

# **College Students' Ability to Discern Fact from Opinion in News Articles, Critical Thinking, Locus of Control, and Need for Cognition**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The news plays an important role in democracy and informing self-governing citizens, yet there is a growing concern that people are not able to critically read the news. In this age of “fake news,” it is essential to find what contributes to college students’ susceptibility to fake news. The purpose of this study is to investigate variables that may affect college students’ news evaluation, with the emphasis on their critical thinking skills, and to suggest models that can explain the relationships between those variables. The study will measure two independent variables: college students’ perception of control over their situations or experiences (locus of control) and the degree to which they engage in and enjoy thinking (need for cognition). The study will statistically examine how these variables influence the students’ abilities to differentiate between fact and opinion in news when critical thinking is involved. In addition, the study will interview students to explore their news reading and media literacy practices. The results of this study will have academic and practical implications across many disciplines, such as higher education, library and information science, and media studies, by highlighting areas to teach to prevent students from falling for fake news.

## **ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS**

information literacy; education; academic libraries.

## **AUTHOR KEYWORDS**

fake news; misinformation; critical thinking; media literacy; news literacy.