

Navigating the Post-Truth Era: A Critical Study on Media Literacy and Misinformation in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

The term post-truth captures a moment when settling disagreements now often depends less on hard evidence than on the emotions a claim stirs. In that environment, misinformation slips into classrooms faster than most instructors can build an awareness filter. Scholarly investigations reveal the simple act of checking a source is no longer optional; it is the bare minimum for any student who hopes to make sense of a scrolling news feed or a tweet storm. Educators have begun to notice that when learners practice those checks, their broader critical-thinking habits visibly strengthen. Traditional lectures, however reliable in the print era, fall short because they do not mirror the fast-moving, fragmented digital world students actually inhabit. Literature on media literacy in higher education teaching illustrates a range of course designs and instructional methods that now leave an imprint across the curriculum. Collectively, the studies testify both to increased student interest and to stronger long-term recall of key concepts. This study argues that overhauling the syllabus to treat source scrutiny as routine instruction, rather than an add-on workshop, might give graduates the tools to meet a landscape where truth no longer stands still.

Keywords: Critical Thinking; Higher Education; Media Literacy; Misinformation; Post-Truth

INTRODUCTION

People now often talk about living in a Post-Truth Era, a time when a gut feeling trumps hard evidence, and the headlines you trust matter more than the numbers behind them. In Indonesia, that mood hits harder than in many other places because WhatsApp and Twitter spread half-baked rumours almost before officials can deny them. Buckingham (2019), writing from outside the archipelago, warns that fake stories chip away at democracy and leave voters grasping at phantoms unless schools step in with real media literacy lessons. Economic stress and fraught elections make things worse on the ground; Dell (2018) found neighbourhoods sharing hoaxes about rice import bans as if they were stock market tips. When repeated lies clash with the official line (Kholid et al., 2023), faith in police, courts, and the House of Representatives vanishes overnight, and thoughtful citizens become bystanders to their own confusion. That same confusion flared up in Jakarta and Surabaya when bogus claims about

social security cuts turned normally calm crowds into protesters waving makeshift placards (Udoudom et al., 2023).

Now that facts are often treated as optional, knowing how to read the news has never mattered more. Media literacy teaches people to poke, prod, and re-make a headline instead of swallowing it whole (Çelik et al., 2018). When that habit takes hold, rumour and reason start to look very different. Petranová and Hossová (Petranová & Hossová, 2016) stress that asking who wrote something and why is the first step in any workshop on digital smarts. Students who skip that step can easily drag old myths into new conversations and wear out their trust in sources that once felt reliable. Classrooms that prioritise media habits end up coaching young voters, plain and simple; learners learn to untangle the strings behind an image and still have the courage to speak out in public forums (Geers et al., 2020). Evidence even suggests that short, targeted lessons bump both critical skills and community awareness, leaving societies with citizens who notice, care, and act (Bergström et al., 2018).

This critical review aims to identify areas that still require study, and to transform those gaps into actionable research questions, focused on media literacy and misinformation in today's post-truth world. Researchers have conducted numerous broad surveys, yet not much attention has been given to how Indonesia's unique socio-political context might reshape media literacy training. Therefore, the current inquiry will systematically sift through articles and conference papers from a variety of academic hubs to determine whether newly developed curricula genuinely assist students in decoding false claims and questionable sources (Ciampa et al., 2023). The piece is structured to guide readers step by step from classroom exercises to the broader set of critical skills individuals need when information storms begin to emerge. By pairing empirical snapshots with the latest theoretical debates, the review seeks to demonstrate, and, hopefully, persuade, why cultivating stronger media habits could be one of Indonesia's best defences against viral falsehoods.

Media literacy has emerged as the bedrock of education in a world constantly buzzing with information, a point made vividly by Hobbs and Martens (2015) when they describe the skill set as the ability to reach for, break down, judge, and even produce messages in any screen or page you happen to open. Three elements, honest, hands-on thinking; a nose for good, bad, and ugly facts; and solid know-how, with devices and apps, spring up nearly every time the topic comes up. The thoughtful piece of that triad asks students to poke, prod, and layer different claims until something like sense appears, and Bulger and Davidson (2018) remind us that solid practice in that area turns online scouting for dependable sources from guesswork into habit. Sorting out anything labelled true or false bites harder when scams and eye-catching fakes swim past, yet classroom drills have shown, as Jang and colleagues recorded, that even a few guided lessons can fine-tune the instinct to spot a line that doesn't hold. Finally, digital chops go well beyond clicking buttons; they involve knowing, say Okkonen and Kotilainen (2019), why a two-second share leaves a trail and how that trail can reshape what folks see tomorrow.

Scholars who examine the inner workings of media literacy programs keep finding a strong link between careful message review and a reduction in false claims. Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory explains why people adopt habits simply by observing others, the classroom teacher serves as the original model, whether the lesson is pitch-perfect or not (Hattani, 2016). When instructors think aloud about a suspect headline, students borrow that scepticism, often without realizing it. A different perspective, Foucault's idea of discourse, reminds us that what we call truth gets a makeover every time new jargon enters the room (Audenhove et al., 2018). If learners practise questioning the vocabulary that supports a story, they become harder to deceive. That steady drilling in questions has turned media literacy into a first-line defence against the deluge of misleading information we now navigate every day.

Media literacy circles now uncover dozens of pilot projects that remix screen-savvy training to fit local habits, slang, and folklore (Korona & Hutchison, 2023). Finland offers a textbook case: its nationwide syllabus weaves fact-checking and source inquiries into history, maths, even Physical Education, turning each lesson into a chance for close reading (Yeh, 2019). Teachers there claim students enjoy the classes more and argue their way through tricky problems with fresh confidence. A few thousand kilometres away, American schools sneak media habits into literature, civics, and after-school clubs, hoping the patches stick before graduation bells ring. Yet funding politics and election headlines often yank the programmes out mid-year. Flemish educators, watching their own regional channels, roll out firewall-style drills, fearing quick clicks might lead to fake news or worse (S. M. Jang et al., 2019). They see caution where some see censorship. Local moods, in short, shape how literacy lands on the school timetable.

Indonesia's vibrant social media landscape creates the perfect breeding ground for misleading posts, so boosting media literacy across the nation has become urgent. Official campaigns now cite digital education as their first line of defence (He, 2019), yet in many communities, the message encounters cultural attitudes that treat media as pure entertainment. Trainers often discover that residents trust old stories more than fact-checking websites, forcing them to repackage lessons around locally familiar myths and moral tales. Only by framing critical thinking this way can organisers convince listeners to question what flashes across their screens.

A handful of American schools have scrutinised media-literacy lessons, and the results appear promising. One standout is the Media Literacy Now! project, which encouraged several state boards to incorporate fact-checking and source-reading into their official learning objectives and even deemed it a victory for the republic in Haxhihyseni & Tirana (2022). When instructors who participated in the programme tested the new material, most reported that teenagers began questioning headlines instead of merely clicking Like.

The Indonesian government launched a media literacy initiative known as *Literasi Digital*. The Ministry of Communication and Information Technology runs the programme through local workshops and activities in district schools. Recent evaluations show that students who participate are much better at distinguishing news from opinion and spotting what is real (Belaya et al., 2024). Those improvements continue to accumulate in the case-study files and demonstrate just how far targeted media training can enhance young people's critical skills. Successes never look the same under different pairs of glasses. The most useful road map usually draws on bits of several trial runs. When a college, a high school, and a local radio station pool their talents, the classroom buzzes in a way that feels real (Sengl & Heinke, 2023). A journalist who still files stories every week usually writes a language, students can see themselves in. Tossing textbook units for a messy, deadline-driven project forces learners to hang on to the habit of asking, Who's telling this story and why? (Hobbs, 2019).

But the existence of a national program does not imply that the fundamental issues have been resolved. Most of the available research focuses on immediate improvement following workshops or short-term interventions. In addition, it is unclear whether students maintain their use of verification strategies long-term after the program has ended. Few studies have focused on inter-region, technological access, institutional resources, and less-resourced schools. It is still unclear, therefore, to what extent media literacy programs occupy a place in formal curricula and classroom practices.

Teaching young people to analyse the news or spot a deepfake is undeniably valuable, yet many schools stumble before they reach that goal (Kholid et al., 2023). Money stands out as the biggest roadblock, few districts can pencil in fresh cash for a brand-new subject. When the budget is tight, slick lesson plans, classroom kits, and up-to-date training sessions all end up on the cutting-room floor (Bulger & Davison, 2018).

Incorporating media literacy into the daily lesson plan is still a tall order for many teachers who have not been shown or have not had time to attempt how to combine it with maths, history, or literature. That disparity between how urgent the topic feels and how relaxed an instructor is when standing in front of the class reveals a significant gap (Mualafina & Ulfyiani, 2025; Zhou, 2019). Many of our preparation programmes rush through introductory seminars but stop short of follow-up workshops that actually strengthen teachers' web-savvy skills. Yeh (2019) argues, and many educators echo the sentiment, that structured sessions with clear goals are the only way staff will leave training able and ready to guide students through the daily deluge of information.

Cultural context matters when designing media literacy programmes, and Indonesia offers a clear example (Widyasari & Allert, 2019). Traditional storytelling and face-to-face rumour mills sometimes drown out the digital world for students, so teachers have to meet them where they already are (Tenorio Azevedo, 2019). Making media literacy feel like an everyday lesson rather than a weekend extra is the first step toward helping young people learn how to question what they see on screens. Research keeps showing that when enrolment in media literacy classes grows, so does healthy scepticism about fake news (Kholid et al., 2023; Tekoniemi et al., 2022). Even so, money for textbooks and time for teacher training never seems to appear on the school budget. Borrowing ideas from other countries and then updating them to fit local customs gives educators a fighting chance to equip kids for a news cycle that never sleeps (Tarsidi et al., 2023).

While the importance of cultural relevance has been established, how local traditions, narratives, and values can be incorporated into media-literacy education without compromising critical standards is not very well explained in earlier literature. Educators, therefore, must skillfully employ familiar cultural materials to stimulate discussion, while also cultivating spaces for learners to challenge unsupported claims. Scholarship that is uncritical of cultural authority can yield assumptions that media literacy should question (especially in Indonesia, where distance from students' experience may be exacerbated by programs unconcerned with local culture).

More authentic learning opportunities arise where they bring together educational institutions with journalists, community organisations and local media. The journalists can help students become acquainted with how stories are researched, framed, edited, and published. Project-based Learning can also promote the exploration of public statements, cross-examining narratives, and interviewing and sound Media. Hobbs (2019) states that this type of activity can enhance students' capacities to interrogate who is communicating, why a message is created, and how meaning is conceptualized.

But much co-operation is still short-lived. External funding, individuals, and short-term projects might sustain them. The existing literature has not adequately addressed the sustainability, institutionalization, and long-term evaluation of such partnerships. It is also about sharing responsibilities among schools, universities, journalists, government agencies, and community organizations. Promising programs may flounder at the end of funding periods or when institutional priorities change if they are not part of a longer-term movement.

Another significant challenge is resource inequality. Newer materials, a world without quizzes, broadband access, appropriate technology, and teacher development are key to effective media-literacy education. Yet many institutions lack the financial and technical capacity to consistently provide these resources (Kholid et al., 2023). Bulger and Davidson (2018) point out that a lack of funding can be a barrier to schools updating teaching materials or planning ongoing professional development. Despite this being a recognized problem, previous work has not yet provided the evidence needed to implement affordable, scalable, and sustainable models in Indonesian schools & universities with limited resources.

Teacher preparation is equally important. While a lot of teachers recognize the danger of misinformation, they are still not sure how to make media literacy fit within language arts, literature, history, science, math (or civics). The distinction between recognizing the significance of media literacy and having the skills to teach it represents a huge gap (Mualafina & Ulfiyani, 2025; Zhou, 2019). Short seminars may raise awareness, but they do little to prepare teachers to assess digital sources, explain algorithms, or analogize politically charged conversations. According to Yeh (2019), structured and sustained professional development with defined aims and opportunities for practice is important to teachers.

However, previous studies have not clarified which type of training is appropriate, its duration, or whether certain competencies should be prioritized, nor have they provided guidance on how to evaluate their impact. And, as already noted, little is known about the extent to which media literacy can be integrated into their teaching in practice, influenced by teachers' disciplinary backgrounds, digital confidence, institutional support, and teaching experience. As such, teacher preparedness continues to hover ominously in the background, nowhere near the level of evidence-based solutions.

An emerging body of literature indicates that media-literacy education may lead students to spot fake news and exercise more critical evaluation of information (Kholid et al., 2023; Tekoniemi et al., 2022). However, this research remains fragmented. We identified three large areas of content: some studies focused on students distinguishing between truth and falsehood, others on teacher preparation and curriculum development, such as skill adaptation, cultural adaptation, or digital competence, while the third area was program evaluation. Since these problems are typically studied in isolation, their interrelationships are not well understood.

This disaggregation is the primary research gap in this study. Previous studies have highlighted numerous important issues, including poor teacher education, lack of curriculum integration, unequal access to resources, inability to adapt culturally, and the fact that many interventions are short-term. However, these issues have not been addressed under a common framework that explains how tensions co-vary in Indonesia. Research to date has also not paid sufficient attention to the gap between whether media-literacy programs are officially offered and their ability to effect long-lasting changes in everyday student practice.

This critical review is novel as it draws these estoppels into concert around a burden of scholarship illustration in education and outlines them as related educational issues. This study understands media literacy not as an isolated personal skill or a reaction to single instances of misinformation, but rather as a pedagogical, cultural, institutional, technological, and democratic problem. It illustrates that curriculum design cannot be dissociated from teacher preparation, that curricular design is contingent on institutional resources, that cultural adaptation confounds the nature of authority, and that sustainability and long-term behaviour change inform program effectiveness.

The study also adds to the knowledge base on gaps between program implementation and substantive educational value. Previous research has frequently normed workshops, campaigns, and curriculum policies as indicators of progress. Instead, the current review examines students' continued use of critical practices beyond formal learning activities, teachers' professional development to integrate media literacy across subjects, and whether international models will fit Indonesia's regionally varied linguistic/cultural/technological landscape. In this approach, the research not only describes programs but also evaluates their utility, relevance, sustainability, and impact on education and learning.

Part of the novelty is the ties between theoretical composition (i.e., social cognitive theory) and discourse-oriented analysis. Social Cognitive Theory made sense of students' learning verification practices through observation and modeling, along with discourse analysis to explain how truth and credibility are constructed through language, authority, and power.

These perspectives can help to contextualize both the development of students' critical behaviors and their responses to competing cultural, political & institutional narratives.

Thus, this critical review analyses previous approaches to theorizing, implementing, and assessing media-literacy education for misinformation in the post-truth era. It maps the advances achieved through previous studies, what remains unresolved in this regard, and why none of these matters have yet been incorporated into sustainable, context-based educational strategies. In particular, it focuses on Indonesia's sociopolitical milieu, the cultural diversity of students and teachers, teacher preparedness to integrate media literacy learning, institutional support, collaborative partnerships with local organizations to sustain media literacy, and a critical focus on students' engagement with various media throughout their lives.

People wake up each morning to headlines that swirl and shout, so the ability to read, question, and sift through news has become less of a bonus course and more of a core survival skill (Vraga et al., 2020). In places where a single, charged story can tilt public trust (Udoudom et al., 2023) like a seesaw, that lesson feels especially urgent. This review tries, clumsily maybe, to lay out for lecturers or educators and decision-makers ways of weaving sharper media practice exercises into college classrooms. The hope is a student body that does not just scroll but pushes back, joins the local debate, and, on a good day, helps steady the institutions they still believe in.

METHODOLOGY

In this literature review, a dependable step-by-step method filters the flood of studies on media literacy and misinformation in university settings. Researchers navigate through the usual sites, Scopus, Springer Link, Taylor and Francis, Web of Science, casting the keyword net wide enough to catch every peer-reviewed insight (Tommasi et al., 2021). Only papers published between 2015 and late 2025 are logged intentionally, so the snapshot of classroom practice lines up squarely with the stories, memes, and half-truths that swirl across students' phones every day (Perdomo et al., 2025).

This study leans on articles taken from a variety of academic periodicals where media education intersects with misinformation and classroom practice. Notable entries on the reading list are the *Journal of Youth and Adolescent Behaviour*, *Atlantic Journal of Communication*, and *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*. Those publications provide plenty of empirical snapshots and theoretical scaffolding for anyone attempting to make sense of media literacy (Hajisoteriou, 2024; Perdomo et al., 2025). The survey also tracks studies that experiment with new teaching strategies and observe how the approaches unfold in culturally diverse classrooms, situations as varied as those found in Indonesia (Friesem, 2019).

Researchers want to find out whether targeted media literacy lessons can actually help university students spot and shrug off fake news (Dell, 2018). The question is not purely technical; it also weighs the way curriculum designers must integrate that training into crowded degree plans, regardless of the cultural twists and turns that misinformation takes (Perdomo et al., 2025). Close-up portraits of working classroom pilots, ones that students describe as eye-opening, provide practical evidence, and so far, Indonesia has surfaced repeatedly because the rumour mill there spills over into elections and public trust in dramatic ways (Friesem, 2019). This study relies on qualitative mapping, not on numbers. Researchers go through the chosen papers, group them by theme, and see what keeps surfacing, first how well the programmes work, then what students actually do with the skills, and how policy changes nudge the whole scene. The framework in play connects core competencies, calm reasoning, spotting shaky claims, and the wider itch for sharp judgment (Perdomo et al., 2025). Where the data allows, we pull in meta-analytic moves, lumping results stage by stage to find the common pulse of

the classroom. Longitudinal snapshots hold a soft spotlight since their chronicle shows whether habits stick after the bells quit ringing, just as Martens and Hobbs (2015) urge us to track. By cross-referencing findings from urban secondary schools, rural middle grades, teacher workshops, and the like, the aim is a broad, messy snapshot of Indonesia's media literacy moment, and of its quiet power for cutting through the noise of a post-truth world. Overall, the approach sketches an early map of how sharpening people's media skills can help push back against the latest waves of fake news (S. M. Jang et al., 2019). That groundwork now invites follow-up research to untangle the next round of hurdles and openings educators will face in classrooms and beyond.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

MEDIA LITERACY'S IMPACT ON STUDENT OUTCOMES

Media literacy suddenly feels like the course students should have been signing up for yesterday. Campuses came alive with news feeds long before the syllabi caught up, and now mischief makers plant fake headlines everywhere. Researchers keep piping up that classes built around media skills nudge young people toward sharper thinking and a healthier dose of curiosity about their communities. Woolard (2018), always a good name to drop here, argues that decoding news items pushes undergraduates to reckon with their role in elections, town halls, and even family dinner debates. In this post-truth moment, the gap between a gleaming headline and solid evidence can vanish in the scroll of a thumb, so that crunching sources into something sensible feels less like extra credit and more like self-defence.

When Mirra and Garcia (2020) took stock of classroom experiments, they discovered that placing multimodal literacy exercises at the centre of the curriculum encourages learners to question, compare, and connect in ways a single text just can't manage. Students who swipe through video clips, memes, podcasts, and articles in the same lesson end up doubting shallow claims almost instinctively. Such habits matter in Indonesia, where rumours spread faster than the news and older fact-checking methods struggle to keep up. Tarsidi and colleagues (2023) found that when pupils practise these digital moves, their arguments sharpen, and they start attending town halls and local forums because the issues stop feeling remote.

When teachers weave media literacy exercises into their lessons, students sharpen their critical faculties and tend to get more involved in local, real-world debates. Researchers following the ACTS (Anti Cyberstalking Text-based System) Framework found that college sophomores who analysed videos about city budgets ended up discussing politics at the cafeteria table the next evening (Gillern et al., 2022). Half a world away, Indonesia's No More Hoax campaign delivers hands-on workshops that show sixth formers how to sniff out fake headlines; participants say the practice makes them feel confident enough to correct a friend's mistake on WhatsApp (Soelistyarini et al., 2019). Initiatives like that turn civic literacy from an abstract goal into a set of concrete moves anyone can use to defend the public square—and that is the point.

Across Indonesia, new media literacy lessons are starting to take hold, and teachers say the atmosphere in classrooms is noticeably sharper. A case in point is Jabar Saber Hoaks, a project that incorporates fact-checking exercises into ordinary local lessons and has advanced civic understanding, partly by involving local volunteers and a range of digital tools (Febrian & Masyitoh, 2019). Students who engage with the module end up evaluating headlines on their phones and debating the ripple effect of a single rumour. The initiative was never truly optional; the archipelagos' mixed cultures and the proliferation of stories contribute various forms of misinformation to every timeline, making a common defence a sensible necessity.

In a recent case study, Hasibuan and colleagues (2024) investigate how early-childhood teachers manage media, tracing the moment when young learners first engage with screens and stories. The researchers discover that instructors who possess strong media literacy skills themselves guide their students towards questioning what they see and hear. Such evidence practically urges teacher-training courses to integrate serious media literacy practice into the curriculum, encouraging preservice educators, and, by extension, their pupils, towards a habit of thoughtful inquiry right from the preschool years.

A flipped classroom experiment examined by Ma'ruufah (2024) shows how an unorthodox lesson design can freshen up civics study and media literacy at once. Students view lectures at home and spend class time debating, quizzing each other, even firing off poll questions; in that format, boredom evaporates and ownership of the material starts to stick. Because they see the content twice, first alone, then among peers, real inquiries emerge, reflexive habits sharpen, and the din of a constant news cycle feels a little less deafening.

Across the world, educators who have made media literacy stick point to one simple lesson: the method must feel like home. In Brazil, Nigeria, and beyond, projects dreamed up by students themselves, and then tested in their neighbourhoods, have turned skepticism into curiosity, Sengl and Heinke write (Sengl & Heinke, 2023). When learners build, argue, and tinker side by side, what began as theory often hardens into an instinct for spotting bias and reliability the next time a notification buzzes.

Classrooms that utilise the latest technology usually see students sit up straighter and actually learn something. A handful of programmes now being rolled out in Indonesia are proof of that; their step-by-step digital literacy guides encourage pupils to ask tough questions, work side-by-side, and hold each other accountable. The benefit is hands-on practice: children sift through news feeds, create short videos, and leave with an understanding of the tools they once took for granted, a practical habit that Kellner and Share highlighted in 2019 (Kellner & Share, 2019) as essential training for any teacher who claims the title of critical media literacy expert.

Bringing a clear policy into play that urges schools to weave media literacy into everyday lessons is still the surest way to steady teachers and keep the rollout manageable. Across Europe, Canada, and a handful of U.S. states, lawmakers and districts have stepped in with rules that make fact-checking and source analysis an official part of the school day (Gillern et al., 2022). When those benchmarks are set, children learn to question headlines and vet their threads the same way they tackle maths problems: by following the standard and then trusting their own judgement.

Plenty of studies trumpet how media-savvy students make smarter choices online, yet classrooms still hit rough patches in practice. School budgets pinch hard, and media literacy lessons often land at the bottom of the pile when money runs thin. Short supplies mean teachers cobble together makeshift materials rather than roll out slick programmes that really grab kids' attention. Finding fresh chunks of budget, either through grants, partnerships, or clever reallocations, will be the first step towards cracking that stubborn resource knot (Fadlillah et al., 2023).

The push for curriculum integration frequently confronts the inertia of subject-centred instruction, where history, maths, and science occupy the foreground and media literacy is pushed to the margin. Many teachers report that the sheer weight of mandated content leaves little bandwidth for experimental pedagogy. Targeted professional development remains the linchpin for shifting that dynamic; educators need more than a single workshop if they are to master the blend of technical skill and critical pedagogy that media literacy demands. Long-term training, continuously refreshed and locally situated, gives instructors the confidence to make media habits a routine topic of classroom discourse (Simons et al., 2017).

Cultural context often determines whether media literacy programmes are welcomed or dismissed. Traditional storytellers still command considerable respect in Indonesia, and their

audiences may interpret media critique as a challenge to long-standing customs. Soelistyarini et al. (2019) note that, unless residents clearly understand how careful news consumption can guard against hoaxes, grassroots support is unlikely to materialise. Outreach efforts must therefore do more than give teachers a workshop; they must speak directly to parents, neighbourhood elders, and local storytellers and explain how informed citizens strengthen, rather than undermine, community narratives.

Recent scholarship has consistently illustrated that when undergraduates confront media messages with a practiced eye, their analytical skills and overall academic performance improve. In pilot courses from Canada to South Africa, instructors report that structured media-mining exercises nudge students towards sharper questioning, deeper civic involvement, and better personal choice-making. Still, tight budgets, cramped syllabi, and lingering doubts about the subject's seriousness limit wider adoption. Overcoming those barriers requires joint action from faculty, state boards, industry partners, and neighbourhood groups who all share an interest in citizens equipped to sift fact from fiction online.

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN FOSTERING OR HINDERING MEDIA LITERACY

Many observers now describe the post-truth moment as defining, and social media sits at the centre of that description. On one hand, a tweet can spread misinformation across the globe in seconds; on the other, a well-timed share might nudge a student towards deeper media literacy. Researchers keep cataloguing that tension, and the data footprint already fills several journal backlogs. Most of the recent work clusters around university campuses, where feeds and timelines persistently shape reading habits and classroom talk.

Information travels at breakneck speed across social-media platforms, allowing users to engage with content long before any forceful moderation can catch up (Al-Zaman, 2021). Studies paint a sobering picture: a sizable share of misinformation streams onto news feeds each day, and public-health topics, by far, attract the lion's share of the false claims (Roozenbeek et al., 2020). The outbreak of COVID-19 only made matters worse; claims that could not be verified often outpaced rebuttals, and users were left to sift through a fog of rumours while lives hung in the balance (Roozenbeek et al., 2020). Al-Zaman (2021) later tallied the figures and found that channels such as Twitter and Facebook together shipped out more coronavirus myths than any other single medium, a finding that startled even veteran sceptics of Big Tech. Exposure to so much unchecked speculation chips away at public confidence, yet surveys show that basic media literacy skills remain disappointingly thin for large segments of the audience.

Social media is often thought of as a distraction, but it can double as an informal classroom. Posts, comment threads, and stories deliver fresh viewpoints almost in real time. Scholars in 2020 pointed out that this spontaneity gives users instant latitude to compare or contest claims (Anand et al., 2020). Organised efforts play a role too; short, punchy campaigns about media literacy pop up in feeds and invite followers to question what they read (Literat et al., 2021). When students click, like, and debate, the odds improve that they will make sense of the tangled narratives that flood digital space. The payoff is visible in places such as Indonesia, where teenagers now spend hours online yet still juggle the sort of rumour storms that left many grown-ups confused (Tarsidi et al., 2023).

Researchers have begun to pay closer attention to how university students use social media for news. A strand of recent survey work shows that many undergraduates visit platforms such as Twitter or Instagram first, choosing immediate updates over deeper verification (Wang et al., 2021; Xiao et al., 2021). That pattern surfaces repeatedly among adolescents whose media literacy workshops remain sporadic at best (Guckian et al., 2021). The result is almost a cognitive treadmill: scholars note robust clicks and shares alongside persistent difficulty in

pinpointing a credible source (Bella et al., 2021). Observers worry, and with reason, that curricula still fall short of providing the habits needed for thoughtful screen time.

In Indonesia, the extraordinary uptake of social media platforms rests largely on students habitually glued to affordable mobile phones and the notification-driven apps they favour (Tarsidi et al., 2023). Yet that same screen devotion quickens teachers' anxiety about distraction and fact-blindness. One remedy is to fold explicit digital literacy modules into existing syllabuses so learners routinely ask who crafted a post, why it matters, and whether the picture matches the caption. Such preventative thinking echoes Roozenbeek and colleagues, who insist that defensive skills must be taught before misinformation slips past the consumer's guard (Roozenbeek et al., 2020).

Universities and secondary schools alike stand at a crossroads, manoeuvring social media away from distraction and towards engagement that matters. Instructors who place media literacy at the centre of their syllabi nudge students to question, verify, and ultimately trust their own judgement when scrolling through feeds. Running short modules that dissect trending posts side by side with peer-reviewed sources exposes the inner machinery of misinformation and gives learners a sturdier map for the ever-shifting digital territory (Soluk & Buddle, 2015).

The FactCheck.org pilot illustrates a pragmatic method for embedding real-time verification into university modules, inviting learners to cross-examine the claims that proliferate on their feeds and, by extension, nurturing a habitual scepticism (Literat et al., 2021). A second line of inquiry demonstrates that asking students to author their own media artefacts, for instance, podcasts or infographics, grows their emotional stake in course content and sharpens the analytical lens through which they later appraise outside sources (Anand et al., 2020).

Social media's inherent interactivity opens new avenues for experiential learning in the classroom. Instructors frequently turn to messaging apps and micro-blogging services to host real-time debates, administer short quizzes, or curate open-access symposiums on media ethics, Coleman and O'Connor (2019) document several such experiments. By placing participants at the centre of these conversations, the format not only heightens involvement but also nudges young adults to scrutinise the way they encounter, disseminate, and authenticate digital content for themselves (Μαρούσου & Koutsogiannopoulou, 2024).

CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTATION

The advantages of harnessing social media for lessons in media literacy are clear enough, yet the road towards real classroom adoption remains bumpy. At the very start, the digital divide still yawns between students who can access high-bandwidth content and those who cannot; a teenager in an isolated corner of the country may struggle to load a single video while a city youth swipes through dozens before breakfast (Soelistyarini et al., 2019). Pair that gap with stark differences in self-confidence and know-how with web tools, and the promise of equal learning evaporates almost overnight.

Scepticism from school boards or veteran teachers adds another layer of friction. Many decision-makers still label anything associated with social media as little more than a playground for distractions, and turning that perception around demands hard, repeatable evidence of learning gains; the corpus of such proof is still growing, though recent field trials hint at encouraging outcomes (Felizarte et al., 2024). Clear, enforceable guidelines on when and how to post for academic credit - strict dos and don'ts, really - also have to fit within in-service training that most instructors already juggle, and that logistics hurdle never quite leaves the table (Islam et al., 2020).

Even if those barriers are cleared, faculty still battle the platforms' own culture of speed and glitter. Headlines explode seconds after an event, rumours masquerade as news, and young readers often slide right past the fingerprint that says otherwise. To counter that reflex, universities must build repeated, reflexive practice around habits of questioning source reliability, cross-checking claims, and weighing evidence (Bergström et al., 2018) before hitting retweet; one-off orientation sessions simply do not stick in a feed-minded imagination.

Social media exists in a state of productive contradiction, simultaneously spreading rumours faster than a newswire and nudging savvy users towards sharper critical habits. The average university-goer now scrolls, swipes, and studies all on the same tiny screen, a behaviour that invites rather than dispels pedagogical scrutiny (Belaya et al., 2024). Classroom practice in Indonesia, as elsewhere, can no longer file social platforms under distraction; they must be examined for both their role in shaping opinions and their potential as learning tools. Discussions that go beyond thumbs-up gestures, quizzes that use trending hashtags, and even live fact-checking can make hype feel less like gospel and more like raw material. The real challenge, of course, is to embed such experiments in course outlines rather than treat them as late-night extras. When curricula insist that students work through the noise rather than around it (Azizi et al., 2021), the campus feeds a habit of active questioning, a habit that survives even when the algorithmic fog rolls in again tomorrow (Bergström et al., 2018).

EDUCATIONAL POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

Misinformation now saturates daily life, and colleges are being urged to embrace policy reforms that push media literacy beyond isolated electives. Leadership on campus, research deans, teaching committees, even student governments, needs to hammer out common standards that spell out exactly how media skills fit within general education rubrics. Strong ground rules matter; they shape what instructors feel licensed to teach and students assume they must learn. Curricular architects can then remix critical thinking, digital source evaluation, and hands-on media production into every discipline. Cross-listing an English seminar with computer science and sociology, for example, lets student journalists speculate on the algorithms that shape their own articles (Lewandowsky et al., 2017).

Faculty sometimes worry that theory will get lost in tasks that feel more like tinkering, but short, iterative projects can marry analysis with agency. Editing a podcast, sketching an infographic, or even building a parody social feed forces undergraduates to quiz headlines, trace biases, and challenge their own biases in real time (Andal, 2019). Indonesia offers a glimpse of what scaled-up practice might look like; its Ministry of Education now pushes for digital literacy across grade levels. Closer to the promise, however, a pledge of teacher training, classroom materials, and ongoing assessment would transform a pilot movement into the backbone of national pedagogy (Purwonugroho, 2024).

A genuine commitment from a university is what keeps media literacy courses alive long after the initial grant money runs out. Fixing the timetable or signing off on a slick new policy document is only the tip of the iceberg; libraries, digital tools, teaching workshops, and hard-nosed research money also have to flow in steady streams. When faculty, staff, students, and parents see that sort of visible backing, they begin to trust the institution even in the noisy arena of social media where fake stories ricochet around the clock. Open dashboards, frank town-hall updates, and plain-language brochures can make that point quickly (Taufik & Suryana, 2022).

A university that refuses to treat media literacy as a gimmick usually discovers that its graduates talk louder about truth and listen more carefully to opposing voices. Multiple studies, including one by Lewandowsky and colleagues, link those skills to stronger public debate and healthier democratic habits. In Indonesian classrooms, giving students the tools to chase down

dubious claims and poke holes in viral rumours can turn passive watchers into active citizens who push back against hoaxes; that exchange, small as it may seem, echoes a wider pledge to keep democracy on its feet (Purwonugroho, 2024).

Educational institutions may forge collaborations with neighbourhood associations, grassroots nonprofits, and independent media outlets in order to move media literacy beyond the confines of formal curricula. Hands-on workshops, pop-up seminars, and open community forums can draw on region-specific issues, cultivating a spirit of mutual investment and active citizenship among young people (McIntyre, 2018). When schools and colleges participate in such place-based projects, they begin to inhabit the role of civic anchor, situating media-education efforts within a larger framework of public responsibility.

Decisions about educational policy and the steady backing of academic administrations sit at the heart of any serious effort to tame the misinformation flood now washing across public life. Universities, by design, remain the laboratories where tomorrow's media-savvy citizens first practice thinking critically about what they read and share. If those campuses pledge to update their rulebooks in real time and to strike useful partnerships beyond their own walls, they can hand students the tools needed to parse a fast-shifting information landscape. That endeavour should reach far beyond credit-hour checklists; at its best, it places young people squarely inside the deliberative arena, ready to defend democracy at home and, before long, overseas.

PROSPECTIVE INNOVATIONS IN MEDIA-LITERACY EDUCATION

Digital platforms and communication technologies are changing course almost daily, leaving older models of media-literacy instruction looking somewhat worn. To meet the new onslaught of cleverly disguised misinformation, many educators are calling for a root-and-branch revision of the curriculum. Long-term studies could help sort signal from noise, yet the real work may lie in crafting region-specific methods, in places like Indonesia, for instance, that respond directly to local media habits and cultural touchstones.

Recent advances in technology have fundamentally changed both the practice and the theory of media literacy instruction. One of the most noticeable shifts is the blending of digital-citizenship principles with traditional media-analysis frameworks. In this context, digital citizenship refers not just to using devices responsibly but also to participating conscientiously in online communities and sharing information with an ethical mindset. Aufderheide (2018) observes that what was once a print-and-broadcast focus now demands new skills for evaluating websites, social networks, and streaming platforms. Classrooms are adopting hands-on activities like crowd-sourced documentaries and neighbourhood rumour audits to put those skills into practice.

Similar patterns can be seen in Indonesia, where smartphones have become almost universal among students. The government-sponsored *Gerakan Literasi Digital*, or Digital Literacy Movement, tries to bridge the gap by teaching young people how to question the reliability of whatever they read, watch, or forward (Juliswara, 2017). Educational policymakers are, therefore, experimenting with lesson plans that reflect the lived experience of the web rather than the legacy of paper texts.

Recent scholarship has begun to map what some now call transmedia literacy, a concept that stretches conventional media-skills training across the many channels young people inhabit. Scolari and colleagues (Scolari et al., 2020) argue that paying close attention to the ways teenagers remix, hop, and continue the same story from one app to the next can help teachers redesign their curricula to feel less ripped from the past. Inside Indonesia, almost every corner of the archipelago is woven into WhatsApp, TikTok, and other platforms (Coleman &

O'Connor, 2019); eavesdropping on that rhythm becomes essential if media and education are to remain relevant.

To understand whether a media literacy training truly changes young people's habits, educators must revisit the same cohort repeatedly rather than settling for one-off surveys. Chen et al. (2021) argue that only longitudinal research reveals whether a spark of critical thinking endures or fades once the classroom lights are turned off. Because behaviour is sticky over the long haul, that kind of scrutiny allows researchers to spot lasting shifts in how students rate news credibility or weigh different sources of information.

The Indonesian media landscape is sprawling and anything but uniform. Urban teenagers may swipe through late-night video threads, while farmers in remote valleys tune into community radio, and those splits mean a single snapshot will miss half the story. By tracking the same group across semesters, evaluators can chart regional trends, catch surprise dips or gains, and hand policymakers actionable evidence rather than gut feelings. Chen et al.'s (2021) review stresses that recurring measurements, not postcards from the field, make patterns visible.

Such steady data-gathering also keeps universities on their toes; when administrators know a researcher will return next year, half-hearted fixes become risky. Yet many Indonesian faculties still rely on convenient pilot studies that prove little beyond a press-release headline. Planting rigorous, time-spanning frameworks now gives curriculum designers the solid benchmark they need for honest policy revisions.

ADAPTIVE PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES

Adaptive pedagogical practices have recently been proposed as a remedy for the blurry, fast-moving problem of misinformation in schools. Such an approach prioritises flexibility, adjusting on-the-fly to new apps, platform updates, and the shifting cultural frame of a given student body, its memes, its slang, its baseline set of beliefs (Cho et al., 2024). Teachers who swap textbook readings for multimedia mini-documentaries or who run live, student-moderated forums often report that participants sharpen their critical faculties almost without noticing the effort.

Indonesia presents a telling case: false claims ricochet through WhatsApp groups with alarming speed, and casual consumers are seldom spared the fallout. Instruction that leans on local stories - topical myths, viral hoaxes tied to adat customs, tweets each student has already seen - is more likely to resonate with a teenager in Surabaya than a generic global example (Vandenbosch & F. Oosten, 2017). A home-grown media literacy framework, like the one Juliswara sketched out in 2017 (Juliswara, 2017), offers students the tools to dissect their own feeds and, by extension, to play a more informed role in the raucous town-hall that is Indonesia's digital public square.

Integrating screens and apps into media literacy courses will stall unless teachers receive steady, hands-on training. Workshops that boost instructors' confidence with new platforms are not an optional add-on; they are the backbone of genuine reform, as Aldahdouh and colleagues (2023) noted earlier this year. Educators must walk out of those sessions knowing both the subject matter and the classroom tricks that prompt students to wrestle with videos, fact-check headlines, and debate misinformation without defaulting to outrage.

Crossing disciplinary borders can deepen that conversation. Borrowing behavioural cues from psychology and pairing them with communication theory allows instructors to unpack why some posts spread like wildfire while others drift into the void. When teacher preparation programmes embrace that blend - and model it in methods courses, critical thinking seeps into maths, history, and science rather than living in a stand-alone block, as Muawanah and co-authors (2023) recently argued.

In sum, the post-truth moment imposes a peculiar burden on media literacy courses. Educators now speak of a future that only arrives when fresh tools of verification and a deeper sense of digital belonging are seamlessly woven together. Long-term studies, repeated across semesters and schools, stand as the only reliable measuring stick, showing whether a workshop's spark survives once the cameras leave. In Indonesia, the strategy must adapt to the archipelago's own rhythms, using WhatsApp rumours and local YouTube stars as classroom fuel so that students learn to question both celebrity gossip and state propaganda. A commitment to such context-sensitive experiments does more than sharpen individual judgment; it quietly fortifies the civic fabric that binds a democratic society.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The current investigation into media literacy shows that even amid the post-truth din, careful reading and reflection remain citizens' first line of defence against viral falsehoods. Evidence scattered throughout the review points to a straightforward chain: classrooms that routinely dissect sources and motives produce learners who can quickly tell fact from spin, a skill that erodes nearly as fast as the news cycle resets. In Indonesia, particularly on the island-strewn archipelago where mobile feeds outpace fibre-optic cable, broadcasting self-check habits early holds the key to a generation that argues, creates, and votes with sober eyes (Yamaguchi et al., 2025). For the promise to take root, principals and policy-makers must stop treating media literacy as an add-on, slotting lessons about verification and context into every subject rather than hedging them off in an afternoon workshop.

Future research must turn its attention to media literacy education and ask how the lessons stick when the classroom doors close. Longitudinal designs track that slow, sometimes imperceptible, growth in skills and reveal whether knowledge translates into wiser navigation of misinformation (Lewandowsky et al., 2017). Indonesian schools, with their wide cultural and regional sweep, present an ideal testing ground; investigators can measure whether local traditions bolster or impede students' confidence in disputing false claims (Xiao et al., 2021). Observers should also evaluate fresh tactics such as digital storytelling and peer-led projects. Some of these experiments will succeed, others will not; the goal remains to sketch out teaching moves that mirror Indonesian learners' lived experience (Austin et al., 2021).

This study thus doubles as an urgent summons to policymakers, educators, and researchers, urging all three groups to work together in cultivating a citizenry fluent in media analysis. Those who shape policy might begin by embedding media literacy directly into curricular standards and funding pilot programs that equip both pupils and teachers with critical tools (Yamaguchi et al., 2025). When ministries and school boards accompany such directives with grants, workshops, and technical support, they quietly clear space for teachers and learners to wrestle with media bias, misinformation, and ethical reporting.

Educators carry the demanding task of preparing young people to sift through the crowded, often misleading information that appears on every screen. Meeting that obligation may require fresh instructional experiments that abandon tired routines in favor of approaches tuned to the latest wave of rumours and hoaxes. The practice feels sharper still when teachers weave in stories and examples that speak directly to the neighbourhood, discussing together how those local echoes connect to larger national or global falsehoods (Widyasari & Allert, 2019). Scholars on the research side, for their part, are urged to leave the comfort of their disciplinary silos, pairing insights from psychology, sociology, and computer science so that the pattern of exposure, belief, and fire-spreading identifier becomes plain (K. Jang & Baek, 2023).

A shared dedication to media literacy can empower citizens, equipping them to confront the misinformation that saturates contemporary public life. When educators, policymakers, platform designers, and families work in concert, the cumulative impact is striking. In Indonesia, as in other democracies wrestling with fake news, sweeping curriculum reforms paired with ongoing scholarly analysis may furnish the psychological armour societies need. Such measures do not merely blunt disinformation; they stabilize the twin pillars of democratic life, public confidence and civic participation.

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