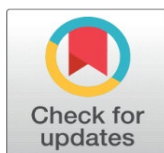
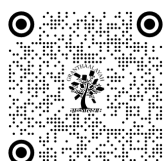


FATHOM OUT THE NUANCES OF SOCIAL MEDIA LITERACY AND ITS PRACTICAL ALLUSIONS TO MISINFORMATION – A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Digital media has become an integral part of our daily lives, connecting people from all around the world in a matter of seconds. In recent years, social media has revolutionized the flow of information and helped people to connect, share, and discuss things at their fingertips. However, this rapid exchange of information has also given rise to a concerning phenomenon – the spread of misinformation. "Misinformation" has led to a wide range of negative consequences, such as political polarization, social unrest, and erosion of trust in traditional media. This review explores the importance of social media literacy, its advantages, impacts, and effects, along with allusions to misinformation. The methodology includes a systematic search of literature in the databases from Internationally double-blinded peer-reviewed journals between 2016 and 2022, in English that also includes scientific articles. A total of 64 articles were obtained. A selection process of articles took place, applying certain inclusion and exclusion criteria, resulting in a total of 10 articles being selected. The findings signify that the conception of social media literacy has just started and more research is needed to identify its practical and theoretical implications. This is linked to the content and competencies, critical thinking, content, and context of the information, and the time and literacy level and fear of missing out on the user. Socio-emotional competencies, literacy level, and time spent stand out since social media is a frequent place of interaction between people. Thus, it is crucial to develop social media literacy skills to combat the dissemination of fake news and ensure a more responsible citizen and informed society.

Keywords: Digital Literacy, Media Literacy, Misinformation, Social Media Literacy, Systematic Literature Review

1. INTRODUCTION

People access news through many forms of digital media like smart phones, laptops, tabs, smart TV/watch, and other platforms such as social media, to search for and get news. The new media set aside people for real-time, interactive, and multimedia content, which differs from conventional media such as print, radio, and television (Dhiman, 2023). The growth of new media in recent years has reshaped industries such as journalism, advertising, and entertainment. Online news outlets deliver real-time updates, blurring the lines between traditional journalistic gatekeepers and citizen journalism. Advertisers leverage new media to reach highly targeted audiences through personalized campaigns. Entertainment has transformed through streaming services, online gaming, and immersive experiences made possible by new media technologies. According to (Dhiman, 2023) Privacy and security, Misinformation and fake news, Addiction and overuse, Polarization and echo chambers, Income inequality, and the digital divide are some of the most significant issues and challenges in new media technology. The new changes in the media make it easier than ever for people to

actively shape their news repertoires according to their habits, needs, and preferences. As opportune as these practices seem, they may favor the development of misperceptions such as "news finds me" perception (NFM) and make it easier for some people to disconnect from news and political content (Goyanes, 2021).

Adolescents regularly guzzle news on social media, which is their preferred source of news (Notley, Dezuanni, Zhong, & Howden, 2017; Robb, 2017). The role of news is to inform people, and this is now being challenged by an increasing amount of misinformation, polarizing views, non-logical thinking, and confirmation bias. The ability and fondness to think critically about news is valued more than ever as it underlies the news choices we make as informed individuals and on behalf of society (Kelly Y.L. Ku, 2019).

Social media has changed the mindset of the common man on how to share and consume information over social platforms. With 2.3 billion users, Facebook was the most popular social media platform in 2019. YouTube, Instagram, and WeChat followed, with over a billion users. Tumblr and TikTok came next, with over half a billion users (Esteban Ortiz-Ospina, 2019).

It's also important that these users are out in the open to different nuances of social media, such as politically biased aggressive messages, satire and comedy, poor images and videos depicting unwanted messages, etc. The way social media operates is entirely different from other media. It's a kind of participatory media where users can control what to see in their choice and the media can analyze what users are seeing, thereby suggesting users favor their confirmation bias (Plettenberg, N., et al., 2020). So in both ways, social media is both beneficial and also poses a threat to the user. But also at the same time, it fosters community engagement and helps the users to form groups of similar interest who wishes to interact and exchange information among peers.

Media literacy is the "ability to sensitize, analyze, and produce information for specific results (Aufderheide, 1993, (p.6). Media representations of veracity are often curtailed or inaccurate, (Hobbs & Frost 2003). According to Potter (2004), a theory is necessary to help institute a basis for the assessment of media literacy interventions. Potter argues that advancing media literacy education may even be dangerous without an appropriate understanding of what it is meant to accomplish and how and why it will do this. However, "doing something before we are clear about what we need to do is not likely to decrease the risks of harmful effects, and it may end up making the situation worse" (Potter 2004, 39).

Even though the above-said definition can be more applicable to mass media where the contribution of users is less, this concept can't be compared to social media to an extent. Social media has helped to produce and disseminate content by an individual user or group either by text, audio, video or multimedia content (Hobbs, R 2021). He referred to media literacy and understood it as knowledge, competencies, and skills for life that make the user participate in today's digital society by accessing, analyzing, evaluating, and creating messages in various ways and diverse media, as a part of media education.

Users of social media are always exposed to potentially harmful messages about personal and health topics (Mingoia, J. 2019). The users have difficulties identifying this kind of message in this post-truth era (Cooke, 2017), which is spread virally in a single share to obtain monetary or some other kind of benefits (Duffy, A. 2020). Users are the consumers of information, they must possess a good working knowledge of computers, internet and also critically think and evaluate social media messages, to find whether the news sources are providing true information or not (Cooke, 2017) since the sole responsibility of finding and choosing the correct information lies on the shoulders of the user (Wang, X. 2020).

According to Livingstone (2015), the need for literacy that particularly focuses on social media to update the analysis of media literacy is the need of the hour. In addition, there is evidence that authors define it differently; it has not been established what the content and competencies are to be included in this type of literacy given the authors working with this concept in their research.

Increasing and maintaining the media literacy level of people who use social media should be the focus of much recent attention among scholars, academicians, and researchers in this field. Academicians and researchers in the field of social science and humanities like Hobbs, Potter, Mihailidis, Adler, Ashley, Frost, Duran, and many more have contributed many research findings that can shed light on future researchers and policymakers in the field of media literacy. In light of the above, the main focus of this article is to explore and deeply dive into the understanding of social media literacy by performing a systematic literature review to better understand the concept that adequately steers efforts in the path of research, teaching, and learning processes to future generations.

2. METHODOLOGY

The questions that paved the way for this study are:

Q1: Do the current studies help to bridge the gap between media literacy and the spread of fake news?

Q2: What are the factors that are needed to be social media literate?

The search for the articles was done using keywords such as "Media Literacy, Social media, Digital hygiene and literacy, Fake news, Misinformation.

The filters used for this study are: **Year** – 2016 – 2022, **Language**: English

Type: Articles published in Various peer-reviewed journals, Scopus, Web of Science and UGC care-listed journals.

Selection criteria: A total of (n=64) articles were selected based on keywords, and were segregated based on the title, relevant abstract and field of study. (n=49) articles were then selected for the initial round of screening. Paid articles (n=23), studies that contain only abstracts, conference proceedings, and book chapters (n=12) were excluded. Then the articles were fully reviewed and (n=14) were shortlisted to apply the inclusion and exclusion criteria finally resulting in 10 articles (n=10) for the review.

3. THRESHOLD FOR INCLUSION/EXCLUSION OF ARTICLES

Articles selected were included based on the study that mainly focuses on media literacy, fake news and digital hygiene, social media literacy and misinformation. Since social media literacy is the subset of media literacy, articles that discuss the importance of media literacy and that touch on the nuances of misinformation in today's new-gen society were also taken into account.

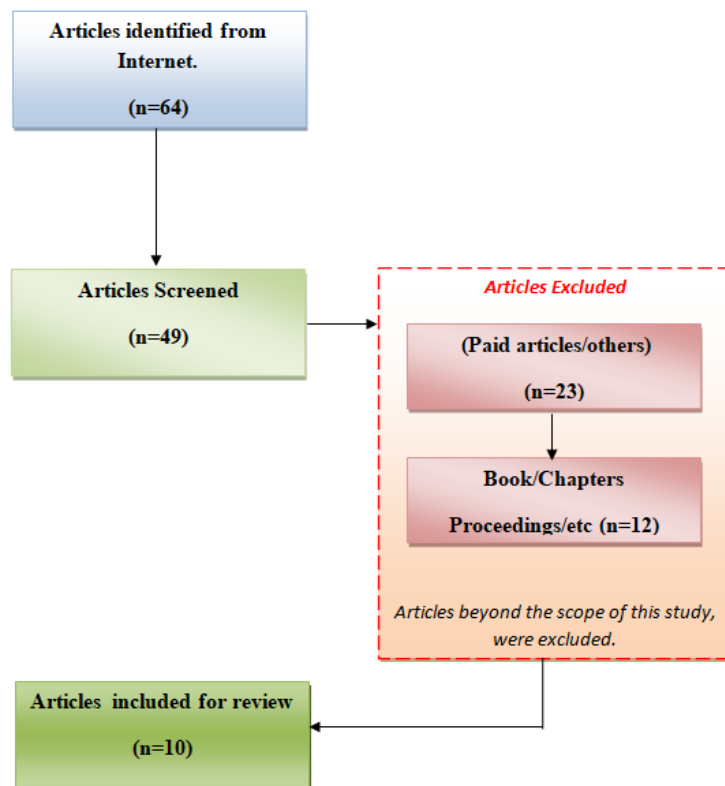


Figure 1 Flowchart of inclusion and exclusion of articles for the review.

Articles that match the research objective and questions were only included. Therefore many of the articles that were initially selected based on keywords were eliminated. A joint review and further discussion took place between the researchers to overcome the bias of individual researchers for the inclusion and exclusion of the articles.

The final set of articles was selected based on the standard quality assessment criteria (Kmet, L.M. 2004). Those articles (n=10) were read in detail and noted down the important points that are more common and different from each of those papers by each researcher. After the systematic review of the articles main results were presented in a tabulated form for easy comparison and better understanding.

4. DISCUSSIONS

Ten articles were selected for the analysis that were published in various reputed journals around the globe. Since the number of research based on social media literacy is less in number in Asian countries, most of the articles are from European backgrounds. The primary goal of this review is to bring out the limitations of each study and thereby combine those results to rectify the problem faced during this kind of research and come out with future recommendations for scholars who wish to pursue research in this area. The overall outcome, definition, and various factors were also compared and reviewed.

5. UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL MEDIA LITERACY

According to the researchers, social media have transformed the way people communicate, collaborate, and access information. It has bridged geographical gaps, empowered individuals to express themselves, and facilitated new avenues for personal connect, business and activism. After reviewing these studies social media literacy consists of various skills, attitudes and knowledge structures required to critically analyze, evaluate, and collaborate with the information that is accessible through social media platforms. It rivets discerning authentic sources, recognizing biases, and understanding the flowchart of online interactions. It also encompasses the understanding of digital etiquette and online identity. When the articles were reviewed one thing that social media literacy can do is that it can bridge the gap between the virtual and the real world thereby minimizing the risk of misinformation spread and maximizing digital hygiene. So a longitudinal study or empirical research is much needed to study the long-term influence of social media literacy.

6. CONFRONTING MISINFORMATION

Misinformation has a long history of spreading from the Roman ages to recent social media platforms. Only the mediums and the way of spreading have changed. This review acknowledges that misinformation is not a new phenomenon, but social media's amplification effect has magnified its impact. Misleading information can lead to foolish decisions, societal divergence, and the wearing down of trust in authentic resources. Besides that studies focusing on independent variables like gender, age, and location should be more focused since the level of literacy varies among each age group across different locations. Since confirmation bias plays an imperative role in the spread of misinformation along with another set of skills, studies that can deeply cut through the physiological factors should also be included for refined outcomes.

7. NEW MEDIA APPROACHES AND INTERVENTIONS

Schools, Higher educational institutions and digital literacy awareness programs can endow individuals with the necessary skills to steer the digital landscape safely and responsibly because educational interventions can play an essential role in enhancing social media literacy. Promoting critical thinking, identifying the source of information, and digital etiquette can give power to users to be more discerning consumers of information. Also, a collaboration between social media platforms and fact-checking organizations can support curbing the swelling of misinformation in social media by providing accurate information promptly.

Technological advancement in AI has started its journey and we can use that in the areas of research to inbreed and find more ways to promote social media literacy and combat fake news. Since the users communicate with each other in a digital plane, their emotions and attitudes cannot be captured by computers. It is understood by using AI algorithms based on their digital footprints. In this context, AI can be used as an effective tool to stifle the menace of misinformation. Studies on AI with humans on social media are a new area of research in the coming future.

8. CONCLUSION

This systematic review underscores the significance of social media literacy in combating the menace of misinformation. From studies focusing on the psychology of belief formation, the construct of a framework for social media literacy and research on the dynamics of information spread on social media platforms, this body of work underscores the need and the multifocal challenges associated with social media literacy and misinformation. As the digital landscape continues to evolve, individuals must cultivate the ability to critically assess the information they encounter. Enhanced social media literacy empowers individuals to make the right choices, fosters responsible online behavior, and contributes to a more informed and connected global society. As educators, policymakers, and technical giants collaborate, awareness about social media literacy and the fight against misinformation gains a strong ally in our quest for a well-informed digital hygiene world. Where and when to apply this media education is still a question. Beating around the bushes in the higher education sector can't stop the flow of misinformation. Especially in a diverse country like India the spread of misinformation and ways to combat that menace is a difficult task. So from the above studies, the researchers were able to understand that, Information whether it's fake or fact, will spread. If it's fake and sensitive it will spread rapidly in seconds to millions of social media users. However, the spread can be stopped up to a certain extent if social media literacy interventions are there among the users at some point in their age. It can be either at their primary, secondary or higher education level. But since the children are also a part of this new age information revolution, making them social media literate starting from the primary level within the secondary level can somewhat equip them to be media literate and disentangle between the good and bad in this digital world. Young learners must be equipped with the skills to navigate the digital landscape safely and responsibly. Here the teachers and parents can play a significant role in imparting the knowledge and tools necessary to be acquainted with the signs of online harassment, cyberbullying, and the potential risks associated with over-sharing personal data and keeping out of reach of leaving digital footprints. Social media and its literacy is no longer an optional skill but a fundamental requirement for participation in the digital age.

As technology continues to evolve, it is imperative that we equip ourselves with the ability to critically engage with the digital world, sift through information, and contribute meaningfully to the online discourse. Social media, when approached with mindfulness and an awareness of its impact, has the potential to be a force for positive change, enabling us to connect, learn, and grow in ways that were previously unimaginable.

9. LIMITATIONS

A review study to find out the limitations among a few other studies itself has some limitations. It should be noted that every article that is related to social media literacy and misinformation is not selected for analysis and review. It can be either missed out to include or might have been excluded due to the criteria set for this review. There might be chances were more insightful articles that were published in very highly indexed Scopus journals need to be paid and read. Researchers have only considered the articles that are accessible to them. Similarly, book chapters, conference proceedings and other review papers were not taken into account. So in the future evidence-based descriptive studies with a broad area of study comparing the methodology, and various factors applied in research and comparing the results can yield more fruitful and better results that can be used for future research.

Table 1

Author(s)/Year	Festl (2020)	
Samples	1,508 secondary school students	
Objectives of the study	Conclusion	Limitations
To develop a standardized instrument based on skills on social media literacy.	Adolescents' knowledge, abilities, and motivation positively predicted a higher level of participatory-moral, communicative, and educational behavior, with behavioral motivation playing the most influential role.	Implication for a preventive promotion of media literacy.
Author(s)/Year	Lihong We et., al. (2023)	
Samples	1068 users above are 18	

Objectives of the study	Conclusion	Limitations
To understand whether better social media literacy skills curtail the affinity towards sharing fake news	A positive association was found between trust in social media and fake news sharing. It was the most important factor that forecasted fake news sharing conduct among the sampled Nigerian population. Trust in social media and fake news sharing in such a way that the effects/relationships are stronger among those with low social media literacy skills.	Online survey made it difficult to find the exact emotions of the users. Qualitative study with in-depth interview/group discussions can give better results.
Author(s)/Year	P. P. Nedungadi et., al. (2018)	
Samples	1000 people from remote area	
Objectives of the study	Conclusion	Limitations
To illustrate an Inclusive Digital Literacy Framework for vulnerable populations in rural areas under the Digital India program	Imparting digital literacy to indigenous people in remote areas demonstrates the value of a Digital Literacy Framework as a powerful lever. Proposed Education model epitomize a practical strategy to invariable challenges by taking tablet-based digital literacy directly to communities.	The study was conducted in remote area. So the model needs to be tested across various geographical locations and people with different levels of educational qualification to know its reliability.
Author(s)/Year	Lara Schreurs & Laura Vandenbosch (2021)	
Framework	SMILE model	
Objectives of the study	Conclusion	Limitations
How to conceptualize social media literacy, How SML can change the dynamics between social media and its users, How participatory mediation processes result into SML	The SMILE model is illustrated against the background of the social media positivity bias. Finally, this new framework aims to stimulate more theory-driven research into the scholarly understanding of SML in well-being. Such insights may especially be useful for research in the field of children, adolescents and the media..	Need to develop interventions which adequately target the appropriate competencies among young social media users.
Author(s)/Year	Tyler W. S. Nagel (2022)	
Samples/Methodology	1476 students of Canadian polytechnic colleges.	
Objectives of the study	Conclusion	Limitations
Is the existing MAC2015 media literacy instrument useful in predicting fake news acumen?	MAC2015 scale of news media literacy may be an effective tool to measure not only news media literacy generally, but fake news acumen specifically.	Relies exclusively on self-reported behaviors of samples. Respondents were unlikely to have received formal news media literacy training, their self-reported confidence in identifying fake news may be earnest and accurate, but misguided. Significant non-response bias.
Author(s)/Year	Andrew M. G et., al. (2020)	
Samples/Methodology	US – 907, 283 India – 273, 369	
Objectives of the study	Conclusion	Limitations
To test the heterogeneity of the treatment effects based on the adherent geniality of the content and to test whether the intervention changed self-reported intentions to share false stories.	Shortfalls in digital media literacy are an important factor in why people believe misinformation that they encounter online. A brief intervention of digital media literacy can be effective to reduce the perceived accuracy of false news stories, helping users more accurately gauge the authenticity of news content they come across on unusual topics or issues.	Couldn't conduct comparative evaluations of the effects of different interventions. Cannot test how media literacy interventions can increase the frequency or effectiveness of accuracy-promoting behavior in social contexts.
Author(s)/Year	Mathea Simons et., al. (2017)	
Samples	454 teachers and 219 student teachers	

Objectives of the study	Conclusion	Limitations
To develop a valid questionnaire to test the media literacy for teachers.	Effective media education requires that teachers have sufficient media literacy competencies as well as the competencies to promote media literacy in students. Based on the identification and conceptualization process, twelve basic competencies were formulated, which could be assigned to three clusters, like using media, understanding media and personal locus.	Competencies in Personal competencies and pedagogical-didactic is not measured in this survey. In-depth study needed to explore more since results remain at the level of teacher beliefs in survey mode.
Author(s)/Year	Femi Olan et, al. (2022)	
Samples	356 active users of Social media	
Objectives of the study	Conclusion	Limitations
To know if FN is cascading impacting negatively on the society Does SM organizations is taking actions in reducing FN cascading?	SM should understand the risks of cascading of FN and the influence on the society at large. Implementation of fact checking tools is significant in reducing the spread of FN. Fact-checking information and public awareness can support the affected societies in combating the impact of FN.	Other constructs like SM firms power, political strategies, and societal perceptions were not studied.
Author(s)/Year	Syam and Nurrahmi (2020)	
Samples/Methodology	500 students 17-24 years	
Objectives of the study	Conclusion	Limitations
To study the vital ability of university students to identify fake news in social media.	Students lack media literacy skills to process fake news. They are finding it difficult to identify the fact and fake news, so findings suggest a new model of media literacy introducing the way to identify fake news and explore the consequences of fake news behavior. The study also suggest social media literacy should be taught at university level.	Students are not segregated into rural and urban areas. Various factors such as skills and attitudes while sharing is not taken into consideration.
Author(s)/Year	Yeh and Swinehart (2020)	
Samples	66 students in US	
Objectives of the study	Conclusion	Limitations
To find the use of social media by examining their characteristics in use of language.	The study results indicate the importance of adding a socio-cultural pragmatics components like language, interaction and behavior into the framework of social media literacy and to inform recommendations for future social media training programs.	Only language students participated. Other skills like analyzing and evaluating abilities were not tested.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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