



Enhancing Social Media Literacy and Fake News Awareness Among Female University Students: A Mixed Methods Study

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Abstract

There has been a significant increase in the spread of fake news through social media in India, and concerns about fake news have increased after pandemic year of 2019. There were numerous events across the country that were affected. University students, Being the most active social media users, are highly vulnerable to consuming and distributing fake news. The attempt made here is to understand that media literacy interventions help users to counter fake news. However, Previous studies have mainly studied the role and impact of Social media literacy in identifying fake news among students. Using the new media literacy framework, this study analyses the level of media literacy of university-going female students and their ability to identify fake news on social media. This study employed mixed methods approach. Applying convenience sampling technique, a total of 190 females (N =190) university students, pursuing undergraduate and postgraduate courses participated in this survey. After the survey, female (N=18) students were selected to participate in the Focus Group Discussion (FGD). The findings revealed that female students have low understanding of media literacy regarding identifying fake news or real news. Almost all students have good skills of creating, editing and making photos and videos. Respondents able to check, validate, and define information social media posts. They are using more than two social media platforms. Surprisingly, some students are well aware of trolling and fake news trends on social media. Based on the findings of this study, it is suggested that program of media literacy should be promoted which emphasize identification of fake news and the consequences of its distribution. Media literacy should be included in the curriculum at college and university levels.

Keyword: Fake news, Media literacy, University students, Social media.

Introduction

The use of Internet is increasing rapidly all over the world and India is no exception, with the highest growth rate of internet users in the world. According to a report by Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI), the number of active internet users in India reaches 886 million in 2024, registering a robust growth of 8 per cent yearly. Rural India is not far behind in this growth rate. It is way ahead with 488 million users and 55 percent of the total internet population resides here (IAMAI,2024).¹

¹ https://www.iamai.in/sites/default/files/research/Kantar_%20IAMAI%20report_2024_.pdf



India became the second largest of the world's Internet users as of December 2023, with 886 million internet users (speed test.net global index,2024)². India's 52.4 % population using the internet which is second in the world.³ Social media are the most visited sites in the internet. India is the home of 462.0 million social media users in January 2024, estimating to 32.2 percent of the total population. According to projections of research, 67 percent of the population of India will have access to social networks by the year 2025 (Tanushree, 2022). Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, are the most popular social media platforms in India. In particular, India has most Facebook and Instagram users in the world with 378 million Facebook active accounts and 413 million Instagram users (Statista, 2024a). Although the term 'fake news' has been in use for at least a century, it has recently gained renewed interest among media scholars and journalists, largely due to the sudden increase in false news spread via the internet. According to scholarly works, information dissemination via the Internet can potentially lead to two major impact on society; which are "universal access to information" and "selective exposure". (Brundidge, Rice,2009). Digital media literacy generally refers to the skills and strategies needed to create, evaluate, and engage with all types of digital media sources. In the context of Indian society, today most of the people do not have media literacy. In the age of information, social media has become a part of our daily lives. Because of easy access of Internet and social media peoples are flooded with the information.

However, due to lack of social media literacy, people share false or misleading content on social media, due to which various kinds of challenges have emerged in society. Which is a burning and serious issue for a healthy society and a nation. According to the latest survey conducted by digital rights organisation Social & Media Matters showed that nearly 80% of India's first-time voters are bombarded with fake news on popular social media platforms. (Social & Media Matters,2024). This highlights the critical need for media literacy education to help individuals to understand the vast amount of information available online and make informed decisions. Therefore, this study is attempt to bridge the gap as it investigates the level of social media literacy among the female University students in Lucknow. The findings from the study are proposed to develop a program for social media literacy to counter fake news among university students in the context of India.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework:

The history of fake news dates back at least a century, but its spread has never been as rapid as it is now. However, the 2016 US presidential election saw the spread of fake news, and the subsequent rise in fake news cases attracted academic and journalistic attention. Thus Fake news has a global impact. India saw a rapid spread of fake content via WhatsApp during the 2019 general election. The pandemic year of 2019 saw a 214% increase in fake news-related cases, which affected many events across the country⁴. The spread of fake news in India is massive, and there is a dire need to consider measures that can control such a pandemic.

In this research, findings suggest that susceptibility to fake news is driven more by lazy thinking than partisan bias, which opens up potential ways to fight fake news. This research also highlighted that lack

² Kantar IAMAI REPORT 2024

³ <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-deep-dive-india-rising>

⁴ <https://bit.ly/3u8sYTc>



of critical thinking of fake news can result in susceptibility to fake news instead of partisanship (Pennycook & Rand, 2018, 2019).

Pennycook & Rand, (2019). The ability to distinguish between fake and real news is associated with analytical thinking. The ability to distinguish between fake news and real news is associated with analytical thinking. This suggests that users who participate in more analytical reasoning are better at identifying misinformation, regardless of whether it aligns with their existing beliefs. According to Livingstone, Media literacy is described as the ability to access, understand and critical evaluation of media content and to create messages in various forms (Livingstone, 2004). Such a definition refers to a general definition of media literacy and does not specifically address a definition of new media literacy.

Meanwhile, media literacy in the context of social media is best described as a "set of abilities and skills where audio, visual, and digital literacies overlap". Media literacy is an essential skill to evaluate, analysis, and developing critical understanding among social media user in the context of fake news. These include the ability to understand the power of images and sounds, to recognise and harness that power, to manipulate and transform digital media, to distribute them widely, and to adapt them easily into new forms. (New Media Consortium, 2005, p. 2).

Ling, Ali, and Mustaffa (2019) highlighted the idea of critical thinking to understand social media literacy. Therefore, media literacy is an essential skill to deal with the negative effects of social media, particularly the distribution of fake news and misinformation.

By obtaining an adequate level of social media literacy, social media users will have a more critical understanding towards social media content and they will not have manipulated by easily available content. Jones-Jang et al. (2019) conducted an online survey in March 2017 on 1,2999 American nationals and found that those who have abilities to find and verify information online (information literacy) are more likely to identify fake news. Another study of Jang and Kim (2018), This study found that fake news has a third-person effect, so individuals believed that fake news had a greater effect on others than on them. Which affects the ability to think and make decisions? They further stated in this research, "partisan identification, social undesirability of the content, and external political efficacy were the factors that influenced third-person perception." (Jang & Kim, 2018). Furthermore, the current studies on media literacy, in general, can be understand according to the use of the theoretical framework to measure the concept of media literacy, i.e. no specific framework (Adiarsi, Stellarosa, & Silaban, 2015), individual competence framework (Lin, Tzu-Bin, et al,2013,), and new media literacy framework (Atmi et al., 2018; Chen, Li, Lin, Lee, & Ye, 2014; Chen, Wu, & Wang,2011).

Fake News (FN) and Social Media Literacy (SML):

Previous study found that social media literacy(SML) have been playing essential role in curbing the fake news. Sachdeva and Tripathi (2019) have investigated the Indian youth and drawn conclusion that Media literacy becomes essential for the youth as they are the primary social media users, if social media users are not media literate and information literate then the India is not going to achieve a status of developing nation. Media literacy will play an important role in developing information economy. Al-Zaman, Md Sayeed (2021) in his research found that, fake news shared on social media was basically have six major theme: health, religion, politics, crime, entertainment and miscellaneous. this research also identified the two main source e.g. online source and mainstream media. Mainstream media mostly produce political fake news. Bali, et al (2019), this paper identified the fake news as a possible challenge



in the context of disruption of public share and policy making can help to reduce the spread of fake news. Raj, and Goswami (2020) have conducted survey on 300 social media users across India, and collected this survey online in April 2020 during nationwide lockdown. This study found that self-regulation will not be the proper solution no controlling the spread of fake news. But organising effective campaigns in order to regulate the fake news over social media platforms.

New Media Literacy Framework

In this study researcher opted new media literacy framework developed by Chen et al. (2011) and later developed by Chen et al. (2014) which consists of a two-way scale, Critical-Functional and Consuming-Prosuming that form four new media literacy division, namely Functional Consuming, Critical Consuming, Functional Prosuming, and Critical Prosuming.

Chen et al. (2014) propose four division including nine indicators as follows:

1. Functional Consuming is defined as the ability to access media content (consuming skills) and understand the textual meanings of such content (understanding)
2. Critical Consuming is defined as the ability to interpret media content in a specific social, political, economic and cultural context. Critical consuming includes three indicators, i.e. analysis (performing a textual analysis of the media content), synthesis (comparing and combining information from multiple sources), and evaluation (criticizing media content).
3. Functional Prosuming is defined as the ability to operate software to produce, disseminate, and duplicate media content.
4. Critical Prosuming is defined as the ability that requires a contextual interpretation of media content. It is measured by the ability to actively and critically participate.

This study deploys the new media literacy framework to investigate the critical ability of social media literacy and fake news awareness among the female university students.

Objectives of The Study:

The primary objective of the current research is to investigate the Social Media Literacy and fake News awareness among the university female students. This research is based on female students who are studying at Central University are being examined. There are following objectives:

- 1) To explore the social media literacy among the university girl student's.
- 2) To evaluate having the skills of fake news identification.
- 3) To pick out the motivation of using social media.
- 4) To summarize the suitable suggestions and importance of social media literacy.

Research Methodology

This study employed mixed methods, quantitative and qualitative methods. By using this



method, the study aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of Social Media Literacy and fake News awareness among the female students. The sample was collected using convenience sampling technique. The participation was voluntary. This study only selected female students who are the active user of social media at the Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University (A Central University), Lucknow and have active social media accounts preferred. The researcher developed the questionnaire accessing the respondent's demography and the level of social media literacy.

The questionnaire was administered in English and Hindi for the respondents convince and understanding complete comprehension. Respondents were asked to complete the questionnaires by themselves (self-administered survey) with consent. For demographic questions respondents were asked to identify their gender, age and education this personal information as confidential. This study collected primary data from 190 female students from central university located in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. Questionnaire included a Likert scale with closed-ended questions. Were distributed among respondents. Where 190 female students participated in the survey and 18 female students participated in the focus group discussion.

Furthermore, the items to measure the level of media literacy was developed and modified from the framework proposed by Chen et al. (2014), consisting of four dimensions: Functional Consuming (nine items), Critical Consuming (seven items), Functional Prosuming (seven items), and Critical Prosuming (one items).

Items were measured with a 4-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 4 = strongly agree). The 4-point scale was selected to remove the respondents' tendency to choose the middle options (neutral answer). The higher the score, the higher the level of social media literacy possessed by respondents. In addition to a quantitative method, this study also employed a qualitative method. This study conducted a Focus Group Discussion (FGD), FGD was intended to explore more detailed aspects of social media literacy and fake news awareness. FGD was organised two times comprising two groups of 9 female students. The contributors were selected using a purposive sampling method based on the criteria that they were active students at university and they are active social media users. The FDG was conducted, recorded, and transcribed in English. Data were analysed qualitatively and coded based on indicators of Functional Consuming, Critical Consuming, Functional Prosuming, and Critical Prosuming. The findings that emerged from the FGD were also crosschecked with the results from the quantitative study.

Research Techniques:

Statistical analyses - Statistical Product and Service Solution (SPSS) software version 22

The statistical test was a descriptive test based on the mean score for each dimension of social media literacy. The respondents who had the mean score of less than three were classified as having low social media literacy levels, while those having the mean score of more than three were categorised into the high level of social media literacy.

Reliability test:

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.821	26



The reliability test was done with 26 questions. Cronbach's alpha score to test the reliability of the questionnaire. An important tool for determining an instrument's stability and internal consistency is the reliability test. It is unacceptable if the Cronbach Alpha value is less than 0.60. The Cronbach Alpha value (Hair, 2010) is deemed moderate and acceptable if it falls within the range of 0.60-0.80. It is a very good value if the Cronbach Alpha is above 0.80 – 1.00. The reliability value in this study is 0.821 which is regarded as very good.

Analysis and Discussion

Table 1:

Respondents' profileThe primary sample size was two hundred (200). The data is collected from 190 respondents with a response rate of 95 %. The analysis of the study is done with the responses from 190 University female students. The demographic profile of the students is mentioned below.

Table 1: Demographic profile of student

Demographic status	Category	No of respondents	In percentage
	Female	190	100 %
Age	18-20	54	28.4 %
	20-22	91	47.9 %
	23-25	42	22.1 %
	25 and above	3	1.6 %
Education	Graduation	80	42.1 %
	Post-Graduation	110	57.9 %

Table shows that the majority of respondents' from 20 to 22 years' age group which is 47 %, age group 18 to 20 which is 28 %, 23 to 25 year which is 22 %, and 25 and above is 1.6 %. details are presented in Table 1. Academic profile shows that majority of the respondents from the post-graduation (57%), followed by graduation which is 42%.

Table 2: Daily use of internet –

Demographic	Hours	No of respondents	In percentage
	less than1 hrs	6	3.2 %
	1-2 hrs	19	10 %
	2-3 hrs	38	20 %
	3-4 hrs	65	34.2 %

	more than 5 hrs	62	32.6 %
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Table.2 shows that daily uses of internet by female student in University. 34 % of the female students in University spend time on internet 3 to 4 hours, followed by 32% female students uses internet more than 5 hours ,20% female students spend time on internet 2 to 3 hours ,10 % female students spend time on internet at least 1 to 2 hours, and 3% female students spend time daily on internet only less than one hours.

Table 3: Daily use of the social media

Demographic	Hours	No of respondents	In percentage
	less than 1 hrs	42	22.1 %
	1- 2 hrs	66	34.7 %
	2-3 hrs	43	22.6 %
	3-4 hrs	28	14.7 %
	more than 5 yrs.	11	5.8 %

Table 3 reveals the daily uses of social media platforms used by the female students. 34 % of the female students in University spend time on social media platforms 1 to 2 hours ,22 .6 % female students spend time social media platform 2 to 3 hours ,22.1% female students spend less than one hours,14% female students' spends time on social media 3 to 4 hours' social media platform, and only 5% female students' are using daily social media platform at least more than five hours.

Table 4: Purpose of using social media.

Purpose	No of respondents	In percentage
making new contacts	4	2.1 %
entertainment	56	29.5 %
educational learning	63	33.2 %
share ideas and content	21	11.1 %
keeping in touch with others	21	11.1 %
filling spare time	18	9.5 %
supporting good cause	7	3.7 %

Table 4 explains the purpose of using social media by the female University students. 33 % of the students use social media for educational learning. 29% of the students use social media platforms to entertainment. 11 % of the students use the platform for Share ideas and content, keeping in touch



others, 9 % of the students use the platform for filling spare time, 3 % of the students use the platform for supporting good cause and 2% of the students use the platform for making new contacts.

Functional consuming

Table 5: Functional consuming

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
I can access more than one social media platforms	2.72	.756
I am using social media platforms a day	2.92	.646
I can find the information I need on social media	2.91	.768
I can use Facebook features	2.17	.796
I can use Instagram features	2.67	.760
I am aware of social media's privacy features	2.94	.695
I understand the meaning of emoji	3.01	.625
I am aware of the significance of the social media content.	3.03	.585
I am able to identify trolls on the social media posts	2.82	.694

This section describes the findings related to the respondents' ability to consume media and comprehend meaning from the content. As detailed in Table 5, it is evident that the female university students in Lucknow possessed a good ability to access and understand social media content. Most of the respondent were confident to find the information they needed on social media. They believed that social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter provide them with important information. Moreover, they use more than two social media platforms daily. Almost all the respondents considered Twitter and YouTube as the most trusted social media platforms. Findings also indicate that the majority of female student's respondents were able to utilises of Instagram features instead of Facebook. the mean score of item "I can use Facebook Features fell in to the low level category.

Finally, most of the female student's respondents could understand posts on social media and meaning of emoticons. Qualitative findings also confirmed that most of the female respondents have and actively engagement on more than two social media networking sites. They are more familiar with the Instagram features than Facebook features. they are regular visited and most visited social media platforms are Instagram, Twitter, YouTube and Facebook. With respect to news, Twitter was the best options for news information. Instagram was suitable for the promotion of channel and self-presentation, but not for seeking information and news. many female respondents expressed their concerned regarding Snapchat privacy features.

Most of the respondents understand the trolling in their post or content and they blocked trolls and report such users. Several respondents admit that they often use Facebook, it is outdated social media platform and they were using it in their intermediate school days. As the low mean score of using Facebook features show that they are more familiar with the Instagram features. Majority of respondents admit that Facebook as a hub of fake news or propaganda, for the seeing information they prefer twitter.

Also most of the respondents admit that for reliable information they visit mainstream media platform rather social media. Most of the female respondents said that they only knew the meaning of the most commonly used emoticons including fun, cry, smile, and sad. However, they recognized that they sometimes were unsure of the emoticon's meanings, such as high five.

Critical Consuming

Table 6: Critical Consuming

Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
I always double-check information I get on social media to make sure it's accurate.	2.76	.673
I look information from various sources	3.04	.575
I don't always believe what I read on social media.	3.01	.567
I define information as fake news after reading from various sources	2.76	.683
I like to further analyse information I receive from social media	2.91	.645
There are political interest and agendas behind the message disseminated by the media	2.96	.692
I like to understand the reasons and causes behind the post	2.90	.728

This section explains the outcomes associated with the female students' abilities to interpret the textual meaning of social media content, to synthesise information from various media Platforms, and to evaluate the media content. Examines on the mean score from each item indicated that most of female respondents were able to interpret social media content, seek information from various media platforms, and critically assess the information they obtained from social media.

The details are presented in Table 6. They look information from various sources and cross check information most of the respondents admits that they do not easily trust any information received by social media. Majority of respondents believe that mainstream media outlets and media houses provided more accurate and authentic information than social media. we identifying such information through our understanding. Most of the respondents explains that most of the news on social media are clickbait, so we don't trust easily and forward.

Finally, most of the female respondents are able to understand the political biased news/posts and they are able to analyses posts /stories on social media.

Qualitative findings also confirmed that most of respondents active on more than two social networking sites. The most visited social media platforms were Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. Instagram was the most popular among the female respondents.

On the other hand, the results from focus group interviews show slightly different results. Several respondents admit that they cross check information and most of the times we check information from various sources. Hence they do not easily trust any information received by social media. Regarding



the confirmation of news that it is correct or incorrect they trust on mainstream media sources and media houses. Some of respondents admit that they don't have time to cross check such information so they identifying such information through our instinct. Some of going to check information on others sources like mass and others sources like television and newspaper. Surprisingly, most informants expressed that Everyone has different interpretation/opinions about such post and they respect that regarding the freedom of expression. They are able to understand and analysis the politically biases news so that understand that there is manipulative post and such post had agenda to disseminate their personal interest. Most respondents expressed difficulty in identifying fake news and manipulated posts on Facebook. Many respondents understood the meaning of trolling and its serious impact on their mental health.

Functional Prosuming

This segment describes the findings about the capabilities to operate software or apps to create, distribute, and duplicate social media content.

In general, based on the mean scores of all items for Functional Presuming, it can be concluded that the respondents' skills for this category are considered High. The details are presented in Table 7. Table 7 demonstrates that according to the means score, nearly all respondents knew how to create social media accounts and edit pictures or photos. It can be understood through the format of the user friendly software to edit pictures.

However other items show the mean scores of less than three, it means that they are regarded as low. A number of respondents revealed that they are inclined to have skills deficit in making videos and memes. Concerning social media post behaviours, respondents showed that they disliked Posting anything to social media.

Nevertheless, the standard deviation scores for these four items are high, it means that there is a significance difference among respondents about the four items about posting behaviours category on social media. In addition to, most of the female respondents are more concern about posting and sharing post on social media and they also have concerns regarding their privacy and safety. There were also a few of those items about that they like to post their pictures, emotions, activities, ideas, thoughts, and expressions on social media.

Focus group discussions, provided more elaborative results. Most of the respondent's able to create social media, able to run and post their photos, videos and content.

In contrast to the survey findings on posting attitudes, some informants said they liked uploading certain photos on the occasion. For new or very special occasions, most female respondents agreed they would like to talk photos and uploads to their social media account. Most the female respondents prefer to post on Instagram and Snapchat.

However, most of the female respondents admitted that sometime they feel uncomfortable while sharing their personal photos on social media because of the privacy issues and people's comments. On the other hand, in social media account they only add or connect with people whom they know personally. They also make their personal account private because of the privacy concerns. Some of the female informants confessed that they were rarely post personal information and photos to do so because they would get insulted on the ground of their looks, body, colour, and, lifestyle with extent to the body shaming. In addition to purpose of social media platform majority of participants admitted that social media platform is being used for self-promotion and self-branding.

Table 7: *Functional Prosuming*

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
I can create social media account	3.13	.721
I can edit photos or pictures	3.06	.702
I can edit videos	2.91	.805
I can make memes	2.56	.856
I can make video	2.83	.798
I like sharing photos to my social media	2.57	.885
I like posting how I feel to social media	2.27	.834
I like posting my ideas to social media	2.42	.791
I like sharing my personnel things on social media	1.84	.724

Critical Prosuming

This section describes that findings of the respondent's abilities to analyses social media content and able to identify the fake news and critically participating social media discourse.

In over-all, based on the mean score of a single item, it can be concluded that the respondents' do not have adequate skills in critical presuming. The details are presented in Table 8.

The findings from the survey show that the tendency to share fake news is also a major issue and it is prevalent in qualitative findings. some participants acknowledged that sometimes intentionally shared post that was believed to fake news on social media. Later when they realize that they have made a mistake, so they remove that post from there. Its shows the critical use social media of respondents.

Meanwhile, Participants say that we used to spread fake news earlier when we had just started using social media but now we don't do it and if we do it knowingly or unknowingly, we take it back. Most of the respondents admit that they share information only when it is correct otherwise they do not. Furthermore, most participants agreed that people leave critical comments on posts considered fake news only when the information is in their best interests.

Several informants mentioned, during Covid-19 Pandemic, vaccine-related fake news was very common where they verified it through various media houses and government information system and after verifying it they shared it with their friends and family members.

Table 8: *Critical Prosuming*

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
I do not know that if I am sharing news is fake or true	2.11	.795

Based on the four dimensions of new media literacy, the key quantitative and qualitative findings are summarized in Table 9.

Table 9: Major findings of the survey and focus group discussion

Dimension	Quantitative Results	Qualitative Results
Functional Consuming	High	Able to use social media platforms , seek information on social media, understand the social media content, understand the motive behind the social media post .
Critical Consuming	High	Able to check, validate, define information various sources. Able to identify the correct post and content.
Functional Prosuming	High	Able to open account and Create, edit photos, videos, memes. Not sure about sharing their personal information on social media.
Critical Prosuming	Low	Tend to share fake news for fun. confused to identify fake news.

The use of mixed methods in this study not only provides a general description of university students' media literacy skills, but also explores aspects of their media literacy skills in more depth and detail. As detailed in Table 9, the quantitative research results show that students have a high level of media literacy in the elements of functional consumption and critical consumption, while they are low in the elements of Functional Prosuming and Critical Prosuming. However, the results are relatively problematic when compared with the results of the focus group discussions, which further explains some of the contrasting results.

First, both quantitative and qualitative findings confirmed that students have high skills in functional consumption. They can use social media to obtain the information they need and to deliver content, as well as all of its features. They have good ability to use and understand the social media. They also understand the latent meaning of the social media post. they are able to identify the trolling on the social media post.

Second, results from the quantitative and qualitative data shows that high critical consuming, further analysis of qualitative findings revealed that the respondents admitted that they found difficult to identify the fake news. There is also a reflection of limited critical responses towards the information they receive on social media. Moreover, most of the participants admits that their response towards the fake news identification understanding influenced by some factors such as their political beliefs and personal interests. These qualitative findings ultimately indicate that their critical consuming that is high but it is not apply to the quantitative findings results.



Third, this research also finds that contradictory results from both methods, albeit the fact that both methods document lack of abilities in the concept of functional presuming. While quantitative results documents low preferences in posting to social media, on their social media, especially photos. Some of them acknowledges that they preferred posting their photos after editing. Instagram was the most preferred social media platform and Facebook was the least preferred among the participants. In addition to sharing photos and their personal information on social media account, participants have raises their concerns of social media platforms. Qualitative findings also revealed that most of participants raises their concerns related to social media privacy, e.g. stealing photos, misuses of photos and trolling.

Fourth, findings from the qualitative and quantitative in terms of critical presuming are low its backed by both results. While quantitative findings show a low level of critical presuming as students were not sure to identify fake news, they shared fake news intentionally or unintentionally. However, qualitative results found that some student's shared fake news unintentionally but when they found that they did mistakes so they correct it. It is reflecting the participants understanding of the severity of fake news impact and its complications.

In general, a closure examination of the quantitative and qualitative results shows that the functional consuming, critical consuming and functional Prosuming is high among the students. Its means they are able to use social media features, able to validate and define information, edit photos, videos, and able to understand what privacy means to them. On the other hand, degree of critical media literacy is low among the female students. It shows sometimes they confused to identify the real news. Most of the user shared it to others.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study aimed to investigate the Social Media Literacy and fake News awareness among the female students. The findings of this study revealed that female students have high media skills and ability to create social media account, post and edit photos and videos on the other hand they lack skills to deal with fake news. Respondents capabilities are relatively good in terms of functional and critical consumption. They can easily create, post and interpreted the post in social media. They demonstrate the ability to use various social media platforms and their features. They understand the tools and features of the social media platforms and they are able to use it. Often they have concerned about social media app privacy features. Research found that respondents understand the social media content and they don't forward or share it immediately. they don't trust social media post easily. However, sometimes they are unable to identify source of original post. On the other hand, results show a lack of ability in Critical Prosuming. They show an inability to create new content such as memes, videos, and editing. They shared sometimes unverified information without any reason. They tend to share fake news for un and they are also not able to identify the real news and fake news. Fake news is the challenging aspect of the respondents which is very prevalent. they are not able to tackle and media literate.

Hence, the findings suggest a new model of media literacy, which offers a way to identify fake news and explore the consequences of fake news behaviour among university students in Lucknow. Also,



this study recommends social media literacy to be a compulsory taught at the university and college level, Currently, media literacy is limited to media studies and technology based courses. This also emphasizes on the active development of policies and its solutions to countering the fake news. Developing Robust combat mechanism will help to counter fake news ecosystem. Besides, the findings also highlight the importance to campaign social media literacy in various platforms such as public service advertisements. Such advertisements and campaign will help in making the public aware. A social media literacy country is the need of the hour. Responsible social media use must be taught at every college and University in the country and especially in the rural areas where people can be easily manipulated.

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