

Bridging the Confidence-Competence Gap: Assessing Pre-Service Teachers' Ability to Discern Fake News as Basis for Media Literacy Training Module Development

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the competence and confidence of pre-service teachers in discerning fake news as empirical bases for the development of a contextualized media literacy training module. Grounded in Information Processing Theory and Media Literacy Theory, the research employed a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design conducted at Cagayan State University, Andrews Campus, specifically within the College of Teacher Education. Fifty-six fourth-year Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSEd) English students were selected through purposive sampling. In the quantitative phase, descriptive statistics were used to determine respondents' level of competence across six dimensions: headline sensationalism evaluation, content and logical consistency, source credibility and author information, bias and objectivity, visual and media content, and emotional appeal. Results revealed an overall Basic level of competence ($M = 3.40$), with strengths in emotional appeal and source credibility but significant weaknesses in bias detection and logical consistency. Meanwhile, respondents reported confidence to a great extent across awareness, comprehension, analysis, evaluation, advanced critical thinking, and active engagement domains, indicating a notable confidence-competence gap. The qualitative phase, analyzed through thematic analysis, identified both positive practices (e.g., source verification, cross-checking, contextual evaluation) and malpractices (e.g., reliance on virality, emotional bias, impulsive sharing, superficial trust in visuals). Findings highlighted inconsistencies between perceived ability and actual evaluative performance. Based on these findings, the results will be utilized in planning and developing an evidence-based Media Literacy Training Module aimed at combating fake news. The proposed module will focus on addressing identified competence gaps by strengthening analytical reasoning, ethical information consumption, emotional regulation, and critical engagement, aligned with SDG 4.7 and SDG 16.10. Overall, the study underscores the need for structured, skill-based media literacy interventions in teacher education programs to bridge the confidence-competence gap and prepare future educators to fight misinformation effectively.

Keywords: fake news, media literacy, pre-service teachers, competence, confidence, training module development

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I. INTRODUCTION

In today's 21st-century digital landscape, individuals face an unprecedented flow of information where the boundaries between truth and falsehood are increasingly blurred. Fake news spreads rapidly through algorithm-driven platforms, shaping public opinion, political discourse, and even educational spaces. In this environment, the ability to critically analyze and evaluate media content is no longer optional but essential for responsible citizenship and professional practice.

Media literacy—defined as the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media (Aufderheide & Firestone, 1993)—serves as a crucial safeguard against misinformation. It cultivates digital discernment, reflective judgment, and what McGrew et al. (2017) describe as skeptical resilience, the habit of questioning sources and detecting bias. Beyond technical skills, media literacy carries ethical and democratic significance by promoting informed civic engagement (Wineburg & McGrew, 2019). However, despite its importance, its integration into teacher education remains uneven, particularly in developing contexts.

In the Philippines, where social media is a primary source of information, misinformation intensifies existing educational challenges (Alampay, 2020, Lazer et al., 2018). Pre-service teachers are expected to model critical thinking and guide students in evaluating information, yet studies suggest that many educators struggle with assessing credibility and identifying misleading content (Bulger & Davison, 2018). This gap between expectation and preparation underscores the need to examine how equipped future teachers are in confronting fake news.

A key concern is the distinction between competence and confidence. Competence refers to the knowledge and skills required for source verification, fact-checking, and bias detection, while confidence reflects self-efficacy in applying these skills in real-world contexts. Both dimensions are vital, as limited competence or inflated confidence can heighten vulnerability to misinformation.

Thus, this study investigates the competence and confidence of pre-service teachers as empirical foundations for developing a contextualized media literacy training module. By identifying strengths and gaps, the research aims to inform targeted interventions that strengthen teacher preparation programs and empower future educators to foster critically discerning learners in an increasingly complex media environment.

A. Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on a synergistic and interventionist theoretical orientation that first examines the cognitive and critical dimensions of pre-service teachers' media literacy, particularly their competence and confidence in confronting fake news, and then uses these findings as empirical bases for training module development. Rather than merely describing existing skills, the framework positions theory as a diagnostic and developmental tool—identifying gaps in cognitive processing and critical engagement that inform pedagogical intervention.

The integration of Information Processing Theory (IPT) and Media Literacy Theory (MLT) provides a multidimensional lens for understanding how pre-service teachers encounter, interpret, and evaluate misinformation in digital environments. These theories converge on two interrelated dimensions essential to this study: (1) cognitive competence in processing information and (2) critical-reflective judgment in evaluating media content. Together, they explain not only how information is mentally processed but also how it is critically interrogated within socio-cultural contexts.

1. Information Processing Theory: The Cognitive Dimension of Competence

Information Processing Theory (Atkinson & Shiffrin, 1968) explains learning as a process in which information is encoded, stored, and retrieved for application. In the context of fake news, the theory is highly relevant because misinformation often exploits attentional biases, emotional triggers, and cognitive shortcuts to bypass careful evaluation. Within today's fast-paced, algorithm-driven digital environment, cognitive overload can limit individuals' ability to process information deeply, leading them to rely on surface-level cues such as headlines, visuals, and source familiarity.

Grounding the study in Information Processing Theory frames media literacy competence not simply as knowledge acquisition, but as the effective cognitive management of information—filtering misleading content, integrating credible evidence, and retrieving verification strategies when evaluating questionable claims.

2. Media Literacy Theory: The Critical and Reflective Dimension

Media Literacy Theory complements the cognitive focus of Information Processing Theory by emphasizing critical autonomy in media consumption and production (Potter, 2021; Hobbs, 2010). It extends beyond identifying factual inaccuracies to include analyzing representation, ideological positioning, and the socio-political contexts in which misinformation circulates. The theory highlights the importance of skeptical resilience—the habitual practice of questioning and cross-checking information before accepting or sharing it—and frames confidence as self-efficacy in applying critical evaluation strategies in real-world contexts.

Together, Information Processing Theory and Media Literacy Theory provide a comprehensive framework for understanding how competence (cognitive-analytical skills) and confidence (self-perceived ability to apply those skills) interact in responding to fake news. While IPT explains the internal cognitive processes involved in managing information, MLT situates these processes within broader social and ethical dimensions of media engagement. This integrated framework supports the study's interventionist goal by identifying cognitive vulnerabilities and critical gaps, which serve as the basis for developing a contextualized media literacy training module.

3. Study Objectives

This study aims to assess respondents' level of competence in evaluating fake news by examining their ability to identify and analyze key misinformation indicators, including headline sensationalism, content accuracy and logical consistency, source

credibility, bias and objectivity, visual manipulation, and emotional appeal. It also seeks to measure respondents' confidence in discerning fake news across domains such as awareness, comprehension, analysis, evaluation, advanced critical thinking, and active engagement, to understand how capable they perceive themselves to be in detecting and responding to misinformation.

Additionally, the study explores the strategies respondents use when verifying information, identifying effective practices that may strengthen media literacy. Based on the findings, the research proposes the development of a targeted training module designed to enhance critical evaluation skills and equip individuals with practical, systematic approaches to combating fake news.

III. METHODS

A. Research Design

The study utilized a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design to examine respondents' competence and confidence in discerning fake news and to develop an evidence-based training module. Conducted at the College of Teacher Education of Cagayan State University–Andrews Campus, the design first measured competence and confidence quantitatively, then explored emerging strategies qualitatively to inform the development of a contextualized instructional intervention.

In the quantitative phase, a descriptive approach was used, employing structured surveys and performance-based assessments to evaluate competence across key dimensions such as headline sensationalism, logical consistency, source credibility, bias, visual content, and emotional appeal, as well as confidence in awareness, comprehension, analysis, evaluation, advanced critical thinking, and active engagement. Descriptive statistics were applied to interpret the results. The qualitative phase followed, using focus group discussions and interviews analyzed through thematic analysis to uncover verification practices, challenges, and strategies used by participants.

Drawing from both phases, the final stage involved the expected plan for a structured, evidence-based training module tailored to pre-service teachers.

B. Locale of the Study

The study was conducted at Cagayan State University (CSU), Andrews Campus, within the College of Teacher Education (CTE), a leading institution in Northern Luzon known for its strong focus on academic excellence and teacher preparation. Located in Tuguegarao City, the campus serves as a central hub for pre-service teachers and future educators in the region.

The study involved 56 fourth-year Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSEd) English students from the College of Teacher Education at Cagayan State University–Andrews Campus, selected through purposive sampling. This approach ensured that participants were pre-service teachers with relevant preparation in language, communication, and critical thinking – competencies aligned with evaluating fake news. They participated in the quantitative to qualitative phases to assess their competence and

confidence in discerning misinformation and contributed to the qualitative phase through discussions and interviews on their verification strategies.

C. Research Instrument

Two research instruments were used to measure respondents' competence and confidence in discerning fake news. The competence instrument, grounded in Media Literacy Theory, Campus Journalism competencies, and selected SDGs, assessed six dimensions: headline sensationalism, logical consistency, source credibility, bias and objectivity, visual content, and emotional appeal. The news samples were research-developed, reviewed by publication advisers, aligned through a Table of Specifications, and subjected to expert validation and pilot testing to ensure content validity and reliability.

Item analysis from a pilot group of 60 respondents examined difficulty and discrimination indices. Results led to the retention of 40 items, revision of 15, and rejection of 5, ensuring that the final instrument was both valid and effective in measuring competence in evaluating fake news.

Table 1

Item Analysis Summary Showing Difficulty Index, Discrimination Index, and Corresponding Decisions

Category	Frequency (N=60)
<i>Difficulty Index</i>	
Very Easy	20
Average	35
Very Difficult	5
<i>Discrimination Index</i>	
Poor Item	4
Marginal Item	10
Reasonably Good	36
Very Good	10
<i>Decision</i>	
Retain	40
Revise	15
Reject	5

The second instrument assessed respondents' confidence and attitudes in discerning fake news across six domains: Awareness, Comprehension, Analysis, Evaluation, Advanced Critical Thinking, and Active Engagement. Reliability was measured using Cronbach's Alpha, with results showing acceptable to excellent internal consistency across domains. Coefficients ranged from .763 (good reliability) to .897 (excellent reliability), indicating that the instrument consistently measured the intended constructs.

Although one domain initially demonstrated lower reliability during pilot testing, item revisions improved overall internal consistency to .700 and above. Together with the competence instrument, this tool was rigorously developed, validated, and refined to ensure its reliability and alignment with the study’s objectives in measuring both competence and confidence in discerning fake news.

Table 2

Summary of Reliability Coefficients for the Dimensions of Confidence in Discerning Fake News

Construct	Reliability Coefficient
Awareness	0.763
Comprehension	0.866
Analysis	0.882
Evaluation	0.897
Advanced Critical Thinking	0.891
Active Engagement	0.872

During the qualitative phase, semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were conducted to explore participants’ experiences, challenges, and strategies in discerning fake news. This approach allowed respondents to express detailed insights grounded in their lived experiences and provided authentic feedback to refine the proposed training module. Consistent with Porst (2011), Gray (2009), and Dillman et al. (2009), open-ended questioning enhanced data richness, motivation, and depth of analysis.

By integrating quantitative and qualitative methods, the study achieved a comprehensive assessment of respondents’ competence and confidence. The quantitative phase offered measurable results, while the qualitative phase provided contextual explanations and emerging strategies, thereby strengthening the study’s validity and informing the development of a responsive, evidence-based training module.

D. Data Gathering Procedure

The data gathering procedure followed a systematic two-phase approach aligned with the research design and grounded in ethical standards. Approval was first secured from the Cagayan State University Ethics Review Board, followed by permission from campus and College of Teacher Education administrators. Participants were informed of the study’s purpose and assured that their involvement was voluntary. In the quantitative phase, paper-based objective and attitudinal questionnaires were administered to BSEd English IV students, who were given two hours to complete them. The collected data were then encoded and analyzed to assess levels of competence, skeptical resilience, and attitudes toward fake news.

In the qualitative phase, purposively selected participants took part in interviews to provide deeper insights into their strategies for identifying misinformation. The interviews allowed for richer exploration of their evaluative practices, and all qualitative

data were securely stored and anonymized to ensure confidentiality and protect participants' identities.

E. Ethical Considerations

The study strictly adhered to ethical standards, ensuring informed consent, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Confidentiality was maintained through anonymization of names and responses, and all data were securely stored with access restricted to authorized personnel. The principle of non-maleficence was observed by fostering a respectful and comfortable environment during data collection to prevent harm, distress, or coercion.

Upon completion, participants were debriefed and offered a summary of the findings and any resulting intervention programs. A clear data retention policy was implemented, with all information securely stored for up to three months and permanently disposed of thereafter. This ethical and systematic process safeguarded participants' rights, dignity, and well-being while ensuring the integrity of the research.

F. Data Analysis

The data analysis for this study followed a systematic and comprehensive mixed-method approach, employing both quantitative and qualitative methods. In the quantitative phase, data gathered from the objective and attitudinal questionnaires were systematically encoded, tabulated, and analyzed using descriptive statistics, including mean, frequency, and standard deviation, to summarize respondents' performance and perceptions (Mertler & Vannatta, 2013). A scoring rubric was applied to assess participants' competence in discerning fake news based on their responses to an objective assessment. The mean score was used as the primary measure because it provides a clear and reliable indicator of overall competence, aligns well with performance categories such as "Excellent," "Proficient," "Basic," and "Needs Improvement," and minimizes the influence of extreme values. The grand mean was computed by summing scores across all criteria, with higher scores indicating stronger competence.

To ensure a comprehensive evaluation, specific skills such as critical thinking and strategy application were assigned corresponding weights based on their relative importance. These rating standards allowed for a fair and multidimensional assessment of participants' media literacy skills, highlighting both strengths and areas for improvement. The descriptive interpretations of the rubric are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Scoring Rubric for the Level of Competence in Evaluating Fake News

Score Range	Descriptive Level	Interpretation/ Description
4.51 - 6.00	Excellent	Demonstrates outstanding competence by consistently applying advanced critical thinking, verifying sources, and detecting bias and manipulation.

3.51 - 4.50	Proficient	Shows above-average competence by regularly evaluating content and sources, though occasionally missing subtle misinformation.
2.51 - 3.50	Basic	Displays developing competence by recognizing obvious fake news cues but struggling with deeper logical analysis
1.00 - 2.50	Needs Improvement	Demonstrates limited competence by relying on emotional or superficial cues and struggling to assess credibility and logic.

For the level of respondents' confidence in discerning fake news, the responses were interpreted using the following descriptive scale:

Table 4

Descriptive Rating Scale for Respondents' Confidence in Discerning Fake News

Weight	Interval	Descriptive Value
4	3.28- 4.00	Very Great Extent
3	2.52- 3.27	Great Extent
2	1.76- 2.51	Moderate Extent
1	1.00- 1.75	Less Extent

The qualitative phase utilized thematic analysis to examine interview data through a series of iterative steps, including data familiarization, initial coding, pattern identification, category refinement, and final theme development (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach enabled the exploration of participants' experiences and strategies in discerning fake news, as well as the interpretation of expert feedback regarding the module's structure and usability. Its flexibility allowed the researcher to capture both explicit and underlying meanings within the data.

By integrating qualitative insights with quantitative results, the study achieved triangulation and strengthened the validity of its findings. The merging of data sets provided both measurable evidence and interpretive depth, resulting in a comprehensive, evidence-based evaluation of the intervention's impact and offering meaningful contributions to media literacy education and instructional material development.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study examined three major dimensions aligned with the Statement of the Problem: (1) the level of competence of the respondents in evaluating fake news, (2) the level of confidence in discerning fake news, and (3) the emerging strategies employed in identifying misinformation. These dimensions collectively established a comprehensive understanding of the respondents' current media literacy capabilities and served as the empirical basis for the development of the training module.

A. Level of Competence

This section reveals a pattern of strengths and weaknesses in respondents' media literacy competencies. Participants performed best in Emotional Appeal (5.78) and Source Credibility (5.05), indicating an ability to recognize emotionally charged content and identify basic source cues, though these skills appear largely surface-level. In contrast, they scored lowest in Bias and Objectivity (1.63) and Content and Logical Consistency (1.95), showing difficulty in detecting implicit bias and logical fallacies. Their Basic ratings in Headline Sensationalism and Visual and Media Content further suggest limited awareness of manipulative strategies in digital news.

With an overall mean of 3.40 (Basic), respondents demonstrate only initial awareness of misinformation cues and struggle with higher-order analytical thinking. These findings highlight the need for systematic, inquiry-based media literacy instruction that strengthens bias detection, logical analysis, and reflective skepticism. Consistent with prior research, exposure to information alone does not ensure critical understanding; thus, curriculum-embedded modules and structured activities are necessary to enhance evaluative skills and promote responsible media consumption.

Table 5

Level of Respondents' Competence in Evaluating Fake News Across Key Indicators

Category	Mean of Scores	Descriptive Level	Score Range
Headline Sensationalism Evaluation	3.43	Basic	2.51 - 3.50
Content and Logical Consistency	1.95	Needs Improvement	1.00 - 2.50
Bias and Objectivity	1.63	Needs Improvement	1.00 - 2.50
Visual and Media Content	2.57	Basic	2.51 - 3.50
Emotional Appeal	5.78	Excellent	4.51 - 6.00
Source Credibility & Author Information	5.05	Excellent	4.51 - 6.00
Overall Average	3.40	Basic	2.51 - 3.50

B. Level of Confidence

This subsection presents the respondents' level of confidence in discerning fake news, focusing on six critical dimensions: namely, awareness, comprehension, analysis, evaluation, advanced critical thinking, and active engagement. These indicators collectively measure the respondents' self-assurance in identifying, understanding, and responding to misinformation across various media platforms. The analysis aims to determine the extent to which they feel capable of recognizing deceptive content, interpreting information critically, and engaging constructively in fact-based discussions.

1. Awareness

The Awareness dimension obtained a mean of 3.01 (Great Extent), indicating that respondents have a strong foundational understanding of fake news and can recognize common misinformation cues such as emotional targeting, sensational language, and lack of factual references. This reflects solid conceptual awareness and readiness for more advanced analytical tasks. However, lower scores in quickly identifying misleading headlines, distinguishing credible sources, and detecting subtle bias suggest that while

learners understand misinformation in theory, they may lack the speed and consistency needed for real-time evaluation.

Consistent with prior research, awareness does not always translate into habitual practice. The findings highlight the need for progressive, evidence-based instructional modules that move learners beyond conceptual knowledge toward consistent, applied critical engagement in digital environments.

Table 6

Respondents' Level of Awareness Toward Fake News Detection

Statements	Mean	Descriptive value
1. I am confident in identifying content that might be fake news on social media.	2.91	Great Extent
2. I can quickly recognize signs of misinformation in headlines.	2.78	Great Extent
3. I am aware of the prevalence of fake news in the Philippine media landscape.	3.03	Great Extent
4. I feel confident in differentiating between credible and non-credible sources of news.	2.85	Great Extent
5. I am aware that fake news often uses sensational language to attract attention.	3.00	Great Extent
6. I am confident in spotting content that lacks factual backing or reliable references.	3.24	Great Extent
7. I can identify biases in news articles that might indicate fake news.	2.99	Great Extent
8. I am aware of the techniques used to spread misinformation online.	2.90	Great Extent
9. I feel equipped to detect misleading visuals or manipulated images in news stories.	3.04	Great Extent
10. I understand that fake news often targets emotional reactions.	3.36	Great Extent
Category mean	3.01	Great Extent

2. Comprehension

The Comprehension dimension recorded a mean of 2.90 (Great Extent), showing that respondents are generally confident in understanding and interpreting news content. They demonstrated the ability to identify inaccuracies, assess factual consistency, and cross-check information, indicating movement beyond basic awareness toward analytical engagement. However, lower confidence in interpreting lengthy texts and detecting underlying biases suggests difficulty sustaining critical analysis in complex or information-heavy digital contexts.

Consistent with prior research, comprehension can decline amid information overload and fragmented attention. Although overall confidence is high, the findings emphasize the need for targeted instruction that strengthens deep reading, contextual analysis, and analytical synthesis to ensure sustained and effective critical engagement with online information.

Table 7

Respondents' Level of Comprehension Toward Fake News Identification

Statements	Mean	Descriptive value
1. I am confident in understanding the context of news articles to identify inaccuracies.	2.99	Great Extent
2. I can easily discern the main ideas of a news article, even if it is lengthy.	2.75	Great Extent
3. I am confident in interpreting the purpose behind the creation of news content.	2.94	Great Extent
4. I understand how to verify if news content is consistent with established facts.	3.04	Great Extent
5. I feel confident analyzing the structure of an article to identify signs of misinformation.	2.88	Great Extent
6. I can interpret a news story critically, rather than accepting it at face value.	2.75	Great Extent
7. I understand the role of tone and language in influencing readers' perceptions.	2.97	Great Extent
8. I am confident in spotting subtle inconsistencies in the information presented.	2.96	Great Extent
9. I can interpret complex news stories and identify underlying biases.	2.69	Great Extent
10. I understand how to cross-check news content with other credible sources.	3.03	Great Extent
Category mean	2.90	Great Extent

3. Analysis

The Analysis dimension produced a category mean of 2.93 (Great Extent), indicating that respondents generally feel confident in critically examining news content. They rated highest in distinguishing fact from opinion, analyzing the use of visuals, and identifying target audiences, suggesting an awareness of how media messages are constructed and tailored to shape perception. These skills reflect a solid level of analytical reasoning essential to critical media literacy and readiness for more advanced instruction. However, slightly lower scores in detecting logical fallacies, identifying discrepancies in data or statistics, and recognizing propaganda techniques point to areas for improvement. Such competencies require structured analytical frameworks and sustained practice in uncovering subtle manipulation in arguments and presentations. Consistent with findings by Tandoc et al. (2019) and Kahne and Bowyer (2017), effective misinformation analysis demands deliberate, evidence-based reasoning – skills that can be weakened by rapid digital consumption or reliance on prior beliefs. Thus, while learners demonstrate strong analytical foundations, guided and systematic instruction is needed to further strengthen evidence-driven evaluation.

Table 8.

Respondents' Level of Analysis in Evaluating Fake News

Statements	Mean	Descriptive value
1. I am confident in breaking down a news story to identify factual claims.	2.93	Great Extent
2. I can effectively analyze the credibility of the author of a news article.	2.93	Great Extent

3. I feel confident in detecting logical fallacies in news content.	2.76	Great Extent
4. I can evaluate the authenticity of a source's references or citations.	2.94	Great Extent
5. I am confident in identifying discrepancies in data or statistics used in a news article.	2.76	Great Extent
6. I feel capable of analyzing the target audience of a piece of news content.	3.06	Great Extent
7. I am confident in distinguishing between opinion and fact in news articles.	3.13	Great Extent
8. I can critically examine the use of visuals, such as images or videos, in news stories.	3.07	Great Extent
9. I feel confident analyzing whether a news article aligns with credible reports.	2.97	Great Extent
10. I can effectively detect propaganda techniques in news stories.	2.73	Great Extent
Category mean	2.93	Great Extent

4. Evaluation

The Evaluation dimension recorded a mean of 2.96 (Great Extent), showing that respondents are confident in assessing source credibility and relevance but struggle with deeper analysis of argument quality, evidence, and subtle framing. While they possess foundational evaluative skills, the findings highlight the need for targeted instruction to strengthen analytical precision, evidence-based reasoning, and critical discourse analysis.

Table 9

Respondents' Level of Evaluation in Assessing Fake News

Statements	Mean	Descriptive value
1. I am confident in evaluating whether a news source is trustworthy.	3.12	Great Extent
2. I can assess whether the evidence provided in an article supports its claims.	2.91	Great Extent
3. I feel confident evaluating the quality of arguments presented in a news story.	2.88	Great Extent
4. I can judge whether an article provides balanced perspectives or is biased.	2.97	Great Extent
5. I feel capable of evaluating the reliability of sources cited in news articles.	2.97	Great Extent
6. I can evaluate if a news article uses credible and verifiable data.	2.94	Great Extent
7. I feel capable of assessing the relevance of a news article's content to current issues.	3.07	Great Extent
8. I am confident in identifying when news content has been manipulated for profit or influence.	2.99	Great Extent
9. I can critically evaluate the intent behind the dissemination of news stories.	2.97	Great Extent
10. I can critically evaluate the intent behind the dissemination of news stories.	2.82	Great Extent

Category mean	2.96	Great Extent
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5. Advanced Critical Thinking

The Advanced Critical Thinking dimension achieved a mean of 2.96 (Great Extent), showing that respondents are generally confident in applying higher-order reasoning to evaluate the context, validity, and implications of news. They demonstrated strong awareness of the broader societal impact of misinformation, including its political and cultural influences, reflecting a systems-level understanding of how media shapes public opinion.

However, lower confidence in authenticating controversial claims and synthesizing information from multiple sources indicates difficulty with complex reasoning tasks. Although respondents exhibit developing and reflective critical thinking skills, targeted instruction is needed to strengthen their ability to integrate competing narratives, evaluate arguments rigorously, and exercise sound judgment under uncertain conditions.

Table 10

Respondents' Level of Advanced Critical Thinking in Evaluating Fake News

Statements	Mean	Descriptive value
1. I am confident in identifying patterns of misinformation across different media platforms.	2.82	Great Extent
2. I can integrate knowledge from various fields to discern the validity of news content.	2.90	Great Extent
3. I feel confident in challenging my own biases when evaluating news stories.	3.00	Great Extent
4. I can use advanced reasoning to determine the authenticity of controversial news.	2.81	Great Extent
5. I feel capable of synthesizing information from multiple sources to detect inconsistencies.	2.81	Great Extent
6. I am confident in predicting the potential consequences of sharing fake news.	3.13	Great Extent
7. I can evaluate the long-term impact of a news story on public opinion.	3.09	Great Extent
8. I feel capable of questioning the deeper motives behind the creation of certain news content.	2.88	Great Extent
9. I am confident in identifying how political, cultural, or economic contexts influence news content.	3.12	Great Extent
10. I can effectively use fact-checking tools to validate or disprove a news story.	3.09	Great Extent
Category mean	2.96	Great Extent

6. Active Engagement

The Active Engagement dimension recorded a mean of 2.97 (Great Extent), indicating that respondents are confident in promoting media literacy beyond personal use by influencing peers, educating others about fake news, and supporting anti-misinformation

efforts. These results reflect a sense of advocacy and collective efficacy, suggesting readiness to contribute to responsible digital citizenship. However, slightly lower ratings in community-based participation point to the need for structured, collaborative activities that translate confidence into sustained civic engagement.

Despite high self-reported confidence, respondents' overall competence remained at a Basic level, revealing a gap between perceived and actual performance. This discrepancy suggests possible metacognitive overestimation and underscores the need for further research to examine the alignment between confidence and competence.

Table 11

Respondents' Level of Active Engagement Toward Combating Fake News

Statements	Mean	Descriptive value
1. I am confident in educating others on how to identify fake news	3.07	Great Extent
2. I am confident in conducting seminars, workshops, or classroom activities that promote responsible news consumption.	3.00	Great Extent
3. I am confident in initiating or leading online campaigns that combat misinformation and encourage fact-checking.	3.01	Great Extent
4. I am confident in collaborating with peers, organizations, or institutions to advocate for media and information literacy.	3.01	Great Extent
5. I am confident in creating awareness campaigns to educate others about fake news.	2.91	Great Extent
6. I actively participate in discussions about the role of misinformation in shaping society.	2.88	Great Extent
7. I feel confident challenging misinformation shared by my peers.	2.94	Great Extent
8. I take an active role in promoting media literacy within my community.	2.84	Great Extent
9. I am confident in helping others develop strategies for discerning fake news	2.96	Great Extent
10. I feel capable of influencing others to adopt critical thinking practices when consuming news.	3.09	Great Extent
Category mean	2.97	Great Extent

B. Emerging Practices in Discerning Fake News

The qualitative findings identified two interconnected dimensions of media literacy behavior: positive practices and malpractices in discerning fake news. Positive practices, such as source verification and cross-checking, reflect growing awareness of responsible media consumption and align with respondents' high self-reported confidence, despite only a Basic level of demonstrated competence (3.40).

However, malpractices – including impulsive sharing, emotional bias, and reliance on popularity or influencers – reveal persistent digital literacy gaps. The coexistence of awareness and vulnerability highlights a confidence–competence mismatch, emphasizing the need for stronger instructional interventions that translate self-assurance into consistent, evidence-based critical evaluation skills.

1. Positive ways of discerning fake news

The qualitative responses from ENG 3A and ENG 3B participants reveal an emerging yet promising capacity to critically evaluate online information. Participants showed awareness of misinformation cues, verification strategies, and responsible sharing practices, reflecting foundational media literacy skills aligned with the quantitative findings. Although their overall competence in evaluating fake news averaged 3.40 (Basic), their confidence across key domains ranged from 2.90 to 2.97 (Great Extent), indicating a noticeable confidence–competence gap. This suggests that while learners feel assured in their evaluative abilities, their actual performance reflects partial mastery that requires continued instructional reinforcement.

1.1. Source verification

Respondents consistently emphasized verifying the credibility of information sources as a crucial step in discerning fake news. As participant 1 stated, “I always check kung may reliable source, like GMA, ABS-CBN, or official government pages,” while Participant 12 shared, “*Tinitingnan ko kung may .gov o .edu sa link, kasi mas legit usually ‘yon.*” [I check whether the link has .gov or .edu in it, since those are usually more legitimate.] These statements demonstrate a deliberate reliance on institutional credibility and official domains as indicators of authenticity, aligning with their Great Extent confidence in evaluating source trustworthiness (3.12) and verifying factual consistency (3.04).

However, when compared with their overall Basic level of demonstrated competence (3.40), the findings reveal that although participants conceptually understand source validation, their systematic application of these practices remains limited. This reflects the “confidence–competence gap” described by Metzger et al. (2021) where self-perceived ability does not always correspond to actual performance, highlighting the need for structured, evidence-based instruction to translate confidence into consistent evaluative practice.

1.2. Cross-checking

Another dominant theme is participants’ tendency to compare information across multiple platforms as a form of verification. Participant 3 shared, “*I compare the news to other websites para makita kung pareho ang information*” [I compare the news with other websites to see if the information is the same.] while participant 18 stated, “I read multiple sources to see if the information is consistent.” These responses illustrate a clear inclination toward corroborative verification and reflect analytical reasoning consistent with the Analysis category mean of 2.93 (Great Extent), indicating strong confidence in detecting discrepancies.

However, their demonstrated competence scores (3.33–3.47) suggest that while cross-checking is conceptually understood, it may not always be applied systematically or critically. As Tandoc et al. (2017) emphasize, effective cross-referencing requires not only consulting multiple sources but also carefully evaluating intertextual consistency. Thus, although participants show awareness of this strategy, their moderate competence

highlights the need for instruction that strengthens deeper analytical interpretation of conflicting or inconsistent information.

1.3. Content and Context Evaluation

Several respondents demonstrated an evaluative mindset toward content integrity and contextual coherence. One participant explained, “*Binabasa ko nang buo ang article, hindi lang headline, para alam ko kung ano talaga ‘yung context’*” [I read the entire article, not just the headline, so I can understand the full context.] while another stated, “*I analyze kung may clear evidence o puro opinion lang ‘yung article.’*” [I analyze whether the article has clear evidence or if it is purely based on opinion.] These responses reflect deliberate cognitive engagement with the structure, evidence, and logic of news content – skills associated with comprehension and analytical processing – and align with their high self-reported confidence in understanding context (2.99) and identifying main ideas (2.75), both rated to a Great Extent.

However, when triangulated with their lower competence in Content and Logical Consistency (1.95), the findings suggest that although learners grasp the importance of contextual and evidence-based evaluation, they may still struggle to detect deeper logical fallacies and inconsistencies. As Kahne and Bowyer (2019) emphasize, effective media literacy requires sustained cognitive effort to assess internal coherence and argument validity, underscoring the need for structured instructional activities that strengthen advanced inferential reasoning skills.

1.4. Media Cues

Respondents also highlighted the role of visual and multimedia cues in assessing information credibility. Participant 12 stated, “*Tinitingnan ko kung may supporting pictures or videos, pero I also check kung edited ba’*” [I check if there are supporting pictures or videos, but I also verify whether they have been edited] while another shared, “*If it looks like a meme or edited post, I don’t take it seriously.*” These responses demonstrate awareness of visual manipulation and multimodal literacy, which are essential skills in an era where misinformation is often visually driven. This aligns with their high confidence in analyzing visuals (3.07) and evaluating manipulated content (2.99)

However, their lower demonstrated competence in Visual and Media Content (2.57) reveals a gap between perceived ability and actual evaluative skill. As Wineburg et al. (2016) note, individuals frequently overestimate their capacity to detect manipulated visuals, emphasizing the need for structured training in visual verification techniques, such as digital forensics and reverse-image searches, to strengthen applied competence.

1.5. Sensational Cues

Many participants showed sensitivity to emotionally charged or exaggerated content. Participant 7 stated, “*I avoid believing headlines right away, kasi madalas clickbait lang ‘yan’*” [I avoid believing headlines right away because they are often just clickbait.] while participant 23 noted, “*Pag may sobrang sensational words like ‘shocking’ or*

‘unbelievable,’ I question it.” [When there are overly sensational words like “shocking” or “unbelievable,” I question it.

Meanwhile, their demonstrated competence in evaluating Headline Sensationalism (3.43) remains at a Basic level, indicating that although they recognize sensational tactics, their analytical depth may be limited. As Pennycook and Rand (2021) explain, emotional engagement can override analytical reasoning, highlighting the importance of emotional literacy training to strengthen resistance against clickbait-driven misinformation.

1.6. Social Verification and Platform-specific Caution

Participants also reported relying on social feedback and platform-based cues when verifying news. Participant 4 shared, “I usually read the comment section. *Minsan may nagfa-fact-check na doon*” [I usually read the comment section. Sometimes, someone does fact-checking there] while participant 17 stated, “If it comes from TikTok, I double-check *kasi maraming fake info doon.*” These responses reflect peer-based verification and platform awareness, aligning with their Active Engagement confidence (2.97) and suggesting that collective discourse influences individual judgment.

However, quantitative competence results indicate that such social validation strategies remain informal and inconsistently applied. As McGrew et al. (2018) caution, while online communities can support fact-checking, they may also reinforce echo chambers. Therefore, structured peer-evaluation activities in academic settings are necessary to transform informal social verification into a more systematic, evidence-based practice.

The positive practices reflect encouraging awareness of responsible media consumption, as participants demonstrate high self-efficacy and emerging analytical literacy. However, their moderate level of applied competence points to a “confidence–practice mismatch,” where developing cognitive and affective awareness is not yet consistently translated into systematic critical evaluation. Consistent with Hobbs (2020), these findings underscore that media literacy education must extend beyond awareness by equipping learners not only with what to question, but with structured and practical methods for verifying information effectively.

Table 12

Thematic Analysis of Respondents’ Approaches to Identifying Fake News

Major Theme	Core Ideas
1. Source Verification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respondents emphasize confirming the credibility of the original source before believing or sharing information, relying on established, reputable outlets or official websites to ensure authenticity.
2. Source Checking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants actively cross-check multiple sources to verify the consistency and accuracy of information, reflecting their awareness of misinformation across platforms.

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|-----------------------------------|--|
| 3. Content and Context Evaluation | • Respondents analyze not only the content itself but also its context, including the author’s intent, tone, and purpose behind the message. |
| 4. Media Cues | • Respondents assess legitimacy by examining visual and structural cues such as website layout, image quality, grammar, and publication date. |
| 5. Sensational Cues | • Respondents recognize emotionally charged or exaggerated headlines as warning signs of fake news used to manipulate readers. |
| 6. Platform Specific Cautions | • Participants acknowledge that certain social media platforms are more prone to misinformation and adjust their verification practices accordingly. |
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2. Malpractice in Discerning Fake News

While some respondents practiced responsible verification, many exhibited weak media literacy behaviors, such as relying on popularity, familiarity, or personal beliefs instead of systematic evaluation, as reflected in statements like “*Basta may nag-share at maraming likes, siguro totoo na ‘yun*” [As long as someone shared it and it has many likes, it’s probably true] and “*Hindi ko na chine-check kasi galing naman sa kakilala ko.*” [I don’t check it anymore because it came from someone I know]. These patterns reveal cognitive and behavioral gaps in source evaluation and emotional regulation, underscoring the need for structured interventions that promote consistent, evidence-based critical media engagement.

2.1. Reliance on Popularity and Virality

Some respondents equated truth with virality, as reflected in statements such as participant 1’s, “*Wala naman akong strategy, basta pag viral, totoo na siguro ‘yun,*” [I don’t really have a strategy; if it goes viral, it’s probably true]. and participant 2’s, “*Pag maraming likes at shares, ibig sabihin legit.*” [If it has many likes and shares, it means it’s legitimate]. These responses illustrate a bandwagon credibility bias, where social proof replaces factual verification.

This pattern contradicts their self-reported Great Extent confidence in identifying credible sources (3.12) and reveals a misalignment between perception and actual practice. Although Source Credibility previously received a high rating, the presence of virality-based reasoning exposes inconsistencies in applied evaluation. As Wardle and Derakhshan (2017) explain, reliance on popularity cues reflects digital social conditioning, where repeated exposure and engagement metrics simulate credibility. These findings highlight the persistence of surface-level literacy and emphasize the need for deeper epistemic training in systematic source verification.

2.2. Overreliance on Social Media Platforms and Influencers

Statements such as Participant 4’s, “*Pag si favorite influencer ko nag-post, minsan di ko na chine-check,*” [If my favorite influencer posts it, sometimes I don’t even check it] and Participant 10’s, “*Kung galing sa TikTok, alam kong legit kasi madalas accurate naman sila,*” [If it comes from TikTok, I assume it’s legitimate because they’re usually accurate] reveal

misplaced trust in influencers and platform algorithms as indicators of truth. These responses suggest that familiarity and perceived consistency are often used as substitutes for independent verification.

This tendency weakens analytical independence and demonstrates that high Active Engagement confidence (2.97) does not necessarily reflect deep critical awareness. Their low competence in Bias and Objectivity (1.63) further indicates how emotional affiliation with content creators can compromise objectivity. As Fazio (2020) explains, social credibility biases enable misinformation to spread when trust in familiar figures replaces evidence-based evaluation, underscoring the need for media literacy programs that address influencer credibility and algorithmic bias.

2.3. Trust in Surface-level or Visual Evidence

Participant 6 admitted, "*Totoo 'yun kasi may picture naman,*" [That's true because there's a picture"] and added, "*Kung may video, sure na sure ako na legit*" ["If there's a video, I'm completely sure it's legitimate] reflecting a visual confirmation bias in which the mere presence of images or videos is treated as unquestionable proof. Such statements contradict respondents' self-assessed confidence in analyzing visuals (3.07) and reveal a superficial evaluative approach. Their lower competence score in Visual and Media Content (2.57) further confirms this inconsistency between perceived ability and actual skill.

As Paris and Donovan (2019) explain in their research on deepfakes, visual content can be highly persuasive and often overrides critical skepticism, leading individuals to accept manipulated evidence uncritically. These findings indicate that although participants feel confident in evaluating visuals, their applied verification skills remain underdeveloped, highlighting the need for targeted instruction in digital and visual verification techniques.

2.4. Impulsive Consumption and Sharing Habits

Responses such as Participant 9's, "*Pag may nagsend sa GC, share ko na agad para updated lahat,*" [If someone sends something in the group chat, I share it immediately so everyone stays updated] and Participant 5's, "*Wala na akong time magbasa ng buo, headline lang sapat na,*" [If someone sends it in the group chat, I immediately share it so everyone stays updated] reflect impulsive information-sharing driven by immediacy rather than careful evaluation. Although respondents reported Great Extent confidence in evaluating article structure (2.88) and identifying misinformation cues (2.99), their low competence in Content and Logical Consistency (1.95) reveals a clear behavioral gap between perceived ability and actual practice.

This pattern aligns with Pennycook et al. (2020), who found that misinformation often spreads not because individuals cannot distinguish truth from falsehood, but because they fail to pause and reflect before sharing. The findings highlight the importance of integrating metacognitive regulation into media literacy programs, training learners to slow down their cognitive processing and apply deliberate verification before reposting information.

2.5. Emotional and Personal Bias

Participants also demonstrated susceptibility to emotional and ideological confirmation. Participant 13 stated, “*Pag same opinion ko ‘yung post, ibig sabihin tama ‘yon,*” [If the post matches my opinion, it means it’s correct] while participant 28 shared, “*Naniniwala ako agad lalo na pag nakakainis ‘yung tao sa balita. Deserved niya kasi.*” [I believe it right away, especially if the person in the news is annoying. They deserve it]. These responses reflect affective polarization, where personal beliefs and emotions override objective evaluation. Although respondents reported Great Extent confidence in challenging personal bias (3.00), their competence in Bias and Objectivity remained at a Basic level (1.63), revealing another gap between perception and actual critical practice.

Consistent with Martel et al. (2020), ideological alignment can significantly increase belief in misinformation, even among educated individuals. These findings underscore the importance of integrating emotional literacy and reflective critical thinking strategies into media literacy instruction to counteract bias-driven and affect-based misjudgments.

2.6. Indifference or Lack of Awareness

Some respondents expressed apathy toward verifying news, as seen in participant 18’s remarks: “*Minsan wala naman akong pakialam kung fake o hindi, basta entertaining sa social media*” [Sometimes I don’t care whether it’s fake or not, as long as it’s entertaining on social media] and “*Sa dami ng news sites, minsan hindi ko alam paano malalaman kung fake, kaya bahala na lang. Minsan kasi nagiging fake na rin sila.*” [With so many news sites, sometimes I don’t know how to tell if something is fake, so I just let it be. Sometimes they even turn out to be fake themselves]. These statements reveal disengagement and uncertainty, reflecting a critical literacy gap marked by low motivation despite high self-reported confidence in active engagement (2.97).

This dissonance reflects what Tully and Vraga (2021) describe as motivational disinformation vulnerability, where individuals may possess the necessary skills but lack the civic commitment to apply them consistently. Given their overall Basic competence and inflated self-perception, the findings suggest that awareness alone is insufficient; media literacy initiatives must also cultivate civic responsibility and epistemic curiosity to build long-term resilience against misinformation.

These malpractices expose the underlying cognitive, emotional, and behavioral vulnerabilities that persist despite participants’ self-assessed confidence. The data triangulation reveals a paradox: high confidence paired with only moderate competence.

This indicates that while participants believe they are critical consumers, they often rely on heuristics, such as popularity, emotion, and social cues, rather than systematic evaluation. As emphasized by Guess et al. (2020), addressing misinformation requires not only cognitive literacy but also motivational and affective engagement. Hence, educators must prioritize bridging the confidence and competence gap through immersive, reflexive, and skill-based media literacy interventions.

Table 13.

Thematic Analysis on Respondents' Misconceptions and Vulnerabilities in Discerning Fake News

Major Theme	Core Ideas
1. Reliance on Popularity and Virality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The tendency to equate the truthfulness of information with the number of likes, shares, or comments it receives; belief that popularity guarantees credibility.
2. Overreliance on Social Media Platforms and Influencers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dependence on well-known personalities, influencers, or social media channels as primary sources of information without verification; viewing them as inherently trustworthy.
3. Trust in Surface-Level or Visual Evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Believing information based on images, videos, or headlines alone; lack of deeper examination of the context or authenticity of visual materials.
4. Impulsive Consumption and Sharing Habits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The habit of quickly reacting, liking, or sharing content without verifying its accuracy; prioritizing speed and emotional response over reflection.
5. Emotional and Personal Bias	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowing personal beliefs, emotions, or political leanings to shape judgments about truth; accepting information that aligns with one's perspective while rejecting contradictory facts.
6. Indifference or Lack of Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrating apathy toward verifying information or recognizing the existence of misinformation; lack of motivation or knowledge to fact-check before believing or sharing.

C. Development of the Media Literacy Training Module

The study identified a clear gap between participants' perceived confidence and actual competence in evaluating fake news, with some showing emerging critical awareness while others displayed emotional impulsivity, reliance on unverified sources, and difficulty recognizing sensationalized content.

To address these gaps, a comprehensive media literacy training module is proposed, integrating cognitive, ethical, and reflective dimensions of media analysis. Aligned with SDG 4.7 and SDG 16.10, the module promotes critical evaluation, responsible media engagement, and informed democratic participation.

1. Lesson 1: Headline Sensationalism and Evaluation

This lesson addresses participants' limited ability to critically evaluate sensationalized headlines, as findings showed partial awareness but continued susceptibility to clickbait and emotionally driven reading.

To strengthen analytical habits, the module includes lessons on understanding clickbait, spotting misleading headlines, and crafting ethical titles, aligned with SDG 4.7 and SDG 16.10 and grounded in Information Processing Theory and Media Literacy Theory to promote responsible, reflective media consumption.

2. Lesson 2: Content and Logical Consistency

Baseline findings showed that participants often equated polished writing with credibility, as reflected in statements like "*Naniniwala ako basta maayos pagkasulat,*" [I

believe as long as it is structurally correct] revealing difficulty in assessing logical coherence and factual accuracy. This underscores the need to move beyond surface-level cues and strengthen evidence-based verification.

To address this, the module includes lessons on spotting logical fallacies, cross-checking sources, and evaluating evidence, aligned with SDG 4.7 and SDG 16.10 and grounded in Information Processing Theory and Media Literacy Theory, to enhance critical analysis and accurate information evaluation.

3. Lesson 3: Source Credibility and Author Information

The findings showed that participants struggled with source verification, often equating familiarity or page reputation with credibility. Statements such as, "*Minsan hindi ko tinitingnan kung sino ang author basta credible 'yong page,*" [Sometimes I don't check who the author is as long as the page seems credible.] reveal a misconception that professionalism or platform recognition guarantees reliability, rather than careful evaluation of authorship and content integrity.

To address this gap, the module includes lessons such as "*The Hallmark of Credible Journalism*" and "*Verifying Website and Source Reliability,*" which train learners to examine author credentials, publication history, and overall source reliability. Supported by Metzger and Flanagin (2015), who emphasize systematic verification in digital literacy, these lessons align with SDG 16.6 by promoting accountability and transparency in information ecosystems. Grounded in Information Processing Theory and Media Literacy Theory, the instruction equips participants with structured strategies for critically evaluating sources and navigating the media landscape responsibly.

4. Lesson 4: Bias and Objectivity

Bias and objectivity were identified as major challenges, as many participants struggled to distinguish between factual reporting and opinion-based content, revealing confusion about subtle framing and partisan undertones.

To address this, the module includes lessons on detecting bias, analyzing language and tone, and recognizing agenda-setting, aligned with SDG 10.3 and grounded in Information Processing Theory and Media Literacy Theory to promote fair, balanced, and critical media engagement.

5. Lesson 5: Visual Media and Content

The study found that participants often assumed visual content was inherently truthful, as reflected in statements like, "*Di ko alam na may fake images pala*" [I didn't know that fake images even existed.] and "*'Pag may video, mas naniniwala ako.*" [If there's a video, I'm more likely to believe it.] These responses highlight limited visual literacy and a misplaced belief that images or videos automatically guarantee authenticity,

underscoring the risks posed by doctored visuals and deepfakes in today’s media landscape.

To address this gap, the module includes lessons such as “Spot the Fake: Detecting Image and Video Manipulation” and “Framing the Truth: How Staged Visuals Shape Public Opinion,” which teach technical and interpretive verification strategies. Aligned with SDG 9.C, SDG 4.7, and SDG 16.10, these lessons promote digital access, media literacy, and accurate information dissemination. Grounded in Information Processing Theory and Media Literacy Theory, the instruction strengthens visual skepticism and equips learners with critical tools to evaluate and verify visual media responsibly.

6. Lesson 6: Emotional Appeal

Emotional appeal was identified as a major vulnerability, with participants admitting that anger and strong emotions often led them to share content without critical reflection. To address this, the module includes lessons such as “The Psychology of Emotional Manipulation” and “Sentimentality and Manipulated Empathy,” which promote emotional regulation and awareness, aligned with SDG 3.4 and grounded in Information Processing Theory and Media Literacy Theory.

Together with the other lessons, the module forms a comprehensive, evidence-based framework designed to strengthen both competence and confidence in discerning fake news. By fostering reflective judgment, ethical awareness, and emotional intelligence, it equips learners with structured strategies for critical and responsible media engagement.

Table 14.

Correspondence Between Module Units, Target Competencies, Lessons, and Sustainable Development Goals

Unit	Topic	Competencies	Lessons	Sustainable Development Goals
1	Headline Sensationalism and Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify exaggerated, misleading, or clickbait headlines in news articles Differentiate between attention-grabbing and deceptive headline strategies Rewrite sensationalized headlines to reflect factual and neutral reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Art of Clickbait-How Headlines Hook You Fact vs Fiction-Spotting Misleading and Manipulative Headlines Crafting Ethical and Accurate Headline 	SDG 4.7 SDG 16.10
2	Content and Logical Consistency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyze news articles for logical fallacies and inconsistencies Compare multiple sources to verify the accuracy and coherence of information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spotting Logical Fallacies in News and Social Media Cross-Checking Sources: How to 	SDG 4.7 SDG 16.10

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess whether a claim is supported by valid evidence and reasoning 	<p>Verify the Accuracy of Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence Matters: How to Tell if a Claim is Backed by Facts 	
3	Source Credibility and Author Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differentiate between credible journalism and unverified or biased reporting • Evaluate the credibility of news sources based on authorship, expertise, and reputation • Use verification tools to cross-check author backgrounds and publication reliability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Hallmark of Credible Journalism • Verifying Website and Source Reliability 	<p>SDG 4.7 SDG 16.10 SDG 16.6</p>
4	Bias and Objectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detect biases in news reporting through language, tone, and framing techniques • Compare how different media outlets present the same news story. • Apply strategies to consume news from multiple perspectives for balanced understanding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Between the Line: How Language and Tone Reveal Bias • One Story, Many Angles- Comparing How Media Outlets Report the Same Event • Bias Detection: When News has an Agenda 	<p>SDG 4.7 SDG 16.10 SDG 10.3</p>
5	Visual Media and Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify manipulated and misleading contents • Use reverse image search and other verification tools to fact-check visual media. • Analyze the impact of edited or staged visuals in shaping public perception. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spot the Fake: Detecting Image and Video Manipulation • Framing the Truth: How Staged Visuals Shape Public Opinion 	<p>SDG 4.7 SDG 16.10 SDG 9.C</p>
6	Emotional Appeal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize emotionally charged language used to manipulate audience reactions. • Critically evaluate news and social media posts that rely on fear, outrage, or sentimentality. • Develop self-regulation strategies to prevent impulsive sharing of emotionally driven misinformation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Psychology of Emotional Manipulation • Sentimentality and Manipulated Empathy 	<p>SDG 4.7 SDG 16.10 SDG 3.4</p>

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The study revealed a clear confidence–competence gap in participants’ ability to discern fake news. Although respondents demonstrated only a Basic level of competence (3.40), particularly struggling with bias detection and logical consistency, they consistently reported confidence to a Great Extent across awareness, comprehension, analysis, evaluation, advanced critical thinking, and active engagement domains. Qualitative findings reinforced this discrepancy: while participants practiced source

verification and recognized sensational cues, they also exhibited malpractices such as reliance on popularity metrics, emotional bias, impulsive sharing, superficial trust in visuals, and overdependence on influencers. These patterns indicate that foundational awareness exists, but deeper analytical and reflective skills remain underdeveloped.

The findings carry significant pedagogical implications. Media literacy instruction must move beyond surface awareness toward structured, inquiry-based approaches that strengthen higher-order thinking, evidence-based reasoning, emotional regulation, and metacognitive reflection. Given the respondents' strong confidence in advocacy and engagement, training programs can leverage this readiness through peer-led initiatives and collaborative fact-checking activities. The development of a comprehensive Media Literacy Training Module aligned with SDG 4.7 and SDG 16.10 is therefore justified to bridge the confidence-competence gap and cultivate critically reflective, ethically responsible future educators. Future research may further examine the relationship between perceived confidence and actual performance and evaluate the module's effectiveness in reducing susceptibility to misinformation.

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