

Media Literacy among Students of Dada Lakhmi Chand State University of Performing and Visual Arts, Rohtak in Electronic Environment: An Evaluative Study

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Due to the technological advancement, a number of social media platforms have emerged as a source of handy information. But to determine credibility, reliability and the motive behind the information, it is necessary to be media literate, especially for the young generation. Hence, this study is conducted to investigate the status of media literacy among students of Dada Lakhmi Chand State University of Performing and Visual Arts (DLCSUPVA), Rohtak, with a particular focus on finding out the sources, awareness, verification practices, familiarity with fact-checking software, platforms responsible for the spread, and students' perspectives about media literacy programs. This research offers as an insight into the media literacy landscape among these students, shedding light on their role in shaping and consuming media content in today's digital age. Findings of the study reveals that maximum respondents believe 'social media platforms' and 'television' followed by 'newspaper' are responsible for spreading the fake news. DLCSUPVA, Rohtak is chosen as a matter of subject for this study due to the unique characteristics of students of this institution as they are both the consumers and producers of media content. These students are engaged in various media production activities, including acting, editing, audiography, cinematography, animation, painting, computer graphics, etc. Therefore, this is the best population to be studied for the purpose of a pilot project.

Keywords: *Media Literacy, Misinformation, Fake News, Fake News Detection*

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1 INTRODUCTION

Internet has not only changed the way world is seen and understood, but most significantly it has also changed the way people interact and communicate¹, by providing unprecedented access to information for individuals all over the world, over a decade. It is getting complicated because the people have to deal with greater levels of uncertainty between the familiar and accurate facts due to the availability of lots of information/misinformation. One of the biggest issues with information and misinformation in our society is that people often believe what they see or hear without questioning it² as Straubhaar³ says we shouldn't just take the information as reality and treat it like a normal event. Instead, one should distrust the intentions of the media and try to understand the factors that caused the change in the media.

Therefore, in this era marked by the rapid proliferation of digital information, media literacy has emerged as a critical skill for discerning the accuracy and credibility of information sources⁴. As, students, nowadays, primarily rely on multimedia/internet and frequently use the internet to access study materials⁵. Hence, there is a need to promote media literacy so that students can develop their critical thinking skills, responsible digital citizens, and active participants in the media landscape. Information literacy extends beyond a mere skill set and encompasses more than understanding when and why information is needed, where to get it, and how to explore, evaluate, and use it effectively. Media literacy in the twenty-first century refers to the capacity to recognise various media types and to understand various multimedia formats, including audio-visual media, social media etc.⁵

While media literacy and the detection of fake news is essential skill for all individuals, it is particularly important for the students pursuing degrees in DLCSUPVA, Rohtak. Because these students are creators, shaping narratives, and engaging with audiences through their artistic expressions (i.e. acting, editing, audiography, cinematography, animation, painting, computer graphics etc.). This institution holds a diverse student population, comprising artists, performers, and creative individuals whose perspectives and engagement with media may differ from those who are working in other field of knowledge (DLCSUPVA)⁶. They have a unique responsibility to critically engage with media content, discerning the difference between accurate information and misinformation, and ultimately promoting truth and authenticity. Therefore, this study has been undertaken to analyse the skills of the students of DLCSUPVA.

2 MEDIA LITERACY

Definition and the competencies for information literacy and media literacy are constantly changing and evolving with the advancement in technology and

the emergence of various literacies like digital literacy, computer literacy, internet literacy, visual literacy etc.⁷ However, some of the definitions are presented below:

The National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE)⁸ defines media literacy as “the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create and act using all forms of communication”. Rossler⁹ annotated media literacy as “the people’s ability to use media in a critical and beneficiary manners.” Straubhaar³ explained “Media literacy as a mean of learning to think critically about the role of media in society.” Center for Media Literacy (CML)¹⁰ explained media literacy as “a 21st century approach to education. It provides a framework to access, analyze, evaluate, create and participate with messages in a variety of forms — from print to video to the Internet. Media literacy builds an understanding of the role of media in society as well as essential skills of enquiry and self-expression necessary for citizens of a democracy”.

After exploring various definitions of media literacy, it can be said that Media literacy refers to the ability to access, analyse, evaluate, and create media in a critical and informed manner. It involves understanding the role of media in society, recognizing the power of media messages, and being able to navigate and interact with various forms of media effectively. People who are media literate are capable of understanding, challenging, and evaluating the media they come into contact with. It involves a collection of abilities and knowledge that allow people to interact with media critically, comprehend its function, identify biases or manipulations, and make informed decisions about the information they consume and produce.

3 LITERATURE REVIEW

Media platforms, specially social media, serve as the primary source of accessing and sharing information and group interactions because a variety of tools and technologies are employed by these platforms to attract the users by providing these kinds of capabilities to engage with the information. Social media is a prominent medium of information sharing and also playing a major role in academics¹¹. The media industry, media messages, media audiences, and media effects are the main components of the phenomena of mass media. One should be familiar with these fundamental components of the media phenomenon in order to access, examine, and evaluate any type of media message in the modern world¹². Due to the influence of politics on the media, we receive biased information. Therefore, training of media professionals and common men is very necessary in order to overcome the negative effects of media. There should be a systematic training through which, one is able to think critically about any information¹³. It is found by Logeswari¹⁴, et al. in their study that approximately half of the people are moderate level of awareness

about media literacy. They also underscore the need for teaching various forms of literacy including media literacy, information literacy, computer literacy, news literacy, internet literacy etc. Sisman, Yurttas & Ozge¹⁵ concluded that there should be a properly structured education so that students/viewers are able to access, analyse, and properly evaluate media information. The way fake news is created and spread, can damage a company's brand as discusses by Paschen¹⁶ by emotional makeup of the news which can eventually evokes negative emotions rather than positive ones. In order to distinguish between fake news and real news, students should be equipped with artificial intelligence. Mrisho & Dominic¹⁷ suggested when media literacy is incorporated into a society, it creates long-lasting critical thinking habits, goes well beyond socially accepted norms, and increases the curiosity in learning more. It makes members of the community who are active participants in the media rather than only passive consumers of its effect. The four media literacy models i.e. Four Dimensions of Media Literacy (Baacke, 1996), Eighteen Basic Principles (Masterman, 1989), Q/Tips (Thoman, 1993 and Jolls/Wilson, 2014), and Magdeburger Model of Media Education (Jorissen/Marotzki, 2009) were all examined by Stix & Jolls. They revealed how the media affects our lives. They compared all the models and found that media literacy is very important and it should be a part of our lifelong learning¹⁸. Apart from that, there are some programmes organised by various organisations to make the students aware about media. One such program named "FactShala" by DataLEADS, supported by the Google News Initiative, aimed to help people in small Indian cities and villages to discern accurate information from misinformation online. Launched in 2020 with support from Google.org and Internews, FactShala's team of journalists, educators, and fact-checkers seeks to empower communities with ethical information literacy and critical thinking skills¹⁹. A workshop was organised by University of Washington iSchool known as MisinfoDay: Bringing Media Literacy to High School Students, Teachers and Librarians. Students become more confident to fact check misinformation after attending this workshop, before that most students did not even know that fact checking websites exist. Therefore, there is need to educate the students about the same²⁰. Similarly the BeNetWise program impacted very effectively on youth media literacy. It improved the consumption and production of media literacy of the students¹⁸. Discussed that the Turkish Ministry of Education and the Supreme Council of Radio and Television have introduced elective courses on media literacy. They also revealed that media literacy in Turkey takes a protectionist approach to protect children from the negative effects of media²¹. Scheibe found that media literacy teaching is very important for the students²². Further, he wrote that empowerment of the students should be the goal of teacher rather than protection which is in the contrary of the statement of Oguzhan & Haydari²³. While reviewing the literature, it was noted

that the amount of information available today is overwhelming and ever increasing. The way information is presented today is often manipulative and biased. It is important to be able to critically analyse the various sources and forms of information and media in order to make informed decisions. If people are media literate then only they can tackle this flood of information or misinformation on media, especially on social or digital media.

4 OBJECTIVES

The major purpose of this study is to investigate and elucidate the current trends related to media literacy among students of Dada Lakhmi Chand State University of Performing and Visual Arts (DLCSUPVA), in Rohtak. The selected students are examined for their competencies and analytical skills in dealing with electronic/social media, especially fake news.

Some of the main objectives pursued by this study are:

- i. to understand the current status of media literacy among the students of DLCSUPVA, Rohtak;
- ii. to determine students' awareness about fake news;
- iii. to determine whether students verify information before sharing it with others on social media or not;
- iv. to assess students' familiarity with fact-checking fake news detection software/websites;
- v. to identify the software/website most commonly used by students to detect fake news;
- vi. to identify the platform(s) responsible for spreading fake news;
- vii. to know students' opinions about media literacy programs;
- viii. to know the sources from which students can acquire media literacy.

5 SCOPE

For the purpose of this study the students from DLCSUPVA, Rohtak are chosen as subject to be studied. Being a part of the media institution, students of this University are expected to be well conversed with the concept of media literacy and resource evaluation before consuming the same. Therefore, students from the various departments of DLCSUPVA, Rohtak are chosen.

6 METHODOLOGY

The data for the current research has been collected with the help of a questionnaire. However, to fill the gaps in responses, the students were personally contacted by researcher over phone as well as visiting them personally in the departments. To collect the quantitative data questionnaire was distributed to a 100 students enrolled in different departments of DLCSUPVA, Rohtak.

Out of these 100 questionnaires, 80 (80%) were received back. Received questionnaires were further cross checked for inaccuracy and to extract pertinent data, personal interaction was also done to avoid discrepancies in the responses. The collected data has been analysed using MS-Excel and represented below in the subsequent sections.

7 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Demographic Details of the Students

The analysis on the 80 questionnaires which were received back reveals that 47 (58.75%) were male while 33 (41.25%) were female respondents. As far as demographic background in concerned maximum students, i.e., 53 (66.25%) are from urban area whereas 11 (13.75%) are from semi-urban background followed by 14 (17.5%) from rural areas. However, there were 2 (2.5%) respondents who did not specify their background. When it comes to the distribution of respondents by academic department, there were 17 (21.25%) students from each of the following departments: Planning & Architecture, Visual Arts, and Film & TV. The only exception was the Design department, which had a higher number of respondents, totalling 29 (36.25%) students.

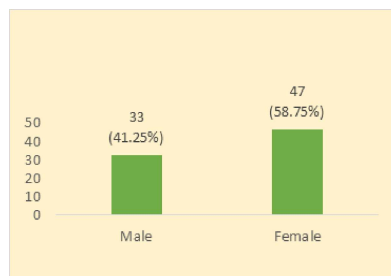


Figure 1: Gender

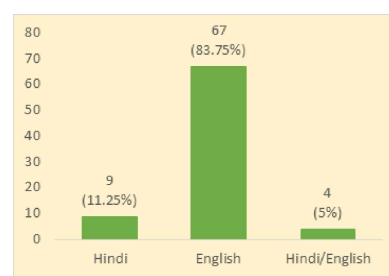


Figure 2: Medium of Course

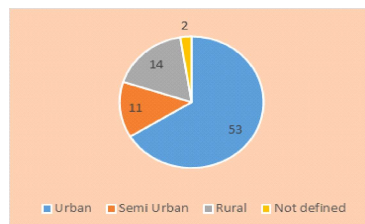


Figure 3: Nativity

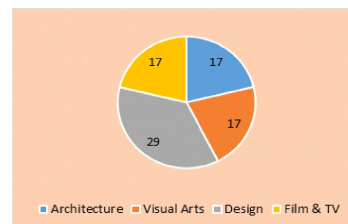


Figure 4: Department

6.2 OBJECTIVE WISE ANALYSIS OF THE DATA RECEIVED FROM THE RESPONDENTS

6.2.1 Current state of media literacy among the students of DLCSUPVA, Rohtak

Out of the total group of 80 students, 43 (53.75%) of them, i.e., roughly

more than half, have heard about the concept of media literacy. This means they are aware of the term "media literacy" and its general significance in the context of today's information-driven society. However, within this group of 43 students who have heard about media literacy, 33 (76.74%) of them possess an understanding and knowledge of what media literacy entails, while 10 (23.26%) have only a superficial awareness, perhaps have only heard the term without a detailed understanding as revealed by their next level response. On the other hand, 37 (46.25%) students have not heard about media literacy. This group is unaware of the concept and its implications, indicating a potential need for awareness and education regarding media literacy among this portion of the student population.

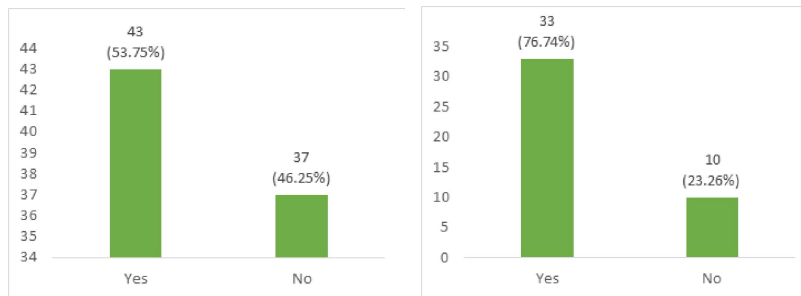


Fig. 5: Heard about Media Literacy Fig. 6: Awareness about Media Literacy

In view of the above it can be said that while a significant portion of the surveyed students have some level of awareness about media literacy, there is a subgroup within this which is awarded category that possesses a more comprehensive understanding of the subject. Additionally, there is a portion of the student population that remains uninformed about media literacy, indicating an opportunity for educational initiatives to raise awareness and promote media literacy among them.

6.2.2 Sources from which students acquire media literacy

The analysis discusses a group of 33 students and their exposure to media literacy education. Among these 33 students, 17 (51.52%) had already studied media literacy in some form, while the remaining 16 (48.48%) had not received any formal media literacy education but had acquired knowledge about it through other means, such as social media or other sources. The 17 students who had studied media literacy, they pursued various fields of study. Specifically, 8 students have studied Mass Communication, 2 had studied Journalism, 4 were engaged in other fields, including computer graphics and notably, none of them had pursued Library Science. Furthermore, 3 students did not specify their area of study, leaving it unclear which academic discipline they were associated with.

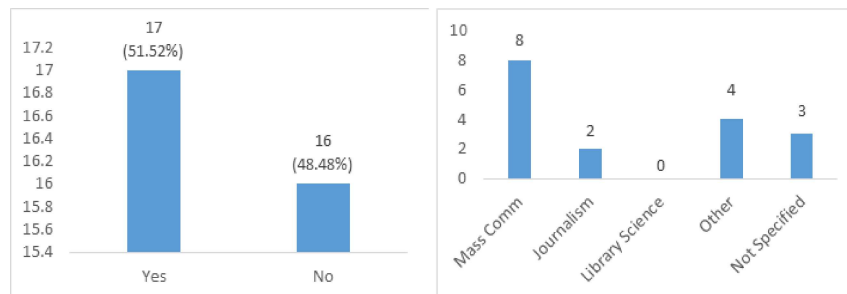


Fig. 7: Formal Education on Media Literacy Fig. 8: Subjects Studied

6.2.3 Students' awareness about fake news

About all respondents indicated that they familiar with the concept of fake news, indicating a universal awareness among the surveyed group. Among these respondents, majority, i.e., 77 (96.25%) students claimed to have a good understanding of fake news, signifying a high level of confidence in recognizing or defining fake news. However, a small fraction of the respondents, i.e., only 1 (1.25%) student, lacked any knowledge of fake news, while 2 (2.5%) students did not provide a response regarding their familiarity with the term.

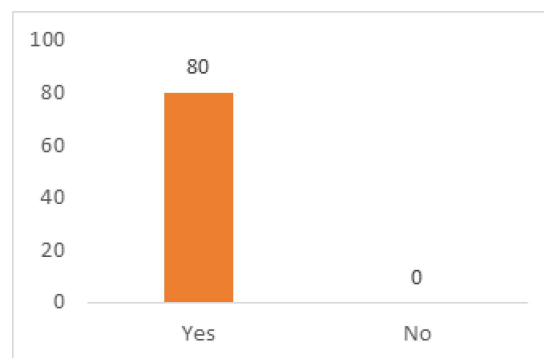


Fig. 9: Heard about Fake News

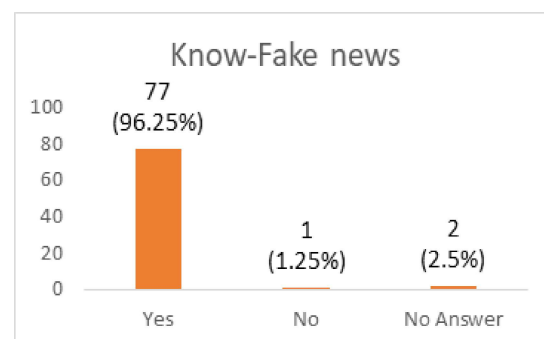


Fig. 10: Awareness about Fake News

6.2.4 Whether students verify information before sharing it with others on social media or not

Based on the responses received from 80 participants, it was observed that a significant majority, i.e., 74 (92.5%) out of the 80 respondents, reported that they have a habit of verifying information before sharing it on social media or any other online platform. Conversely, the data also revealed that there were 6 (7.5%) individuals within the sample who admitted of not checking the information's veracity before sharing it on social media or other online platforms.

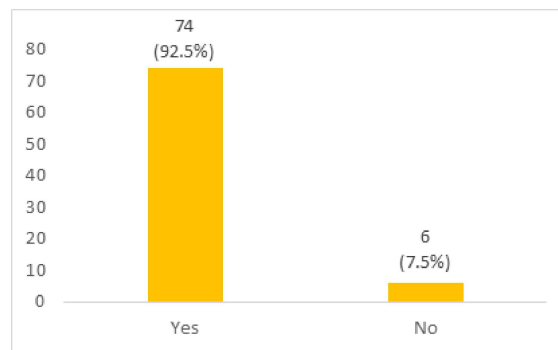


Fig. 11: Cross verification of Content before Sharing

6.2.5 Students' familiarity with fact-checking fake news detection softwares/websites

The responses were analysed with the aim of gauging their awareness and knowledge concerning fake news detection software/websites and the findings revealed that only 33 (41.25%) students out of 80 had heard about the fake news detection softwares/websites and the majority, comprising 47 (58.75%) students, had not even heard about such softwares/websites. Among the 33 students who were aware of fake news detection softwares/websites, only 17 (51.52%) had a clear understanding about their functionality. In contrast, the remaining 16 (48.48%) students, despite having heard about these softwares/websites, lacked the knowledge of their operations/functions. Furthermore, out of the 17 students with knowledge, only 13 (76.47%) actively use these softwares/websites for detecting fake news, while 4 (23.53%) students, despite being aware, do not utilize them. This data presents a significant gap in both awareness and comprehension of fake news detection softwares/websites within surveyed group.

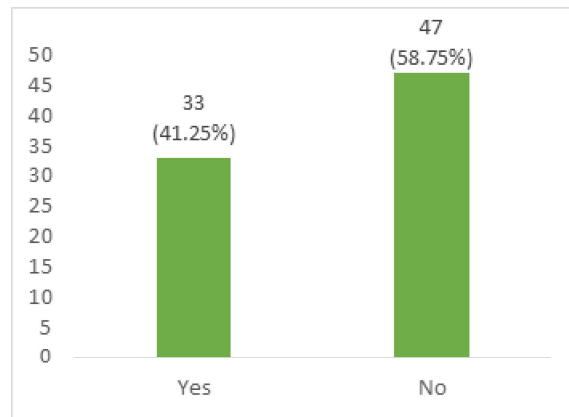


Fig. 12: Heard about Fake News Detection Softwares/Websites

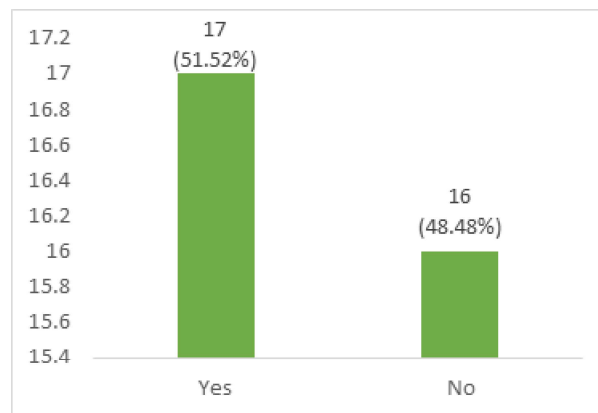


Fig. 13: Awareness about Fake News Detection Softwares/Websites

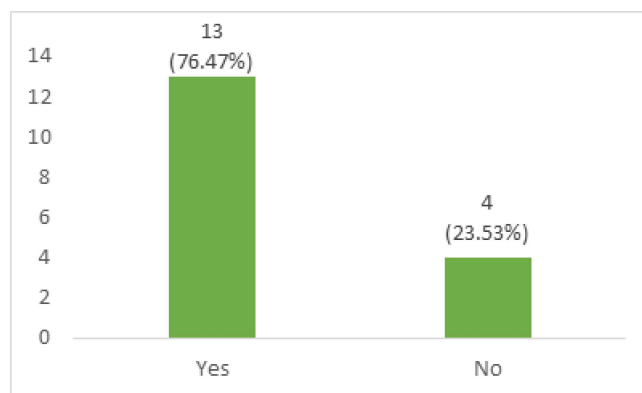


Fig. 14: Utilisation of Fake News Detection Softwares/Websites

6.2.6 The software/website most commonly used by students to detect fake news

Among the 13 (76.47%) respondents who actively use fake news detection softwares/websites, their preferences for specific tools vary. "FactCheck Explorer" did not have any reported users among this group. "Hoax Slayer" is utilized by just one respondent, indicating a niche preference for this particular resource. "Alt News" is used by 4 respondents, indicating moderate usage. "FactCheck.org" is a fake news detection website, with a moderate number of users, as 4 respondents rely on it for fact-checking. "PolitiFact" emerges as one of the more commonly used platforms, with 11 respondents relying on its services for verifying information and detecting fake news. Finally, 9 respondents indicated that they use an "other" fake news detection tool, with one of them specifically mentioning "Quint". This reveals the diverse landscape of fake news detection tools, with varying levels of popularity and user preferences among respondents.

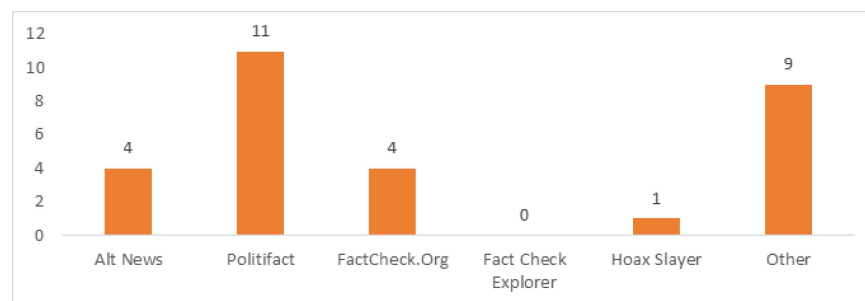


Fig. 15: Fake News Detection Softwares/Websites

6.2.7 The platform(s) responsible for spreading fake news

There are varying beliefs regarding the primary sources responsible for the spread of fake news. A substantial 43 respondents believe that "Social Media Platforms" play a significant role in propagating fake news, indicating a prevailing perception of the impact of social media on misinformation whereas "Television" is identified by 35 respondents as another significant source responsible for disseminating fake news, suggesting that traditional media also has a role in this phenomenon. Furthermore, 17 respondents attribute the spread of fake news to "Newspapers", emphasizing the enduring influence of print media. "Online News Portals" are cited by 9 respondents as contributors to the issue, while radio is mentioned by 5 respondents, indicating a relatively lower level of concern regarding these sources. Interestingly, 4 respondents point to "Other" sources, specifying "Instagram" and "Political IT Cells", highlighting the evolving landscape of media and the diverse array of platforms through which fake news can be disseminated.

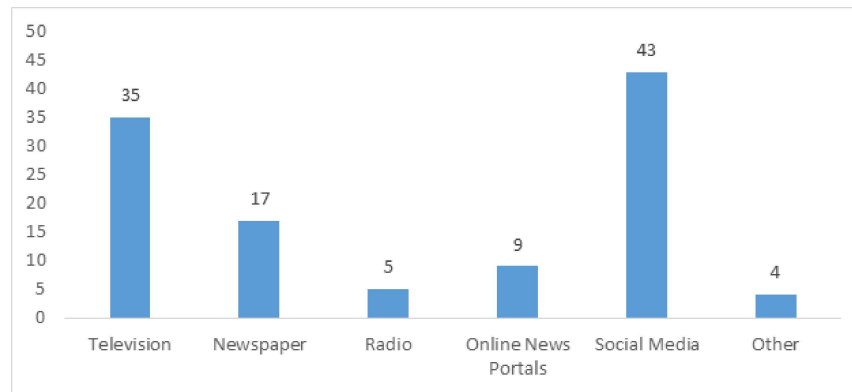


Fig. 16: Platform(s) Responsible for Spreading Fake News

6.2.8 Students' opinions about media literacy programs

Students express a range of opinions and insights on the importance of media literacy and its crucial role in today's world of social media. Some of them highlighted need for media literacy programs to empower students and to promote critical thinking. The influence of media on our daily lives and the necessity of being informed consumers was also stressed by few students.

The suggestions received from the students majorly highlight the significance of media literacy programs to promote media literacy in today's information-rich and digitally connected world which stresses the individual and community development by empowering to take informed decisions.

7 MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Findings from the study conducted at DLCSUPVA, Rohtak indicate that:

- Approximately, 54 % of the respondents have heard about the term 'media literacy' whereas, a significant portion (i.e., 46%) of the respondents remains unaware of the term, suggesting the need of educational initiatives in this direction.
- It is worth noting that all 100% respondents were using social media and have heard the term 'fake news', with 96% claiming to have a good understanding of the same.
- Majority of the respondents believe that 'social media platforms' are the primary source for spreading fake news/information followed by 'Television' and 'Newspaper'.
- Majority of the students, i.e., 92.5% claims that they verify the information before sharing it to others on online platforms. At the same time out of these only 41.25% have only heard about fake news detection softwares/ websites out of which almost half of the respondents have a clear understanding of these tools. Whereas, out

of 80 respondents only 13 uses these tools for detecting fake content. Politifact is the most popular fact-checking website which is being used by these students. Hence, it can be inferred upon that they actually do not check the information before sharing it to others as it found during personal interactions with the students.

8 CONCLUSION

Digital revolution has increased access to information at the same time it has created ocean of information, which makes it challenging to distinguish fact from fiction, often made worse by passive acceptance of the content. In such a situation, media literacy has emerged as an important skill for the students, especially for students at DLCSUPVA.

The findings of the study shows, the group which do not check facts, represents a smaller minority, their response highlights a potential area of concern regarding the unchecked spread of information, which can contribute to the propagation of misinformation or fake news online. Students also know the deep impact of media on their daily lives and the importance of becoming informed consumers. Moreover, their views emphasise that media literacy programs are essential for enhancing individual and community development. The need of media literacy in this media oriented age and the importance of media literacy programs in promoting critical thinking, responsible media consumption, and the creation of a more informed and connected society. It is also a call to action that emphasise the significance of media literacy in shaping our media landscape and our broader perception of the world.

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