



A Study to Analyze Awareness and Detection Level of Fake News among University Students

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Abstract

Fake news is not a new phenomenon, the increasing number of smartphone users and cheap internet have made it easier for people to access information, but at the same time, fake news is also easily accessible to people. From time to time, a rapid increase in fake news has been observed. This research examines the ability of young adult's ability to detect fake news and their fake news awareness level among university students in India. This study also examines the level of fake news awareness among students to process fake news on social media. A quantitative data collection method using questionnaires was used to collect data from 80 students from the university in Lucknow. This study showed that majority of respondents they don't share such fake news after identifying it as fake. The majority of respondents would re-share the post to alert other users, indicating that they are proactive in curbing the spread of fake news. Students have a moderate level of new media literacy, according to study findings. As a result, in this era of information, through media literacy education, fake news and misinformation can be identified and its increasing spread can be stopped. Therefore; today, in the time of social media, these types of skills become mandatory for adults so that they can be able to tackle the increasing challenges of fake news and misinformation.

Keywords: Fake News; Social Media; Misinformation; Media Literacy; Investigative Journalism

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Introduction

Since the previous 10 years or so, communication trends have changed, creating questions about the authenticity, quality, and impact of contents has already put the media under fire. In recent times, the deliberate spread of untruths like disinformation, misinformation, and mal-information of content through social media platforms in addition to traditional media vehicles has caused a significant number of damage in different areas of life. (Journalism, 'Fake News' and Disinformation: A Handbook for Journalism Education and Training, 2020).

The term "false news" traces back to the 1890s (Merriam Webster Dictionary, 2018). It has been used to indicate news reports that are bogus for more than a century. It has been used to indicate news reports that are bogus for more than a century.

The Oxford Dictionary and Collins Dictionary both picked fake news as the word of the year for 2016 and 2017, respectively

(Kalsnes, 2020). "News stories that are purposefully and demonstrably misleading" are also referred to as fake news [1].

News stories that are purposefully and demonstrably misleading" are also referred to as fake news. In 2016, during the American presidential election, the term gained popularity on a global level. Massive attention was drawn to websites with false information, such as the one that erroneously stated that Donald Trump, the republican candidate, had the Pope's support [2].

Fake news and social media

The phrase "fake has been in use for a while .however gained significant attention when many political experts examined Donald Trump's surprise victory in the US Presidential Election in 2016 as a result a significant of Pro-Trump Fake news that went viral on the social media.

The term 'Fake news' may be of recent origin, but the practice of spreading false news has been around the world for several

centuries. With the massive growth of text-based communication, the potential for people to deceive through computer-mediated communication has also grown, and such deception can have disastrous results [3].

In recent times, the growth of smartphone users and rising internet penetration has made social media sites the primary source of information for a large section of the population. Country's digital population amounting to approximately 658 million active users (approx. 47% and 467 million active users in social media as of February 2022. India's internet penetration rate stood at 47.0 percent of the total population at the start of 2022.

The growth and development of social media have increased the ease of dissemination of real-time information. However, along with the development of positive aspects of social media, it resulted in the exponential growth of negative aspects too.

Rational Of the Study

There are many reasons for the study. First, in the scholarly literature, there is a shortage of research on ability to identifying fake news. As social media has become an essential source of news for the users, it also makes it "difficult for people to judge the credibility of any message [4].

Secondly, this study can make significant contribution in the light of understanding the fake news awareness level among university students.

Third, this study can make significant contribution to understand detection ability of fake news among the university students.

Fourth, this study will be valuable to the identifying the intention behind the sharing fake news when they know the nature of the fake news. so we as researcher understand the cause and mitigate these causes.

Objective

To analyze awareness and detection level of fake news among university students

Research Questions

This study aims to analyses students' " ability to distinguish fake news from real news. It will also look at their fake news awareness level and detection ability among the university students.

The following questions are asked:

RQ 1: What is the new fake news awareness level among the university students?

RQ 2: What is the student's " ability to identifying fake news?

Methodology

The population of India is nearly 1.3 billion making it the second most populous country In the world. Comprising nearly a fifth of the world's population. India has more than 50% of its population below the age of 25 and more than 65% below the age of 35. It is expected that in 2020, the average age of an Indian will be 29 years [5].

In this study, the targeted participants were students in Malaysia who are active social media users. According to Bleyer and Albritton (2003) student's "age range is between 15 to 29 years old, while Petry (2002) categorized students as those aged between 18 and 35 years old.

In India, as per National Youth Policy-2003, 'youth' was defined as a person of age between 13-35 years. But the National Youth Policy 2014 considers the persons between the age group of 15 and 29 years as youth.

For this study, the age bracket is set to be between 18 and 30 years old which are enrolled in the university has been selected for this study. To answer the research question, the quantitative method, using the survey research method was used to collect data from 80 university students' students from using convenience sampling. In the first section of the questionnaire, respondents were asked about their preferred source of news?

In order to evaluate their ability to spot fake news, respondents were presented with 6 news stories that were widely circulated on social media platforms, of which six were fake. These pieces were taken from India's "s fact checking website, ppt Alt News .com.

Research Tool

Researchers applied a questionnaire method to investigate student's awareness and detection level of fake news among university.

Procedure of Data Collection

The data was collected by adopting a random sampling technique. The research tool developed by the researcher was given to 80 randomly selected students of Babasaheb Bimarom Ambedkar Central University, Lucknow.

Analysis of Data

Data collected were analyzed using the SPSS software. The descriptive statistical analysis was used to summaries and describes the respondents' demographic profiles.

Findings

The main aim of this analysis is to analyze awareness and detection level of fake news among university students "within the selected age category as determined for the study data collected through the survey.

A total of 100 respondents were selected for the survey Out of which (N=80; 80.25%) respondents were taken into account, rest (N =20; 19.75%) of questionnaires were rejected because of faulty response (**Figure 1**).

Observation: In these 80 questionnaires that were received which were completely filled 55.69% were male and 25.31% were females. This data indicates that there are significantly more men than women participated in this questionnaire (**Figure 2**).

Observation: Among the total respondents maximum percentage is that of age-group 18-24 years 71.3% followed by 25-34 years are 28.6%. It means majority of students are come from age

GENDER DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENT

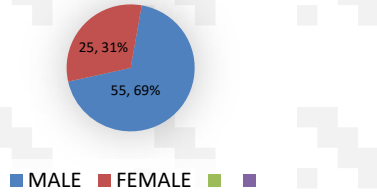


Figure 1 Gender distribution of respondents.

Profession wise distribution

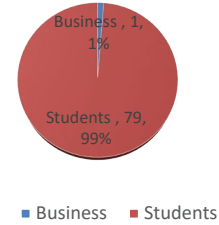


Figure 4 Profession wise distribution.

Age wise distribution

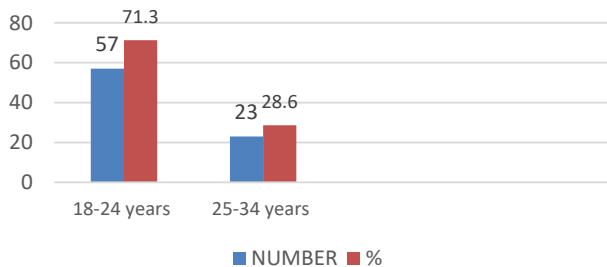


Figure 2 Age wise distribution of respondents.

Marital status wise distribution

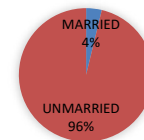


Figure 5 Marital status wise distribution.

LEVEL OF EDUCATION (%)

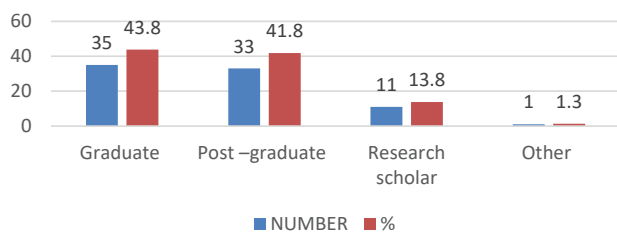


Figure 3 Education wise distribution of respondents.

preferred source of news

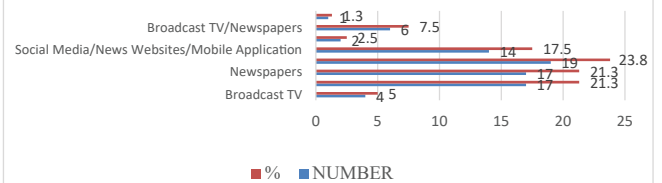


Figure 6 What is your preferred source of news?

group 18-24 years (Figure 3).

Observation: In these 80 respondents 13.8% were pursuing research scholar. Graduate and post undergraduate formed the biggest chunk of the respondents and their percentage stood at 43.8% and 41.8% while others constituted the least part at 1.3% (Figure 4).

Observation: In these 80 questionnaires that were received which were completely filled 99% were students and 1% was from the business (Figure 5).

Observation: In these 80 questionnaires that were received which were completely filled 96.7% were unmarried and 3.8% was from the married (Figure 6).

Observation: From this graph we get to know that 23.8%

respondents get news through website and mobile application and 21.3% through newspaper and social media platform, 7.5% through social media, news website, mobile application followed by broadcast 5% and by others 1.3% respondents watch news, listen or read (Figure 7).

Observation: This graph shows that majority of the respondents consuming news daily (approximately 1 hour) 60% and 23.8% respondents consuming news sometimes (2-3 hours in week) after that 13.8% respondents consuming news rarely. Only 2.5% of respondents said they read the news once a week (Figure 8).

Observation: From the graph 85 we can see that majority of respondents 65.0% have good knowledge about it and 28.7% respondents have knowledge but don't know about details. 3.8% have said that they don't have any idea about fake news only 2.5% of respondents indicated they were unsure (cannot say).

RQ 1: What are the fake news awareness levels of among the university students? This data shows that majority of the respondents (65%) have awareness about the fake news and

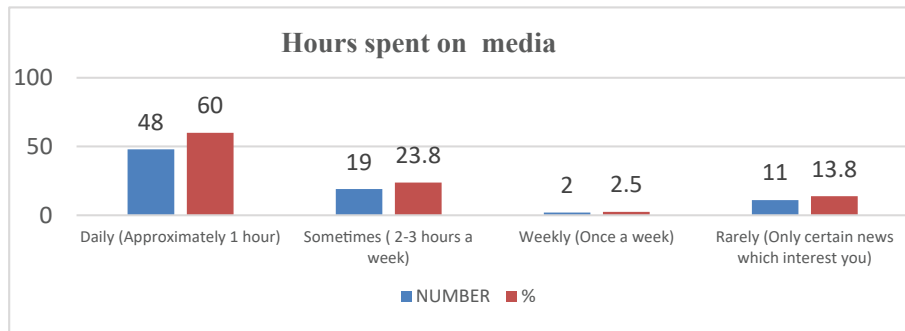


Figure 7 How often do you consume news?



Figure 8 Do you know about Fake News?

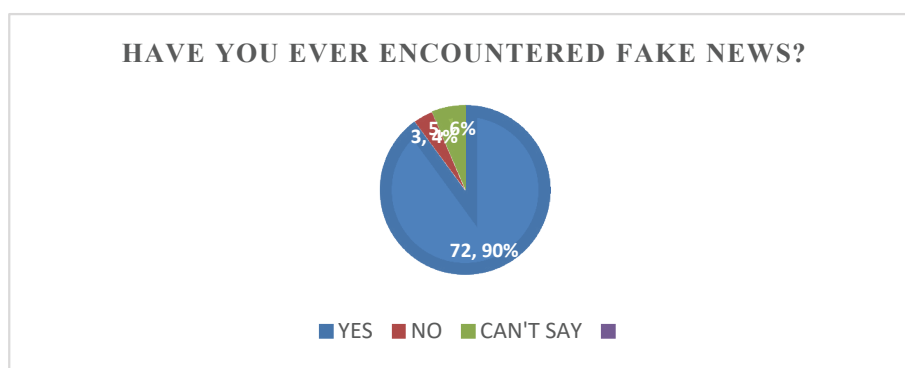


Figure 9 Have you ever encountered Fake News?

28.7% respondents have said that they aware about it but don't know how to deal with it.

Hence, in this age of social media fake news awareness is really necessary for the university students (Figure 9).

Observation: This graph shows that majority of respondents 72.90% have encountered the fake news and 3.8% respondents said that they did not encountered Fake News. Only 6.3% respondents preferred to answer cannot say. This data indicate that fake news is affecting our day to day life (Figure 10).

Observation: This graph shows that 22.5% respondents encountered fake news every day, 23.3% respondent

encountered fake news once in a week, 23.8% respondents encountered fake news once in a month. The biggest chunk of the respondents preferred to say "other" and their percentage stood at 30% (Figure 11).

Observation: The results show that fake news on social media has six dominant themes: health, religion, politics, crime, entertainment, and miscellaneous. Politics related fake news is on the top of the list with the percentage of (N=15; 18.8% followed by fake news about Miscellaneous (N=12; 15.0%) and Religion fake news (n=11; 13.8%).

These three themes make up 47.6% of the fake news stories in

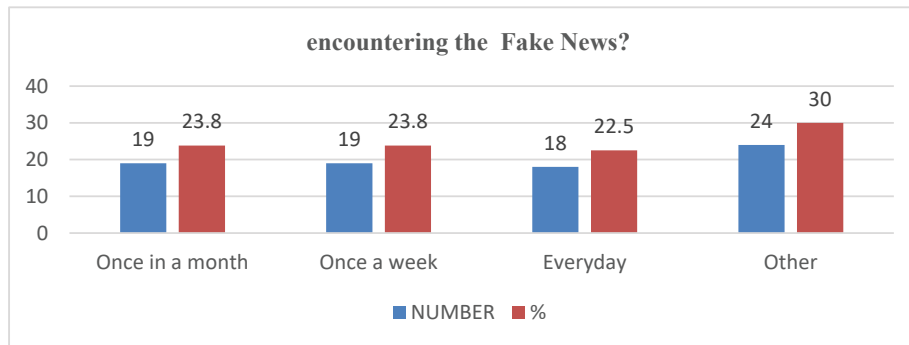


Figure 10 How often do you encounter Fake News?

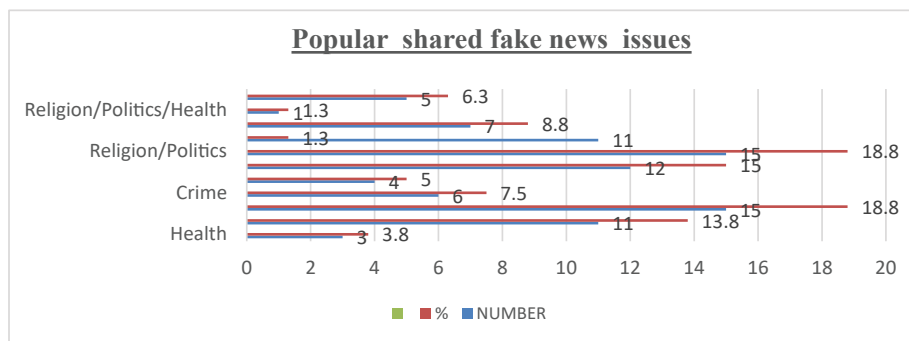


Figure 11 With which subjects do you deal with fake news?

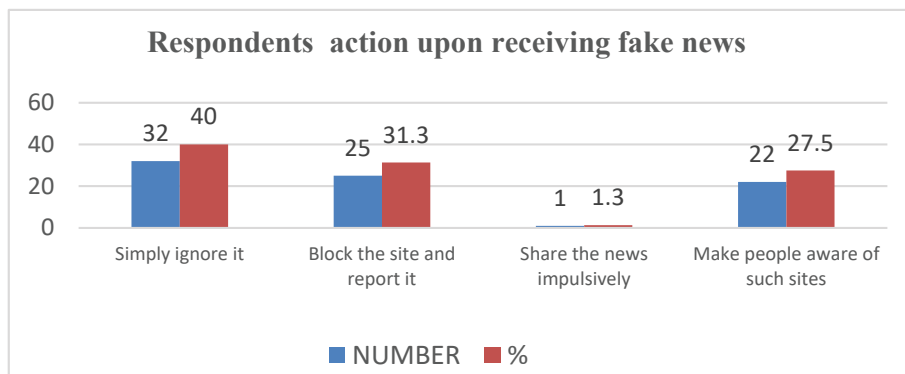


Figure 12 After coming across a piece of fake news, what is your first and foremost reaction?

this study. Crime and Entertainment fake news is on the bottom of the list (n=6; 7.5%) and (n=4; 5.0%).

Remarkably, fake news related to politics, religion, and health dominated the list, highlighting the importance of these topics in fake news (Figure 12).

Observation: In this graph, we have tried to know what the respondents did after getting this fake news. majority of respondents 40% simply ignore it .31.3% respondents after getting this fake news they blocked site and report it .after that 27.5% respondents make people aware of such sites who is spreading such fake news (Figure 13).

Observation: In this graph, majority of respondents 83.8% said

that thy don't share such stories or news after identifying it as fake and only 7.5% respondents willing to share such fake news pieces .2.5% respondents willing to share often .

This analyse show shows that people are aware and they are able to identify the fake news. They don't forward these fake news stories.

Q2. What are the university students ability to identifying fake news –data shows that majority of respondents (83.8%) believe that they are able to identifying the fake new and they are not sharing it on the social media.

In addition, the study revealed that 85% of respondents were confident of being able to spot fake news, although on average

(40%) respondents failed when researcher given multiple fake news for recognition (Figure 14).

Observation: In this graph researcher tried to identify the intention of respondents when they are aware that this story was fake but they are still sharing on social media data platforms. Data shows that 83.8% respondents recorded that they don't share stories identified as fake news but 6.3% respondents said that they share this fake news because it suits my ideological inclination (Figure 15, 16).

Observation: Graph shows that majority of respondents (N=41; 51%) have encountered this fake news before and rest of the respondents (N=39; 41%) have not encountered this fake news before. This data shows the significance of fake news among the university students (Figure 17).

Observation: This graph indicates that a larger population of respondents' 80% mentioned that they didn't share this fake news and only 5% of the respondents share this news. It means a majority of respondents don't share fake news (Figure 18, 19).

Observation: Graph shows that majority of respondents (N=49; 61%) have encountered this fake news before and rest of the respondents (N=31; 39%) have not encountered this fake news before. This result shows how wide spreading fake news is in the society (Figure 20).

Observation: This graph indicates that 66.3% of respondents believe that this fake news is not believable, and only 8.8% of respondents believe that this fake news is believable (Figure 21).

Observation: This graph indicates that a larger population of respondents' 77.5% mentioned that they didn't share this fake

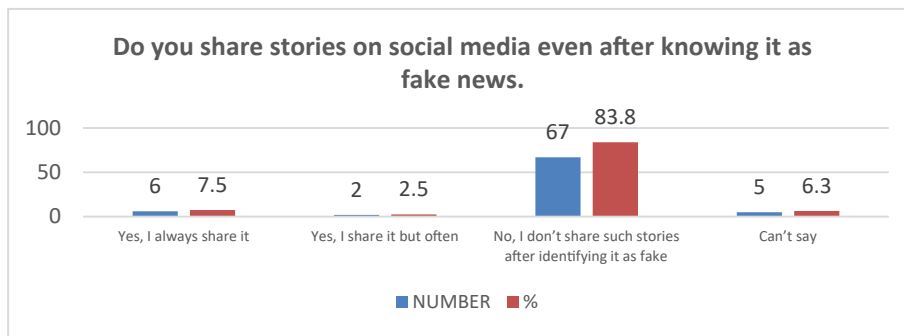


Figure 13 Do you share stories on social media even after knowing it as fake news?

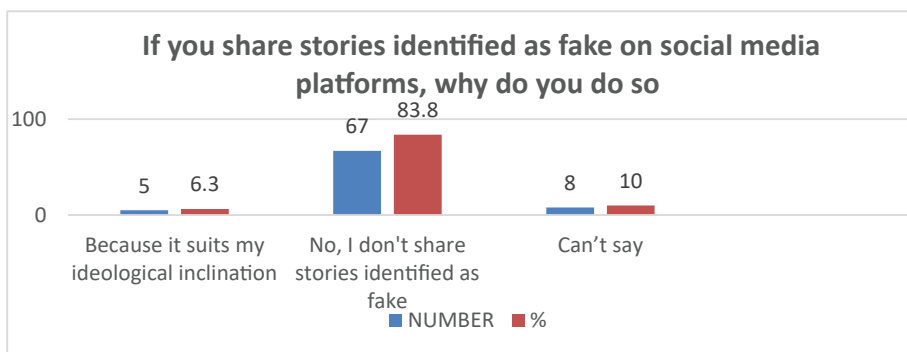


Figure 14 If you share stories identified as fake on social media platforms, why do you do so?



Figure 15 Fake news.

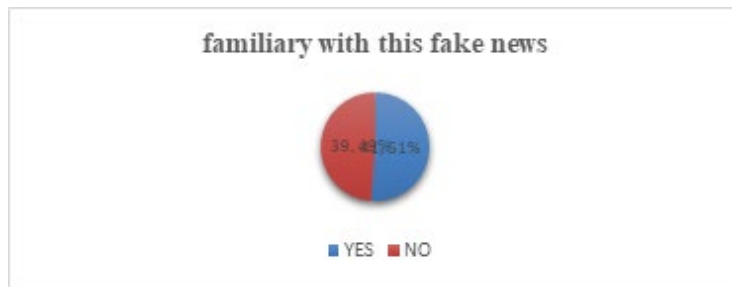


Figure 16 Have you encountered this news piece before?

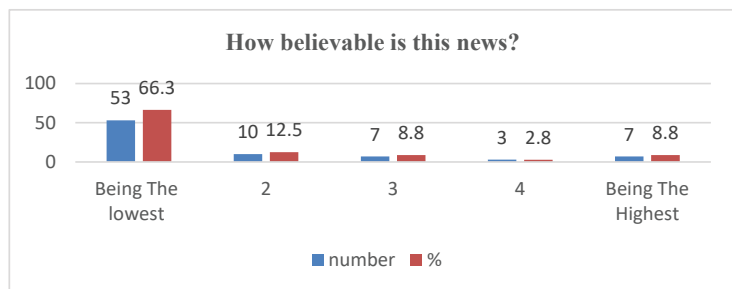


Figure 17 How believable is this news?

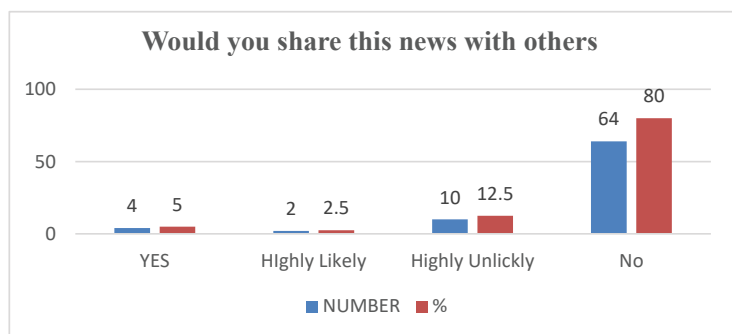


Figure 18 Would you share this news with others?



Figure 19 Fake news.

news and only 10% of the respondent's share this news .Its means a majority of respondent's don't share fake news (Figure 22).

Observation: Graph show that majority of respondents (N=45; 55%) have encountered this fake news before and rest of the respondent's (N=37; 45%) have not encountered this fake news

before .this data shows the significant of fake news among the respondent's (Figure 23, 24).

Observation: This graph indicate that 55% of respondents believe that this fake news not believable, and only 5% respondent's believe that this fake news believable (Figure 25).

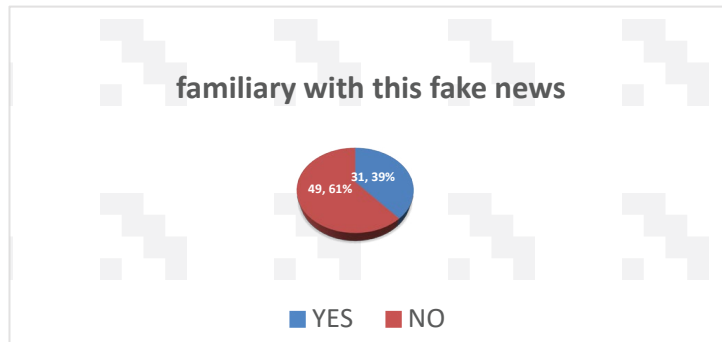


Figure 20 Have you encountered this news piece before?

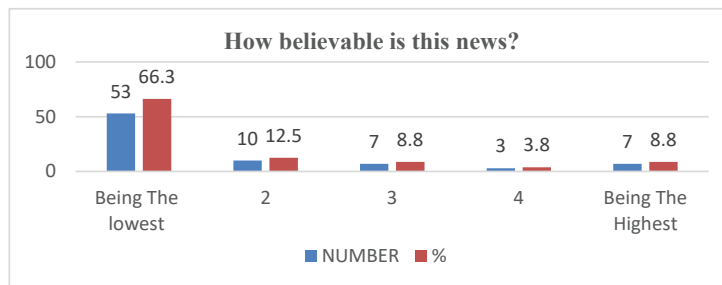


Figure 21 How believable is this news?

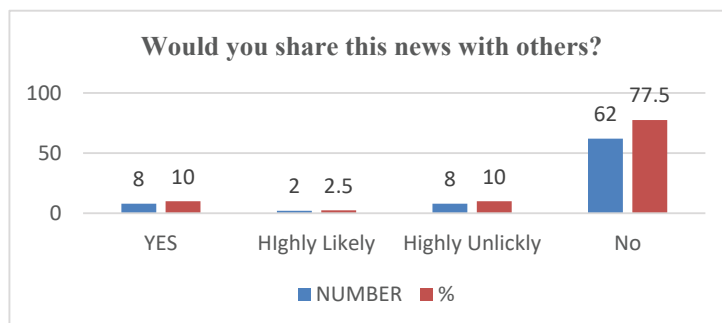


Figure 22 Would you share this news with others?



Figure 23 Fake news.

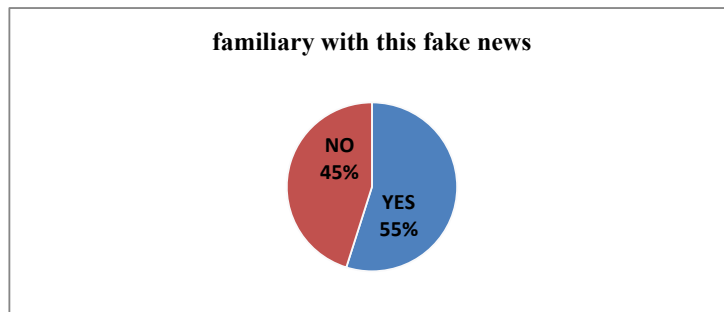


Figure 24 Have you encountered this news piece before?

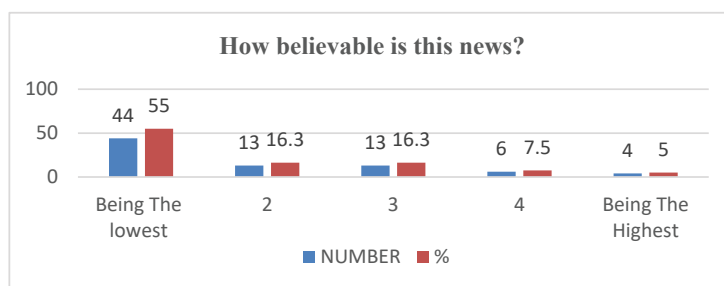


Figure 25 How believable is this news?

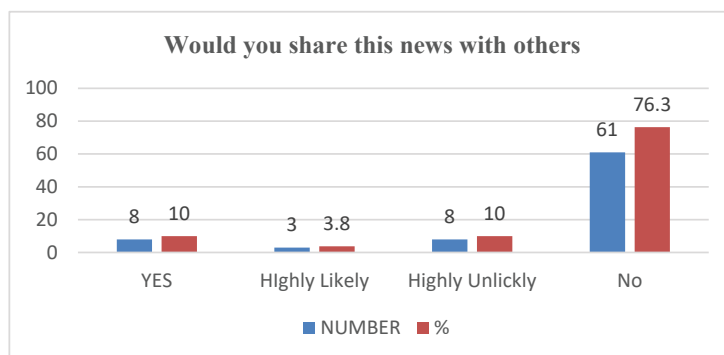


Figure 26 Would you share this news with others?

Observation: This graph indicate that larger population of respondent's 76.3% mentioned that they didn't share this fake news and only 10% of the respondent's share this news. Its means a majority of respondent's don't share fake news (**Figure 26**).

Discussion

This study shows that most of the respondents get fake and misinformation from social media. Most of the students (60%) give their time 1 to 2 hours of searching news on the social media [6].

Therefore, 22.5% of the respondents believe that they get some kind of fake news every day, 23.3% once in a week and 23.8% of the respondents believe that they face such fake news once in a month.

These figures show that in this time, fake news is a sensitive topic

and how severely affecting the students. Along with good and positive news, youth are also getting fake and misinformation.

This findings show that the social media is primarily being used to spread false information about politics, religion, and health [7].

In addition, the study revealed that 85% of respondents were confident of being able to spot fake news, although on average (40%) respondents failed when researcher given multiple fake news for recognition. (RQ2, Answered)

This mirrored the findings by [7-9], This inability of students to validate false information and questionable sources requires immediate attention [8].

Also, the results have shown that most of the respondents (80%) do not share fake news after receiving it. Most of the university students. (40%) usually ignore the fake news after getting it while 31.3% of the students block and report that site and surprisingly

27.5% of the respondents are aware of such fake news sites.

Therefore, it can be said that the students studying in the university understand the seriousness and importance of fake news very well but they needed lot more too new media education in their academia. So they can able to identify the different between authentic news and fake or misleading news [10, 11].

Therefore, media literacy training is crucial for all social media users, not only teenagers and students. So they can detect and prevent fake news and misinformation circulating in the early stage.

In summary, the findings of this study provide valuable insight into the understanding of social media, fake news and the level of fake news awareness among the university students in India.

Conclusion

Young people are particularly vulnerable to propaganda, misinformation, and fake news since information and communication technology has become such a significant part of their life today. Young people spend a lot of time online engaging in activities including playing video games, chatting, blogging, listening to music, posting selfies, and looking for new friends to chat with. They heavily rely on information shared online to understand the world and shape their perception of reality.

Affordability of smartphones, cheap internet connectivity and access to a variability of social media platforms has increased

people's ability to whip up fake news and misinformation.

From this study, we have come to know that not only the youth but all the social media users have to have the knowledge of fake news and the ability to detect it.

In developing countries like India, where media literacy is negligible and the number of users of social media is continuously increasing, this type of study becomes very important.

This study found that students have a moderate level of fake news awareness and detection ability. These results highlight the importance of new media studies and media literacy among the university students in India.

Therefore, there is a urgent need to take an important step here; especially educational institutions and higher educational institutions can include media literacy in their educational curriculum.

As a result, in this era of information, through media literacy education, fake news and misinformation can be identified and its increasing spread can be stopped.

Therefore; today, in the time of social media, these types of skills become mandatory for students so that they can be able to tackle the increasing challenges of fake news and misinformation.

Finally, the research area of this study is limited to university students in India only; therefore the results of this study do not generalize other populations.

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