



Evaluating Media Literacy and Media Education: An Empirical Study of Media Students in Delhi

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Abstract

Media literacy has emerged as a critical competency within journalism and communication education, particularly in an era marked by misinformation, digital manipulation, and rapid media convergence. This quantitative study explores the level of media literacy and the perceived effectiveness of media education among students enrolled in selected media institutions in Delhi. A structured survey was conducted among undergraduate students across different academic years to assess their awareness, evaluative skills, and perceptions regarding media literacy integration within their curriculum. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical tools, including the one-way ANOVA test, to examine variations across student groups. The findings indicate that while students demonstrate a moderate understanding of media literacy concepts, there are noticeable differences in their ability to critically assess media content and identify misinformation. Senior students generally reflected higher levels of literacy and confidence, suggesting that exposure to coursework and media engagement contributes positively to learning outcomes. However, gaps persist in the practical application and pedagogical inclusion of media literacy modules. The study emphasizes the importance of embedding critical thinking, verification practices, and digital ethics into media education frameworks to foster more responsible and discerning media professionals.

Keywords: Media literacy, Media Education, Journalism , Quantitative Study, Delhi, Higher Education

Introduction

In today's information-driven world, the ability to interpret, analyze, and respond to media messages has become a core life skill. The rapid expansion of digital communication platforms has transformed the way people consume, produce, and interact with information. Media messages now shape not only entertainment and culture but also public opinion, political participation, and social behavior. This growing influence makes it essential for individuals, especially young media students, to develop strong media literacy — the capacity to critically evaluate and use media content responsibly.

Media literacy extends beyond technical skills such as editing, writing, or production. It involves understanding how media constructs meaning, influences perception, and reflects societal structures. Media education, therefore, aims to integrate both theoretical and practical components that help learners become informed media users and ethical communicators. As media institutions prepare students for roles in journalism, advertising, public relations, and digital media, they also hold the responsibility to foster analytical and reflective thinking about the media environment.

In the Indian context, media literacy has gained increasing importance with the rise of misinformation, digital manipulation, and social media dependency. The need for critical thinking and responsible media engagement is now widely recognized within academic and policy discussions. The introduction of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 further emphasizes the development of analytical, ethical, and digital skills as part of higher education. Within this framework, media institutions play a significant role in shaping students' understanding of how media operates in a democratic and culturally diverse society.

Delhi, being one of the leading educational hubs in India, hosts several well-established media institutions that offer undergraduate and postgraduate programs in journalism and mass communication. These institutions combine classroom learning with fieldwork, production labs, and industry exposure. However, questions remain regarding the extent to which these programs integrate media literacy as a structured learning outcome rather than as a by-product of professional training. While many courses include subjects such as media ethics, news analysis, and digital communication, the actual understanding and awareness levels among students remain uncertain.

This study aims to quantitatively evaluate the level of media literacy and the perceptions of media education among students enrolled in media institutions in Delhi. By collecting responses from undergraduate students across different academic years, the research seeks to measure their ability to identify misinformation, evaluate content credibility, and assess how effectively their courses prepare them for critical media engagement. The study also examines whether there are significant differences in media literacy awareness across academic years, indicating how learning may progress through the curriculum.

The findings of this research are expected to contribute to the understanding of how media education is implemented at the institutional level and whether it aligns with the objectives of developing media-literate citizens. In the long run, such assessments can help educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers strengthen the analytical and ethical dimensions of media education. Promoting media literacy within academic training not only enhances employability but also supports the broader goal of cultivating an informed, critical, and socially responsible media workforce.

Review of Literature

Media literacy as a field of academic inquiry has evolved considerably over the past three decades, moving from a narrow focus on technical and interpretive skills toward a broader understanding of critical engagement with media systems. Early scholars highlighted the necessity of empowering audiences to question how media messages are constructed and disseminated, emphasizing the role of education in fostering analytical and reflective consumers of information. Over time, media literacy has been linked to civic participation, digital competence, and democratic awareness, making it an essential part of higher education in communication and journalism.

Globally, researchers have discussed media literacy as both a pedagogical approach and a lifelong competency. Livingstone (2004) described it as the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create messages across a variety of media forms, noting that digital technologies have transformed traditional learning models. Similarly, Hobbs (2010) argued that media literacy education enhances students' critical thinking and ethical judgment, preparing them to interpret media within social and political contexts. These studies highlight that media literacy should not be treated as an isolated subject but as an integral part of media education curricula, influencing how students perceive news credibility, representation, and public discourse.

Several scholars have also emphasized the connection between media literacy and digital citizenship. Mihailidis (2014) noted that in an era of participatory culture, students must not only understand media but also engage responsibly as content creators and sharers. The increasing exposure to misinformation, hate speech, and online manipulation has prompted educational institutions to focus on critical digital literacy — a concept that merges traditional media literacy with an understanding of algorithms, social media influence, and online ethics. This evolving framework underscores the need for media education programs to go beyond production-oriented training and incorporate critical analysis as a structured learning objective.

In the Indian context, discussions around media literacy have gained momentum in the past decade, particularly in response to the rapid digitization of communication channels. Scholars such as Das and Ahmed (2019) have argued that while Indian media institutions offer diverse journalism and mass communication programs, they often prioritize practical skills over conceptual or ethical understanding. Research by Mehta (2020) further observed that students are exposed to a variety of media forms but may lack systematic training in content evaluation and bias detection. This imbalance between practice and critique can lead to limited awareness about media's role in shaping social perception and public opinion.

Empirical studies on media education in India reveal a growing need for curriculum reform. A study by Choudhury (2021) analyzed university syllabi and found that courses related to media literacy are often fragmented or embedded within broader modules such as media ethics or communication theory. Similarly, Sharma (2022) noted that while students exhibit enthusiasm for digital media tools, their understanding of misinformation and source credibility remains inconsistent. These findings suggest that media literacy education in India remains at a developmental stage, requiring institutional commitment and pedagogical innovation.

Another dimension explored in the literature is students' perception of their own media competence. Kumar and Thomas (2020) conducted a survey among media students and discovered that many overestimate their ability to distinguish between reliable and misleading information. The study attributed this to high exposure to social media platforms without corresponding analytical frameworks. In a similar line, Rao (2023) highlighted that students

often associate media literacy solely with technological proficiency, overlooking its critical and ethical components. This misconception reinforces the importance of teaching media analysis and evaluation as deliberate academic outcomes.

Research has also identified the challenges in implementing effective media literacy programs. Indian educators often face constraints such as outdated curricula, limited institutional support, and a lack of faculty training in contemporary media analysis techniques (Nair & Bhattacharya, 2021). Additionally, the absence of standardized assessment tools makes it difficult to measure learning outcomes related to media literacy. Scholars have recommended integrating interdisciplinary approaches that combine sociology, political science, and digital studies with media education to provide students with a more holistic understanding of how media operates within society.

Overall, the reviewed literature reveals three key gaps. First, despite growing recognition of media literacy's importance, there is a lack of quantitative studies assessing students' awareness and critical understanding within Indian media institutions. Second, while theoretical discussions exist, few empirical analyses have explored the relationship between curriculum design and students' perceived literacy levels. Third, there is limited comparative data on how media literacy evolves across different stages of academic training at undergraduate levels. The present study addresses these gaps by conducting a structured quantitative analysis of students enrolled in media institutions in Delhi, aiming to evaluate their awareness, perception, and application of media literacy principles.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The present study adopts a **quantitative research design** to evaluate media literacy awareness and perceptions of media education among **undergraduate students** pursuing media and communication programs in Delhi. The study uses a **survey-based approach** to collect measurable data on students' understanding of media literacy concepts, their ability to recognize misinformation, and their views on how effectively their academic curriculum promotes critical and ethical engagement with media. Quantitative analysis allows for objective interpretation and helps identify variations in responses across different years of undergraduate study.

Objectives of the Study

The study aims to:

1. Assess the level of media literacy awareness among undergraduate media students in Delhi.
2. Examine students' perceptions of how media education prepares them for critical analysis and responsible media use.
3. Compare differences in awareness and perception among first-year, second-year, third-year, and fourth-year undergraduate students.
4. Identify possible areas for curricular or pedagogical enhancement in media literacy education.

Population and Sample

The population of the study comprised students enrolled in undergraduate programs in journalism and mass communication or related fields at recognized media institutions in Delhi. To ensure a fair representation, the study used a **stratified random sampling** technique, dividing respondents based on their academic year — first, second, third, and fourth year (where applicable).

A total of approximately **168 undergraduate students** participated in the survey. The sample was distributed proportionally across different years to allow meaningful comparison and ensure diverse academic exposure levels were represented. This design was intended to capture how students' understanding of media literacy evolves during their course of study.

Instrument Design

Data were collected using a **structured questionnaire** administered via **Google Forms**. The questionnaire consisted of 13 close-ended questions designed to measure two dimensions:

- **Media Literacy Awareness:** students' ability to identify credible information, recognize bias, and understand ethical issues in media use.
- **Media Education Perception:** students' views on curriculum design, teaching practices, and institutional initiatives promoting media literacy.

Data Collection Procedure

The survey link was distributed through institutional networks, class groups, and student associations. Participation was **voluntary**, and respondents were informed about the academic nature of the research. The data collection process spanned over two weeks, with **168 valid responses** obtained. Since all participants were undergraduate students, the study reflects perceptions and awareness within this specific educational level, excluding postgraduate or diploma programs.

Results

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The collected responses were exported from Google Forms to **Microsoft Excel** and further analyzed. Both **descriptive** (mean, SD, percentages) and **inferential statistics** (one-way ANOVA) were applied.

Descriptive analysis (mean, standard deviation, and percentage distribution) was used to summarize responses and identify general patterns in media literacy awareness and perception. To examine whether media literacy levels differed significantly across academic years, a **one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)** test was performed. This statistical test compared the mean awareness scores of students in different years to determine whether variations in understanding could be attributed to academic progression.

How the dependent variable was constructed

A **composite media-literacy score** was created by summing eight items that assessed:

1. Workshop participation,
2. Frequency of content production,
3. Verification practices,
4. Knowledge of official sources,
5. Behaviour when encountering viral media,
6. Confidence identifying fake content,
7. Curriculum coverage, and
8. Perceived preparation through media education.

Each item was coded so that higher scores indicated better literacy. The maximum possible score was **19**, converted into a **percentage (0–100%)** for analysis.

$$\text{Composite percentage} = (\text{sum} / 19) \times 100$$

This composite percentage is the dependent variable used in the analyses below. (See Appendix A for the questionnaire and the full scoring rubric.)

Sample Characteristics

Out of the 168 valid responses:

- **1st-year students:** 66
- **2nd-year students:** 54
- **3rd-year students:** 16
- **4th-year students:** 32

The distribution ensured adequate representation across all undergraduate levels.

Descriptive Analysis

Table 1. Mean composite media-literacy percentage by year

Academic Year	N	Mean (sum)	SD (sum)	Mean (%)
1st Year	66	12.95	2.42	68.2%
2nd Year	54	12.60	2.17	66.3%
3rd Year	16	14.60	2.56	77.0%
4th Year	32	12.94	1.81	68.1%
Total	168	13.20	2.19	69.5%

Interpretation:

Overall, undergraduate students displayed **moderate levels of media literacy** with an average score of about **69%**. Third-year students recorded the highest average literacy ($\approx 77\%$), while second-year students had the lowest ($\approx 66\%$).

However, variation across years was relatively small, indicating a generally consistent literacy level across the program.

Inferential Statistics — One-way ANOVA

A **one-way ANOVA** was conducted to determine whether there were statistically significant differences in composite media-literacy percentages across academic years.

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	p
Between Groups	3	1423.78	474.59	1.70	.175
Within Groups	164	22,398.93	136.58		

Total **167** **23,822.71**

Result:

The ANOVA indicated that differences in mean composite media-literacy percentages across years were not statistically significant, $F(3, 164) = 1.70$, $p = .175$.

This means that students' overall media-literacy levels did not differ significantly depending on their year of study.

(NS = Not significant)

Interpretation of Results

- Undergraduate students demonstrated moderate overall media literacy ($M = 69\%$).
- There were no statistically significant differences in literacy levels across academic years, indicating that media education exposure did not lead to consistent increases in critical awareness.
- Numerically higher means in the third year suggest that practical exposure and advanced coursework might contribute to slightly improved skills, but the effect is small.
- The overall similarity across years may indicate that media literacy is not being systematically developed through the curriculum, but rather gained informally through individual interest or external exposure.

Ethical Considerations

The research adhered to academic and ethical guidelines. All participants were informed about the voluntary nature of their involvement, and **no personal identifiers** were collected. Responses were treated confidentially and used solely for research and publication purposes. Approval from the concerned institutional research committee was obtained prior to data collection.

Limitations

As the study focuses exclusively on undergraduate students, the findings cannot be generalized to postgraduate or professional learners. Moreover, since data were self-reported, the results represent perceived awareness rather than objectively measured media literacy competence. Future studies may expand the sample to include postgraduate and faculty perspectives for a more comprehensive evaluation.

Findings

The survey results revealed that undergraduate media students across Delhi displayed a **moderate level of media literacy**, averaging around **69%** on the composite index. Students generally demonstrated awareness of misinformation, yet many lacked consistent habits of verification or critical assessment before sharing content. Participation in media literacy–related workshops was limited; most respondents reported attending one or two sessions or only being vaguely aware of them.

The findings also suggested that **content creation skills** were relatively high, reflecting the production-oriented focus of media programs, but **analytical literacy** (fact-checking, source verification, and ethical evaluation) remained underdeveloped. Among the academic years, **third-year students scored slightly higher**, which could be attributed to increased exposure to advanced coursework and practical modules. However, this difference was not statistically significant, indicating that overall literacy levels remained consistent throughout the undergraduate years.

Students overwhelmingly agreed that while their programs provided **basic theoretical understanding**, there was **insufficient curricular emphasis** on structured media literacy training. Most students recommended strengthening critical-thinking and ethics components rather than adding more production-based tasks. A noticeable portion also emphasized the need for **practical verification and fact-checking exercises** within coursework. These findings highlight a gap between theoretical exposure and real-world application, suggesting that Delhi's media institutions have yet to fully integrate critical media literacy as a pedagogical core.

7. Discussion

The results underscore the evolving yet uneven nature of media literacy within undergraduate education in Delhi. Despite widespread exposure to digital tools, students appear to **confuse media proficiency with media literacy**—possessing strong technical skills but weaker analytical and evaluative capacities. This pattern mirrors recent Indian studies (e.g., **Sinha, 2021; Mehta & Joseph, 2022**) that found students capable of producing digital content but less confident in evaluating misinformation critically.

The limited variation across years indicates that **curricular progression does not strongly influence literacy levels**. This finding may suggest that media literacy competencies are not being reinforced systematically across semesters. Courses tend to prioritize production and presentation rather than interpretation, verification, and reflection. As **Ranganathan (2020)** argued, many media programs in India continue to adopt a vocational model that privileges skill development over reflective literacy, leaving students less prepared for the ethical and analytical demands of the contemporary media ecosystem.

Another interpretation relates to the **informal learning environment**. The near-uniform literacy levels across years may result from students' independent engagement with social media, online news, and fact-checking platforms outside formal education. In such cases, knowledge acquisition is incidental rather than structured—highlighting a missed opportunity for institutions to channel that exposure into a formal learning trajectory.

The modest confidence students expressed in identifying AI-generated or deepfake content further illustrates an urgent pedagogical need. As synthetic media and algorithmic manipulation expand, curricula that lack explicit

focus on these areas risk producing graduates who can create media but cannot critically interrogate it. Integrating **verification tasks, media ethics, and digital-citizenship discussions** would bridge this skill–awareness gap.

Overall, the study suggests that **Delhi’s undergraduate media education remains conceptually aware but pedagogically shallow** in addressing media literacy. The challenge lies in moving from isolated workshops and optional sessions to a **mainstreamed literacy framework**, embedded within course objectives, assignments, and evaluation rubrics.

8. Conclusion

This quantitative study evaluated media literacy and perceptions of media education among undergraduate students enrolled in media institutions in Delhi. Drawing on responses from 168 participants, the results reveal **moderate media-literacy awareness** and limited differentiation across academic years. Students exhibited reasonable awareness of misinformation but lacked consistent verification practices and deep understanding of digital ethics.

The absence of significant year-wise differences suggests that current pedagogical strategies **do not progressively enhance literacy competence**. Rather, awareness appears static, influenced more by students’ personal exposure than by institutional instruction. These outcomes point to the need for curriculum designers and faculty members to treat media literacy as a sustained learning outcome rather than an optional enrichment area.

By documenting the current state of undergraduate literacy in Delhi, this study contributes empirical evidence to the ongoing dialogue on **media education reform in India**. Strengthening critical analysis, verification skills, and ethical reasoning within coursework will enable future media professionals to function not only as producers but also as responsible interpreters of information in a complex digital environment.

9. Suggestions and Recommendations

Based on the findings and interpretation, the following recommendations are proposed for enhancing media literacy and education at the undergraduate level:

1. **Curricular Integration:**

Introduce compulsory, credit-bearing modules on *media literacy, misinformation analysis, and fact-checking methods* within core courses rather than as optional workshops.

2. **Pedagogical Reorientation:**

Balance production-oriented training with critical reflection activities—such as media diaries, bias analysis, and verification projects—to strengthen analytical thinking.

3. **Collaborative Learning:**

Encourage partnerships with professional fact-checking organisations (e.g., Alt News, BOOM Live) for live demonstrations and internships, connecting theory with practice.

4. Faculty Development:

Organise orientation programs to familiarise instructors with new-age misinformation trends, AI-generated content, and digital verification tools.

5. Assessment Reform:

Evaluate students' media literacy through applied assignments—like cross-platform verification exercises and misinformation analysis reports—rather than traditional exams.

6. Institutional Support:

Establish media-literacy clubs, campus fact-checking cells, or student-run awareness campaigns to sustain literacy learning beyond classrooms.

7. Future Research:

Extend the scope to include postgraduate students and educators, comparing perceptions between learners and teachers to assess institutional alignment.

Implementing these measures will move Delhi's media institutions toward a more **holistic, ethics-driven, and critically aware** framework of media education—equipping graduates not just to communicate effectively, but to think responsibly in an era of information disorder.

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Appendix A – Survey Questionnaire and Visual Data Summary

Part I – Questionnaire Items

The following questions were included in the structured Google Form survey titled “Survey on Media Literacy and Media Education Among Media Students in Delhi.” The instrument was designed to assess the level of media literacy and perceptions of media education among undergraduate students from various media institutions in Delhi. Participation was voluntary, and all responses were used solely for academic research.

Section A: Demographic Information

1. **Name**
(Open-ended response)
 2. **Year of Study**
(☐ 1st Year ☐ 2nd Year ☐ 3rd Year ☐ 4th Year)
 3. **Gender**
(☐ Female ☐ Male ☐ Prefer not to say)
-

Section B: Media Literacy Exposure and Awareness

4. **Have you ever attended a specific workshop or seminar focused on media literacy or fact-checking (beyond regular classroom teaching)?**
(☐ Yes, once or twice ☐ Yes, multiple times ☐ No, never heard of such sessions ☐ I’ve heard of them but never attended)
5. **How often do you engage in producing or editing digital content (videos, podcasts, news stories, blogs)?**
(☐ Never ☐ Occasionally for class assignments ☐ Frequently for both academic and personal projects)

- ☐ Very regularly — I maintain my own media platform / channel / blog / page)
6. **Which of the following tools or methods is most accurate for verifying the originality of an online image?**
 (☐ Reverse Image Search (Google Lens) ☐ Checking the number of likes and comments ☐ Screenshotting and uploading on social media ☐ Using “incognito mode” in browser)
7. **Which of the following is the most trustworthy source for official employment statistics in India?**
 (☐ National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) ☐ Personal finance blogs ☐ Anonymous Twitter accounts ☐ News aggregator apps like InShorts)
8. **A trending video claims that a politician made a controversial statement. Before forwarding it, you would:**
 (☐ Share immediately — it’s already viral ☐ Share with a personal disclaimer ☐ Verify the clip through credible outlets and video metadata ☐ Ignore it, not my concern)
9. **How confident are you in identifying AI-generated or deepfake videos?**
 (☐ Not confident at all ☐ Somewhat confident ☐ Fairly confident ☐ Highly confident)
10. **In your curriculum, how well do you feel media literacy topics (like misinformation, ethics, or digital verification) are covered?**
 (☐ Not at all covered ☐ Minimally covered ☐ Moderately covered ☐ Extensively covered)
11. **Do you believe media education at your institution prepares you adequately to handle fake news, propaganda, and misinformation?**
 (☐ Yes, very well ☐ Somewhat ☐ Barely ☐ Not at all)
12. **Which of the following should be strengthened most in your course?**
 (☐ Practical verification and fact-checking modules ☐ Critical thinking and ethics training ☐ Production-based media literacy activities ☐ Digital citizenship and responsible sharing)
13. **Suggest one improvement in your media curriculum related to media literacy or digital education.**
 (Open-ended response)

Part II – Survey Response Charts

The following figures present a visual summary of responses automatically generated by Google Forms (N = 168). Each chart corresponds to one or more survey questions from the instrument above.

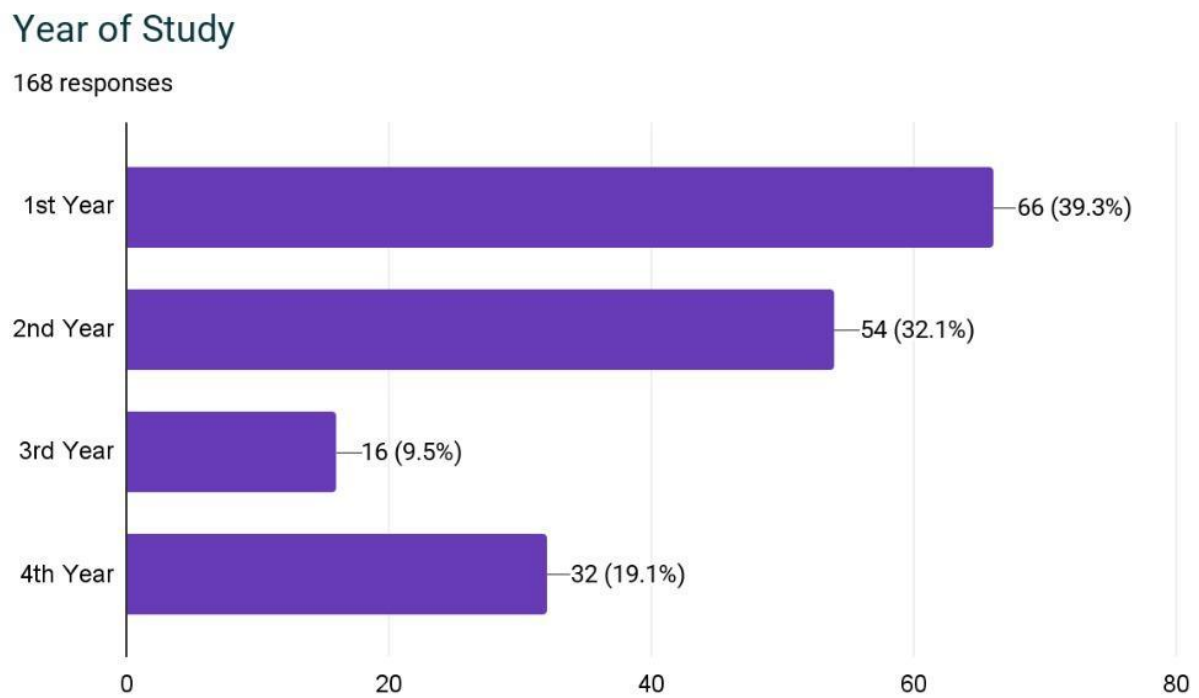
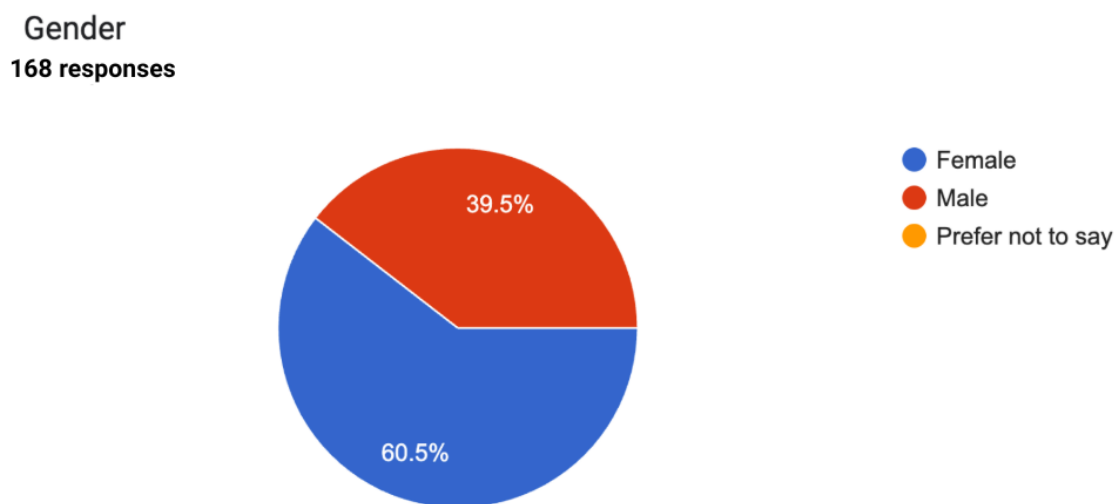
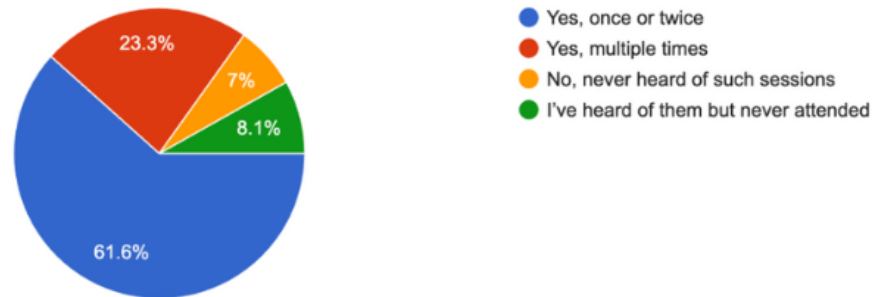
Figure A1. Distribution of respondents by year of study.**Figure A2.** Gender distribution of respondents.

Figure A3. Attendance at media literacy or fact-checking workshops.

Have you ever attended a specific workshop or seminar focused on media literacy or fact-checking (beyond regular classroom teaching)?

168 responses

**Figure A4.** Frequency of digital content production.

How often do you engage in producing or editing digital content (videos, podcasts, news stories, blogs)?

168 responses

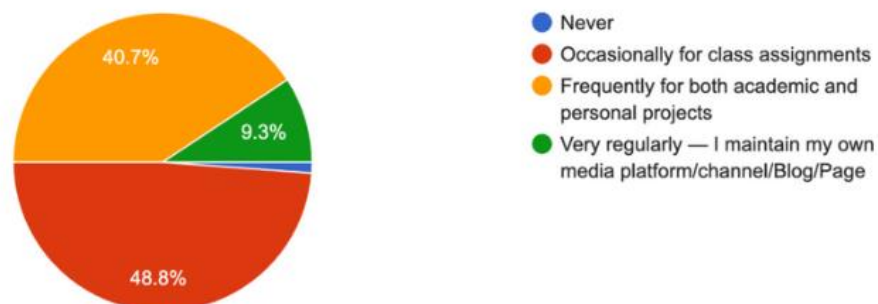
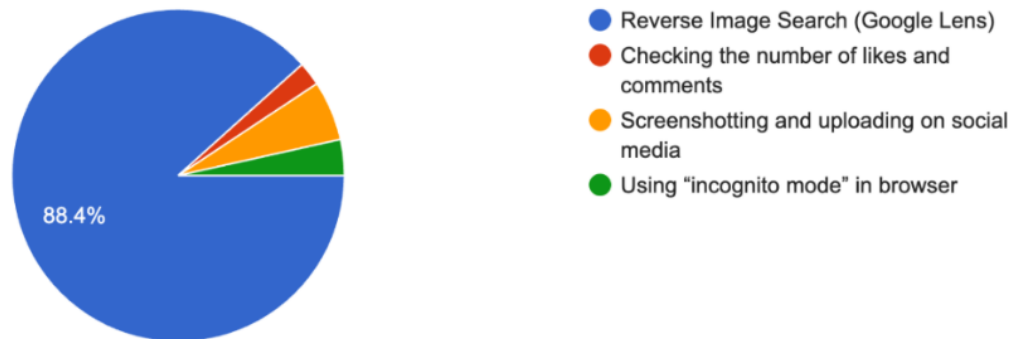


Figure A5. Accuracy tool used to verify online images.

Which of the following tools or methods is most accurate for verifying the originality of an online image?

168 responses

**Figure A6.** Source considered most trustworthy for official employment statistics.

Which of the following is the most trustworthy source for official employment statistics in India?

168 responses

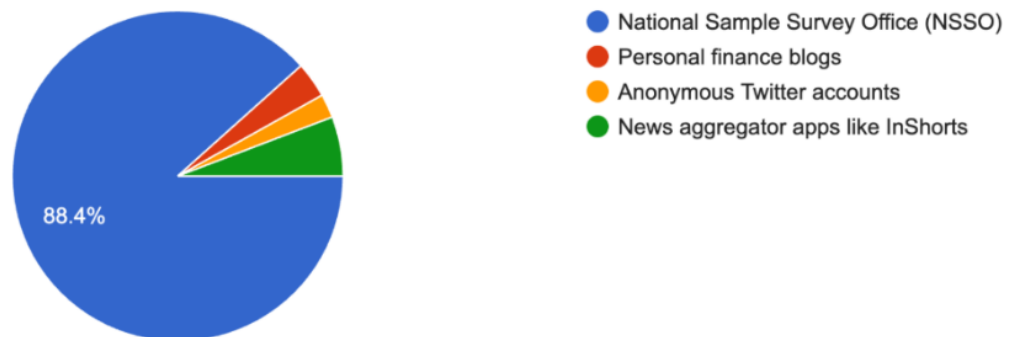
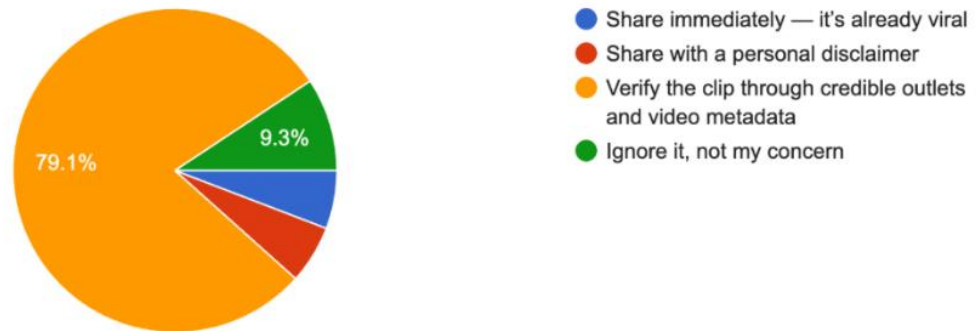


Figure A7. Response to viral or trending video claims.

A trending video claims that a politician made a controversial statement. Before forwarding it, you would:

168 responses

**Figure A8.** Confidence in identifying AI-generated or deepfake videos.

How confident are you in identifying AI-generated or deepfake videos?

168 responses

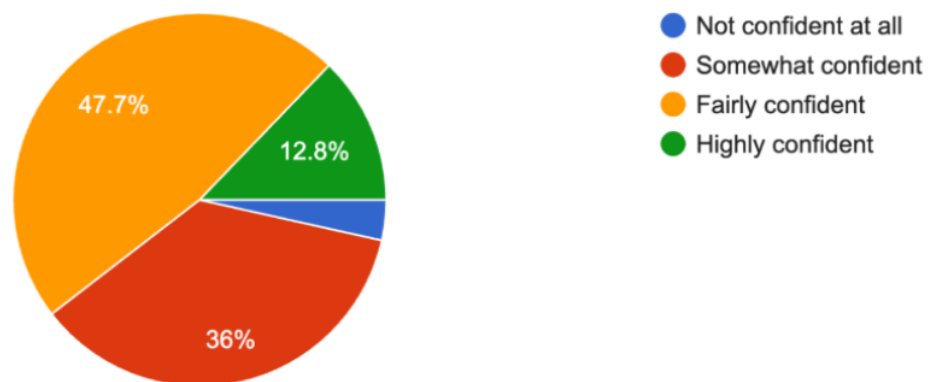
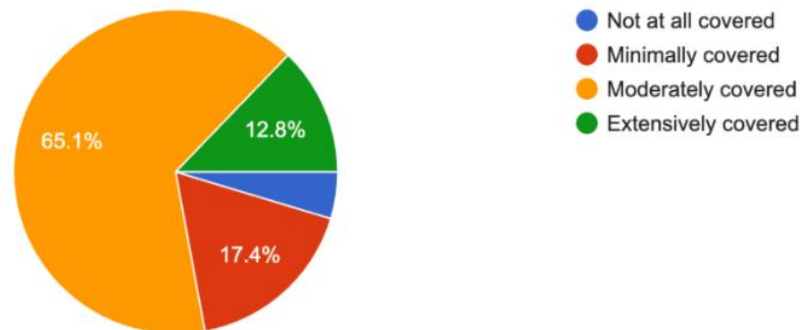


Figure A9. Perceived coverage of media literacy topics in curriculum.

In your curriculum, how well do you feel media literacy topics (like misinformation, ethics, or digital verification) are covered?

168 responses

**Figure A10.** Belief that media education prepares students to identify misinformation.

Do you believe media education at your institution prepares you adequately to handle fake news, propaganda, and misinformation?

168 responses

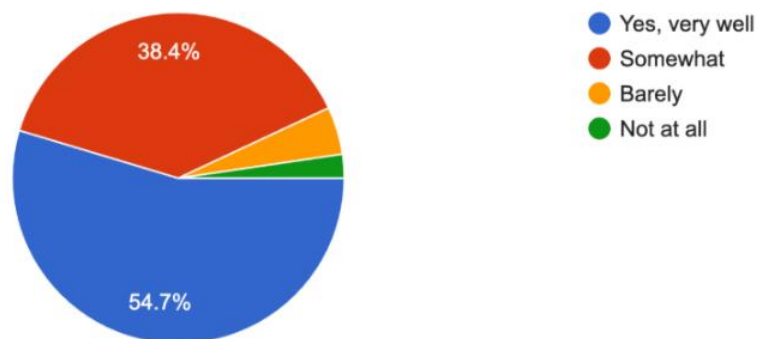


Figure A11. Area that students believe should be strengthened in media education.

Which of the following should be strengthened most in your course?

168 responses

