

Does Information Literacy Help to Mitigate Misinformation in Post-Truth Era?

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Introduction

The participatory nature of social media is a contributing factor to the rapid spread of unfiltered information. Information literacy (IL), known as the “mother of all literacies” is considered a strong tool to fight back the rise of misinformation, disinformation, propaganda, fake news, hoaxes, and conspiracy theories leading the world into the post-truth era. The devastating effects of misinformation are many and varied. It can shake the economies of the countries, jolt the social, educational and health systems of the communities, halt the political process and cripple down the functioning of a democratic society. A lot of discussions and debates concentrated that user education and training through IL programs is an effective way of navigation. However, there is little empirical research examining the pivotal role of IL in spotting, refuting and discerning misinformation on social media; particularly missing the context of developing countries such as Pakistan, hence indicating the need of this investigation.

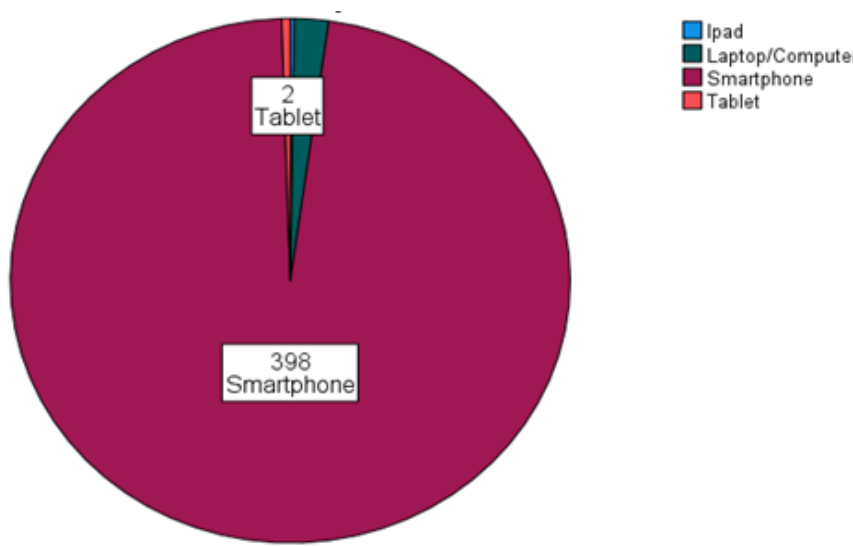
Research Questions of the Study

- 1.How much and why do the common educated citizens of Pakistan use social media?
- 2.To what extent do the common educated citizens’ concerns about accuracy moderate their engagement with fact-checking websites?
- 3.Does IL influence the intentions of common educated citizens of Pakistan to combat misinformation on social media?

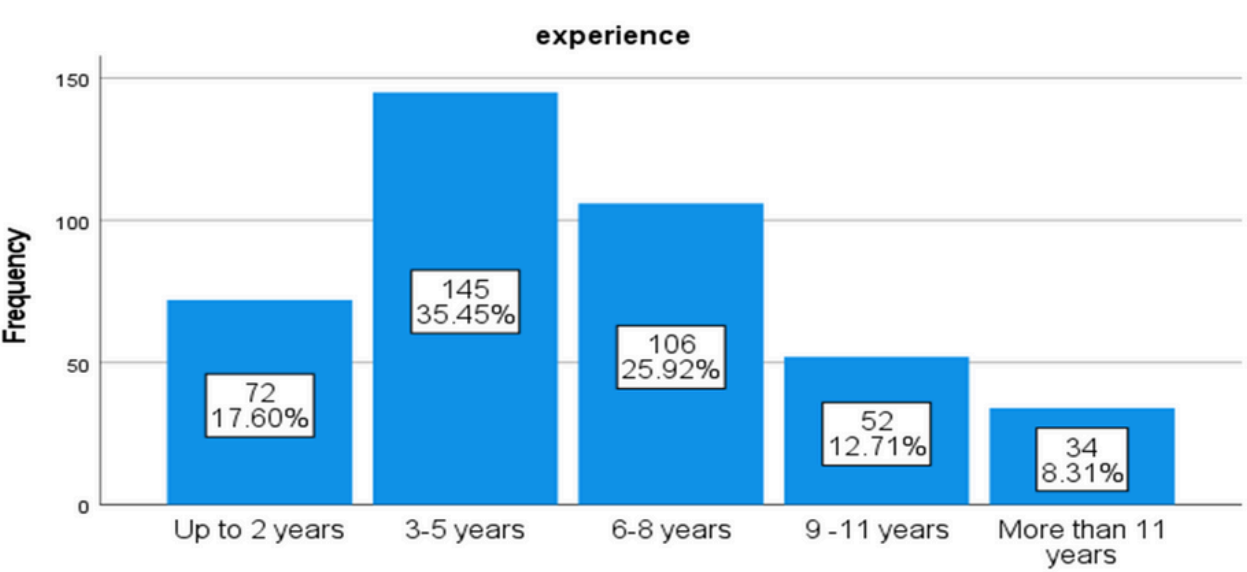
Methodology

Drawing upon the post-positivist paradigm, the study adopted a quantitative approach. A structured questionnaire was adapted and administered online through Facebook, WhatsApp, and email.

Findings



Devices Used to Access Social Media



Experience of Using Social Media

Variable	B	SE	B	t	Sig.
Information literacy skills	.76	.057	.55	13.325	.001

Note: R²=.30

Impact of Information Literacy Skills on the Intentions to Combat Misinformation on Social Media

Figure 4: Time Spent on Social Media

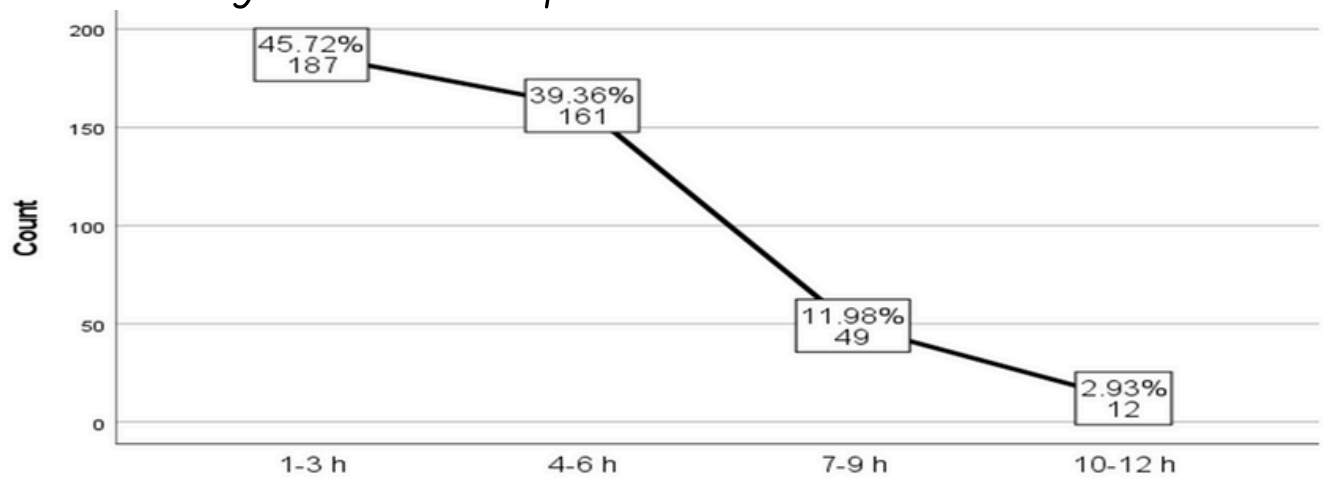
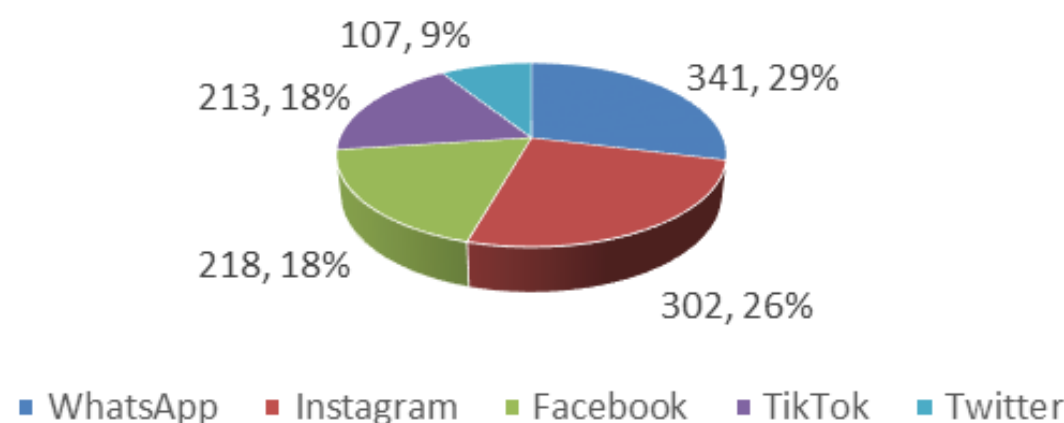
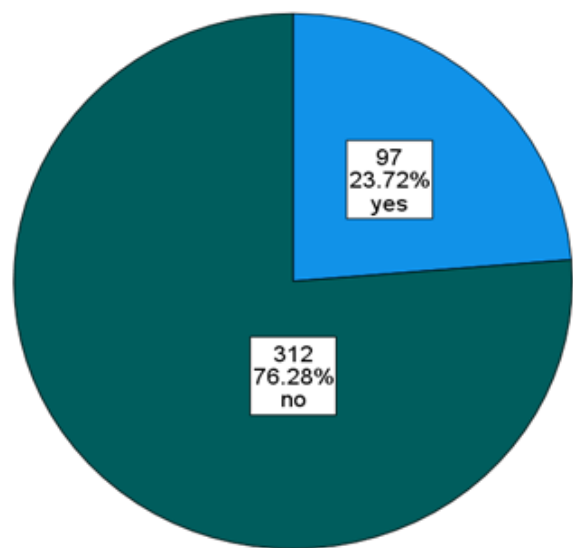


Figure 5: Popular Social Media Platforms

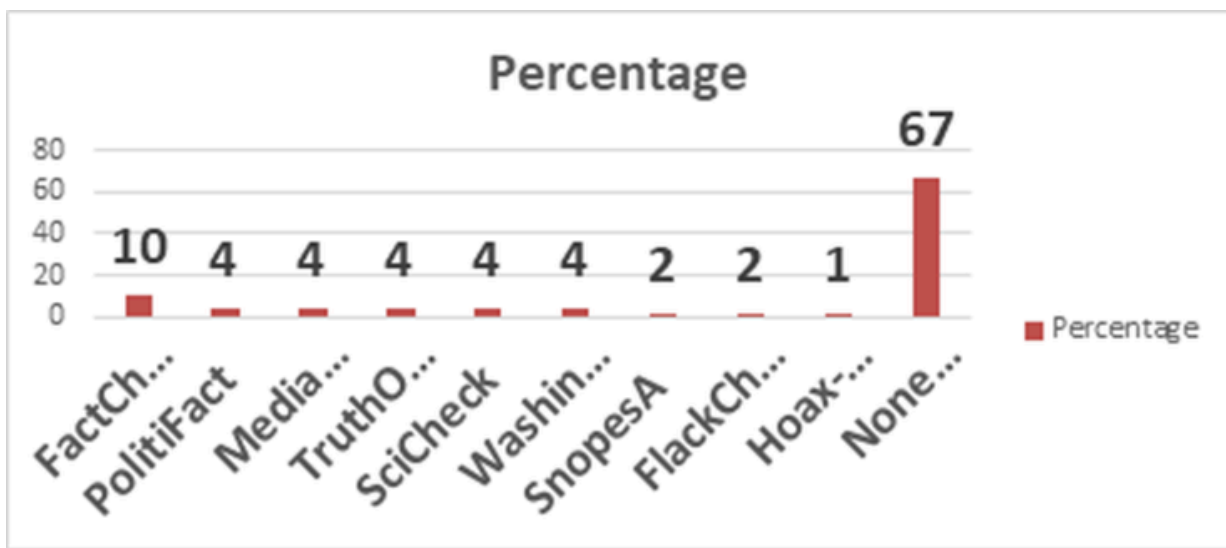


Social media platforms	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Mean
Reasons for using social media						
To pass the time	17	54	158	94	86	3.44
Finding information	11	62	135	143	58	3.43
Sharing information	9	20	130	160	90	3.43
To stay in touch with people	49	74	127	99	60	3.11
Encountering Misinformation on SM						
How often do you check to make sure what you are reading/sharing/commenting on social media is real	42	56	177	94	40	3.08
How often do you see dis/misinformation or fake news on social media	24	22	172	129	62	3.45

Purpose of Using Social Media Platforms and Encountering Misinformation



Frequency of Using Fact Checking Websites



List of Fact Checking Websites

Conclusion

In practice, insights and understanding gained from the study immediately call for a need of discussing, designing and programming effective IL interventions to better equip citizen with cognitive abilities to detect and mitigate misinformation hence, be instrumental in improving the flow of quality information on social media. Such programs for common people of Pakistan can be developed by the public and academic libraries. The government needs to run awareness programs on social media to sensitize the country's common public about infodemic and enable communities to combat misinformation. Such initiatives can be taken jointly while collaborating with NGOs and the professionals related to information fields such as librarians, journalists, teachers, etc. IL interventions will positively contribute to the overall effective functioning of democratic setup in the country. Broadly, this study highlights that librarian and information professionals can help mitigate the global phenomenon of misinformation by enabling people to successfully navigate through a post-truth era.