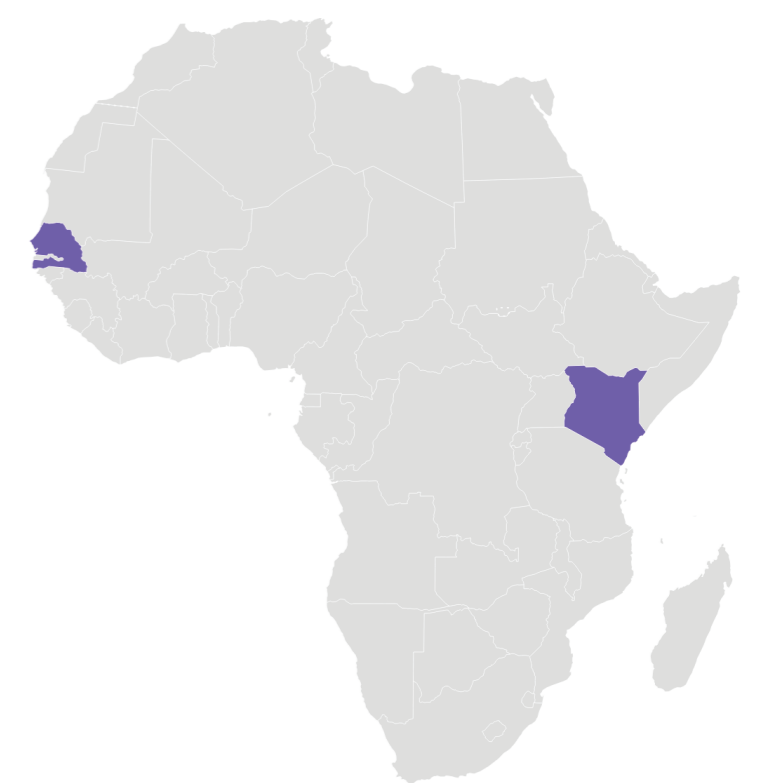
■ **Key takeaways:** (1) exposure to misinformation is not limited to “low literacy” users; (2) age and rural/urban divides shape experiences, but inequalities are multi-layered, not binary; and, (3) older users are often perceived as vulnerable, yet evidence shows active and critical engagement.

Gondwe, G., Madrid-Morales, D., Tully, M., & Wasserman, H. (2026). Misinformation and digital inequalities: Comparing how different demographic groups get exposed to and engage with false information. *Mass Communication and Society*, 29(1), 1–15.



Disinformation Audiences

■ Drawing on 91 interviews with media professionals and social media users, this study uncovers a gap between expert views of passive, gullible audiences and audiences’ own diverse strategies for ignoring, questioning, and verifying everyday misinformation.



■ **Key takeaways:** (1) media professionals link misinformation to news, while audiences emphasise “everyday misinformation”; (2) audiences report high perceived agency, but this is unevenly exercised in practice; and, (3) limited engagement with fact-checking suggests disconnect between interventions and user behaviour

Madrid-Morales, D., Tully, M., Mudavadi, K. C., Matanji, F., & Diop, L. (2025). Exploring Audience Agency in Countering Misinformation. *International Journal of Communication*, (19), 2382–2406.



Geopolitics of Disinformation

■ Survey data from N = 4,600 online news users in show that support for Russian- and Chinese--favoured strategic disinformation narratives is driven less by direct media exposure than by broader geopolitical worldviews and anti-US sentiment.



■ **Key takeaways:** (1) support for foreign-backed narratives varies by country, reflecting local political and historical contexts; (2) limited evidence that news consumption alone explains adoption of these narratives, and (3) public opinion is shaped by interaction of global geopolitics and domestic factors

Madrid-Morales, D., Wasserman, H., & Ahmed, S. (2024). The geopolitics of disinformation: Worldviews, media consumption and the adoption of global strategic disinformation narratives. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 36(3).



Countering Electoral Disinformation

■ Based on 36 interviews, this article shows how civil society coalitions that monitor harms, educate voters, and pressure platforms and regulators, effectively stand in for weak formal governance around electoral information integrity.



■ **Key takeaways:** (1) civil society coalitions act as de facto governance infrastructures in weak regulatory environments; (2) effective interventions combine fact-checking, media literacy, and platform engagement; and, (3) sustained, locally adapted strategies are key, especially beyond election cycles.

Madrid-Morales, D., Wasserman, H., Davies-Laubscher, N., & Sow, F. (2026). How Civil Society Coalition-Building Affects Information Integrity during Elections: Evidence from Four African Countries. *Information, Communication & Society* [Advance Publication]

