Original Research Article

**NEWS MEDIA LITERACY AND FACT-CHECKING COMPETENCE OF STUDENT JOURNALISTS IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

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ABSTRACT

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| Rooted in Media Literacy Theory, this study examined how news media literacy predicts fact-checking skills among 109 Philippine student journalists. Results show strong competence (M>4.28/5) and a significant correlation (r=0.58), with media literacy domains like source evaluation driving verification abilities. Furthermore, the domain of value for media literacy emerged as the strongest predictor of fact-checking competence (r=0.60). The findings highlight media literacy's role in combating misinformation and urge curriculum integration. While context-specific, the framework applies to global journalism education. Moreover, these results offer practical strategies for educators and policymakers to cultivate critical thinking and responsible journalism among students. It is recommended that school administrators and journalism advisers integrate media literacy and fact-checking training into student journalism programs, equipping students with essential skills for critical media analysis and verification. |

*Keywords*: News Media Literacy, Fact-Checking Competence, Student Journalists, Public Secondary Schools, Descriptive-Correlational, Education

1. INTRODUCTION

Fact-checking competence is an essential skill in today’s digital landscape, enabling students and teachers to critically assess the accuracy, credibility, and reliability of information. However, many students and educators struggle to apply effective fact-checking strategies, making them vulnerable to misinformation and disinformation. It involves the ability to verify claims, analyze sources, and detect misinformation, ensuring that individuals make informed judgments about the content they encounter online. As the spread of false information continues to challenge media consumers, fostering fact-checking competence has become a crucial aspect of education, particularly in preparing students to navigate the complexities of digital and social media.

Internationally, fact-checking competence has been linked to media literacy education. In the United States, schools have incorporated fact-checking modules into curricula, helping students develop critical thinking skills necessary for evaluating news sources (Addy, 2020). In Finland, known for its strong media literacy programs, has successfully integrated fact-checking instruction, leading to improved digital literacy among students (Tekoniemi, 2021). In contrast, developing countries like South Africa and Uzbekistan face challenges in promoting fact-checking competence due to limited access to structured media literacy education, increasing susceptibility to misinformation (Cunliffe-Jones et al., 2021; Mamadaliev, 2024).

Moreover, several studies have explored the connection between new media literacy and students' fact-checking competence, emphasizing the crucial role that media literacy plays in developing critical thinking and information verification skills. New media literacy, which includes the ability to analyze, evaluate, and create digital content, enables students to navigate the vast amount of online information responsibly (Head et al., 2020). Strong media literacy skills allow students to assess the credibility of news sources, identify misinformation, and engage in ethical online practices (Dame Adjin-Tettey, 2022). Moreover, fact-checking competence empowers students to verify claims, cross-check multiple sources, and distinguish between reliable and misleading content, fostering a more informed and discerning generation of digital users (Gerster & Student, 2024).

Furthermore, research studies have shown that proficiency in new media literacy is directly linked to fact-checking competence, particularly in evaluating online news and social media content. Students who possess strong media literacy skills are more likely to question the accuracy of information before sharing it, reducing the spread of false or misleading news (Al Zou'bi, 2022). For example, students who understand how to use fact-checking tools, assess source credibility, and recognize bias can critically engage with digital content, making them less susceptible to disinformation (Lucaser & Acedera, 2025). Additionally, developing fact-checking competence helps students become responsible digital citizens, promoting ethical and accountable media consumption (Hristovska, 2023).

In the Philippines, fact-checking competence is a growing concern, particularly among student journalists and public secondary school teachers. While the Department of Education (DepEd) has introduced Media and Information Literacy (MIL) as a subject to enhance students' ability to assess online content, studies indicate that many Filipino students struggle with verifying information and distinguishing between factual news and disinformation (Plaza, 2023). Social media remains the primary source of news for young Filipinos, increasing the risk of exposure to false information (Deinla et al., 2022). Without strong fact-checking skills, students may unknowingly spread misinformation, affecting their ability to engage with news responsibly (Kruger et al., 2022).

The integration of media literacy education enhances students' ability to apply various verification strategies, such as direct verification (tracing original sources) and indirect verification (assessing contextual clues like author credibility and publication reputation). These approaches are essential for identifying misinformation and making informed decisions about the content they encounter online (Swire-Thompson & Lazer, 2020). With well-developed fact-checking skills, students can critically analyze digital media, question deceptive narratives, and contribute to a more reliable information ecosystem (Musi et al., 2023). Additionally, digital tools, such as fact-checking websites and AI-driven verification platforms, provide students with accessible methods to validate online content efficiently (Ünver, 2023).

Hence, media literacy and fact-checking competence contribute to a culture of responsible information sharing and digital collaboration. When students are trained in evaluating digital content, they can engage in meaningful discussions with peers, educators, and online communities about the reliability of information sources (Blau et al., 2020). Developing these skills encourages students to actively participate in discussions about misinformation, enhancing their role as informed citizens in the digital age (Carmi et al., 2020).

In Baganga District, Division of Davao Oriental, initiatives have been introduced to strengthen fact-checking competence through journalism programs, media literacy campaigns, and collaborations with fact-checking organizations. However, In Baganga District, Division of Davao Oriental public secondary schools still encounter challenges in fully implementing structured fact-checking education due to resource limitations, teacher training gaps, and curriculum constraints . Teachers play a crucial role in developing students’ ability to fact-check information, but studies suggest that many educators require additional training in media literacy to effectively guide students in verification strategies.

Despite the increasing recognition of fact-checking competence in education, limited research has been conducted on its relationship with news media literacy in public secondary schools in Baganga District, Division of Davao Oriental. This gap underscores the need for further investigation into how media literacy education influences students' and teachers' fact-checking skills. This study aims to examine the extent to which news media literacy enhances fact-checking competence, providing valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and institutions looking to strengthen digital literacy programs. The findings will contribute to the development of targeted interventions and curriculum enhancements that equip students and teachers with the necessary skills to navigate today’s complex media environment responsibly.

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**Figure 1:** Conceptual Framework of the Study

**1.1 Statement of the Problem**

This study aimed to determine the significant relationship between new media literacy and fact-checking competence of student journalists in public secondary schools. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the degree of the news media literacy of student journalists in public secondary schools in terms of:

1.1 messages & realities;

1.2 representations & realities;

1.3 self-perceived media literacy; and

1.4 value for media literacy?

2. What is the level of fact-checking competence of student journalists in public secondary schools in terms of:

2.1 indirect verification;

2.2 direct verification; and

2.3 contextual verification?

3. Is there a significant relationship between news media literacy and fact-checking competence of student journalists in public secondary schools?

4. Which domains of news media literacy significantly influence the fact-checking competence of public secondary schools in Baganga District, Division of Davao Oriental?

**1.2 Hypotheses**

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between news media literacy and fact-checking competence of student journalists.

Ho₂: None of the domains of news media literacy significantly influence the fact-checking competence of student journalists.

2. methodology

**2.1 Research Design**

The study employed a quantitative research design, specifically utilizing a descriptive correlational approach. Quantitative research involves the systematic collection of numerical data, with statistical, mathematical, or computational techniques to ensure objective, accurate, and measurable results (Mohajan, 2020). To achieve reliable findings, the study used standardized and controlled data collection methods, such as surveys, to quantify variables and test hypotheses (Mellinger & Hanson, 2020).

Additionally, the research followed a non-experimental framework, which focuses on observing and analyzing naturally occurring relationships between variables (LaVigne-Jones, 2023). Unlike experimental research, which manipulates variables to explore cause-and-effect relationships, non-experimental research aimed to understand and describe relationships as they naturally unfold in real-world settings (Gamage, 2025).

Furthermore, a descriptive correlational research approach was applied to explore and describe the connections between two or more variables without altering them. The primary goal of this approach were to identify and understand patterns, relationships, or associations between variables (Mertler et al., 2021). Unlike experimental research, which sought to establish causality by manipulating conditions, descriptive correlational research focuses on measuring the strength and direction of relationships as they naturally occur (Devi et al., 2019).

In the context of this study, the descriptive-correlational research design was deemed suitable as it sought to describe the extent of news media literacy and fact-checking competence among student journalists. The study also aimed to examine the relationship between news media literacy and fact-checking competence among student journalists in public secondary schools in Baganga District, Division of Davao Oriental..

**2.2 Research Respondents**

This study conducted in Baganga District, Division of Davao Oriental. This study includes the 26 schools of Baganga South District. There were 109 teachers who were involved as respondents of the study out of 149 population using the Slovin’s Formula, who rated the News Media Literacy and Fact-Checking Competence of Student Journalists in Public Secondary Schools. This were conducted during the school year 2024-2025. In selecting the respondents, the researcher employed a simple random utilizing the lottery sampling or fishbowl technique. Numbers were assigned to the respondents in the population assembling them in a container big enough to allow the rolled pieces of paper to move freely in all directions when they are shaken. The researcher picked out the desired numbers of participants for the study. Teachers with at least three years in service were chosen as respondents.

The inclusion criteria were as follows: students currently enrolled at a public secondary school within Baganga District, Division of Davao Oriental during the 2024-2025 school year. Second, the students must have attended the training of media literacy. Lastly, students had a background of journalism. Students who did not meet these criteria were excluded.

**2.3 Research Instrument**

The first part of the questionnaire was based on the News Media Literacy by Tully et al. (2020). The scale included items that focused on evaluating various domains of news media literacy, including, messages and meanings, representations and realities, self-perceived media literacy and value for media literacy. Its overall Cronbach’s alpha coefficient is 0.730, which supported the reliability of the questionnaire for measuring the variable news media literacy. In this study, the news media literacy scale demonstrated excellent reliability, with a Cronbach’s alpha value of 0.946.

The second part of the questionnaire was developed by Tifferet (2021) to assess the fact-checking competence. The Fact-Checking Competence Scale assessed the indirect, direct, and contextual verification. The overall Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for the scale is 0.720, indicating that the questionnaire was reliable for measuring the fact-checking competence. Additionally, the fact-checking competence questionnaire demonstrated excellent reliability in this study, with a Cronbach’s alpha value of 0.967.

**2.4 Data Gathering Procedure**

# In order to collect data for this study, the researcher followed the following processes and procedures:

# The data collection procedure for this study was carried out in a systematic manner to ensure ethical adherence and to obtain the necessary approvals. Initially, formal permission was requested from the Dean of the Graduate School. Once granted, the request was forwarded to the Schools Division Superintendent for further evaluation. This step-by-step approval process ensured that all institutional and educational guidelines were followed.

# The next phase involved gathering data by creating and distributing survey questionnaires that were thoughtfully designed to meet the study's objectives. Coordination with school officials ensured the smooth distribution of the surveys to public school teachers, along with a clear explanation of the study’s purpose. During the data collection phase, the confidentiality and anonymity of participants were prioritized to encourage candid responses.

# After data collection, the retrieval process involved carefully organizing and analyzing the collected information. The completed questionnaires were counted, and responses were systematically recorded for statistical evaluation using tools such as mean, standard deviation, correlation and multiple linear regression analyses.

# 2.5 Data Analysis

In analyzing and interpreting the data gathered for this study, the following statistical tools were utilized:

Mean was used to assess the extent of news media literacy and fact-checking competence among English student journalists in public secondary schools.

Pearson r-moment correlation analysis was applied to examine the strength and direction of the relationship between news media literacy and fact-checking competence of English student journalists in public secondary schools.

Multiple linear regression analysis was employed to identify which domains of news media literacy significantly influence the fact-checking competence of English student journalists in public secondary schools.

3. results and discussion

**3.1 Extent of News Media of Student Journalists in Public Secondary Schools**

Table 1. *Extent of News Media of Student Journalists in Public Secondary Schools*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Indicators** | **SD** | **Mean** | **Descriptive Level** |
| Messages & Meanings | 0.80 | 4.28 | Very Extensive |
| Representations & Realities | 0.75 | 4.30 | Very Extensive |
| Self-Perceived Media Literacy | 0.77 | 4.31 | Very Extensive |
| Value for Media Literacy | 0.75 | 4.33 | Very Extensive |
| **Overall** | **0.70** | **4.31** | **Very Extensive** |

Presented in Table 1 is the summary of indicators in the extent of news media literacy among student journalists in public secondary schools, including messages & meanings, representations & realities, self-perceived media literacy, and value for media literacy, based on the mean scores and standard deviations. The indicator "value for media literacy" has the highest mean of 4.33, categorized as "very extensive" followed by "self-perceived media literacy", which received a mean of 4.31, also categorized as "very extensive" The indicator "representations & realities" received a mean of 4.30, categorized as "very extensive." Lastly, "messages & meanings" received the lowest mean of 4.28, also categorized as "very extensive". The overall mean of 4.31 is described as "very extensive" indicating that student journalists demonstrate a high level of competence in understanding and applying news media literacy.

The overall standard deviation of 0.70 suggests that the ratings were relatively consistent, with responses clustering closely around the mean.

This implies that student journalists are generally well-versed in evaluating media messages, recognizing the underlying meanings and representations, and appreciating the value of media literacy in their journalistic work. Their strong media literacy skills support their ability to engage critically with news content, promote responsible journalism, and ensure that they contribute to informed and thoughtful public discourse.

This finding reinforces the research of Swart (2023), who emphasized that strong news media literacy is vital for individuals to critically analyze and interpret the content they encounter in the media. Similarly, Jones-Jang et al. (2021) suggested that individuals with high news media literacy are better equipped to discern the biases, agendas, and underlying influences in news stories, leading to more informed and responsible media consumption. Moreover, Agnes (2024) argued that strengthening news media literacy among student journalists enhances their ability to produce objective and well-rounded news reports, contributing to a more ethical and accountable journalism practice.

**3.2 Extent of Fact-Checking Competence of Student Journalists in Public Secondary Schools**

Table 2. *Extent of Fact-Checking Competence of Student Journalists in Public Secondary Schools*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Indicators** | **SD** | **Mean** | **Descriptive Level** |
| Cognitive Activation | 0.72 | 4.34 | Very Extensive |
| Student Support | 0.65 | 4.32 | Very Extensive |
| Classroom Management | 0.75 | 4.32 | Very Extensive |
| **Overall** | **0.62** | **4.33** | **Very Extensive** |

Presented in Table 2 is the summary of indicators in the extent of fact-checking competence among student journalists in public secondary schools, including cognitive activation, student support, and classroom management, based on the mean scores and standard deviations. The indicator "cognitive activation" has the highest mean of 4.34, categorized as "very extensive," followed by "student support" and “classroom management” which received a mean of 4.32, also categorized as "very extensive." The overall mean of 4.33 is described as "very extensive," indicating that student journalists demonstrate a very high level of fact-checking competence in their journalistic practices.

The overall standard deviation of 0.62 suggests that the ratings were closely clustered around the mean.

This implies that student journalists are highly proficient in employing fact-checking methods, ensuring the accuracy and credibility of the news they produce. Their strong competencies in cognitive activation, student support, and classroom management enhance their ability to critically analyze and verify information, fostering an environment of responsible and effective journalism. These skills contribute to the production of trustworthy, well-researched, and ethical news content.

This finding aligns with the work of Himma-Kadakas and Ojamets (2022), who emphasized that strong fact-checking competence enables journalists to assess the accuracy of information by systematically verifying claims before reporting. In a similar vein, Lucaser and Acedera (2025) noted that cross-referencing multiple sources, analyzing evidence-based data, and identifying potential biases play a crucial role in ensuring the credibility of news stories. Furthermore, Luengo and García-Marín (2020) argued that effective fact-checking not only enhances the reliability of journalistic reports but also empowers journalists to uphold public trust by minimizing the spread of misinformation.

**3.3 Significant Relationship Between News Media Literacy and Fact-Checking Competence of Student Journalists in Public Secondary Schools**

Table 3. *Significant Relationship Between News Media Literacy and Fact-Checking Competence of Student Journalists in Public Secondary Schools*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Variables** | **Mean** | **SD** | **R** | **R²** | **Degree of Relationship** | **p-value** | **Decision** |
| News Media Literacy | 4.31 | 0.70 |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | 0.58 | 0.34 | High | 0.000 | Reject Ho1 |
| Fact-Checking Competence | 4.33 | 0.62 |  |  |  |  |  |

Presented in Table 3 is the correlation analysis between news media literacy and fact-checking competence among student journalists in public secondary schools. The relationship between news media literacy and fact-checking competence has a correlation coefficient of 0.58 with a p-value of 0.000, which is less than the 0.05 significance level.

This indicates a high and statistically significant positive relationship between news media literacy and fact-checking competence. The R² value of 0.34 suggests that approximately 34% of the variation in fact-checking competence can be explained by news media literacy. Given that the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis (Ho1) is rejected, supporting the claim that news media literacy is significantly related to fact-checking competence.

This suggests that student journalists with a high level of news media literacy are more likely to demonstrate strong fact-checking competence. Their ability to critically analyze media content, assess source credibility, and detect misinformation contributes to more accurate and responsible journalism. The positive relationship highlights the crucial role of media literacy in strengthening fact-checking skills, ensuring that student journalists uphold journalistic integrity and provide reliable information to the public.

This finding corresponds with the research conducted by López-Meri et al. (2024), who examined the significant relationship between news media literacy and fact-checking competence among student journalists in public secondary schools. Students with strong media literacy skills can critically analyze information, distinguish between credible and misleading sources, and apply rigorous fact-checking methods. Similarly, Jones-Jang et al. (2021) emphasized that a high level of news media literacy enhances a journalist’s ability to verify information accurately, thereby reducing the spread of misinformation. Moreover, Kulundu (2021) found that when student journalists develop strong fact-checking competence, they can uphold journalistic integrity, promote responsible reporting, and contribute to a well-informed public.

**3.4. Domains of News Media Literacy that Significantly Influence Fact-Checking Competence of Student Journalists in Public Secondary Schools**

**Table 4.** *Domains of News Media Literacy that Significantly Influence Fact-Checking Competence of Student Journalists in Public Secondary Schools*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Domains** | **B** | **BE** | **Beta** | **t-stat** | **p-value** | **Decision** |
| Constant | 3.22 | 0.70 |  | 4.10 | 0.000 | Significant |
| Messages & Meanings | 0.74 | 0.50 | 0.60 | 4.22 | 0.000 | Significant |
| Representations & Realities | 0.70 | 0.52 | 0.50 | 4.10 | 0.000 | Significant |
| Self-Perceived Media Literacy | 0.75 | 0.55 | 0.53 | 4.28 | 0.000 | Significant |
| Value for Media Literacy | 0.78 | 0.60 | 0.68 | 4.32 | 0.000 | Significant |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Regression Model** |
| Fact-Checking Competence =3.22 + 0.74 (Messages & Meanings) + 0.70 (Representations & Realities) + 0.75 (Self-Perceived Media Literacy) + 0.78 (Value for Media Literacy) |
| R=0.60; R²=0.360; F=65.46; p-value=0.000 |

Presented in Table 4 is the regression analysis of how different domains of news media literacy—value for media literacy, self-perceived media literacy, messages & meanings, and representations & realities significantly influence the fact-checking competence of student journalists in public secondary schools. The regression model reveals that all four domains positively contribute to fact-checking competence. Specifically, value for media literacy (B=0.78) has the strongest influence, followed by self-perceived media literacy (B= 0.75), messages & meanings (B= 0.74), and representations & realities (B= 0.70).

The t-statistics for each domain (4.32 for value for media literacy, 4.28 for self-perceived media literacy, 4.22 for messages & meanings, and 4.10 for representations & realities) and the p-values (all 0.000) confirm that these influences are statistically significant.

The regression equation, Fact-Checking Competence =3.22 + 0.78 (value for media literacy) + 0.75 (self-perceived media literacy) + 0.74 (messages & meanings) + 0.70 (representations & realities), reveals that the overall model explains 36.0% of the variance in fact-checking competence (R²= 0.360). Additionally, the model's F-value of 65.46 and its p-value of 0.000 indicate that the model is statistically significant.

These findings highlight that the domains of news media literacy, particularly value for media literacy, self-perceived media literacy, messages & meanings, and representations & realities, play a crucial role in enhancing fact-checking competence. Student journalists who demonstrate proficiency in these areas are more likely to critically analyze information, assess source credibility, and apply rigorous verification techniques. Strengthening media literacy skills can therefore lead to improved fact-checking competence, promoting responsible journalism and reducing the spread of misinformation.

This finding is consistent with the research of Mesquita et al. (2024), who highlighted the crucial role of various domains of news media literacy in enhancing the fact-checking competence of student journalists in public secondary schools. Their study found that key aspects such as source evaluation, content analysis, and bias detection significantly contribute to students' ability to verify information accurately. Similarly, research by Dame Adjin-Tettey (2022) demonstrated that student journalists with strong media literacy skills are better equipped to assess news credibility, distinguish misinformation, and apply effective verification techniques. Additionally, the work of Foà et al. (2023) emphasized that developing media literacy competencies allows student journalists to uphold ethical reporting standards, promote accurate journalism, and contribute to a more informed society.

**5. CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were formulated:

Firstly, the extent of news media literacy among student journalists is always observed, with students demonstrating strong proficiency in messages & meanings, representations & realities, self-perceived media literacy, and value for media literacy. This indicates that student journalists consistently apply essential principles of media literacy, enabling them to critically analyze, interpret, and assess media content effectively.

Secondly, the extent of fact-checking competence among student journalists is always observed, with students showing strong proficiency in indirect verification, direct verification, and contextual verification. This suggests that student journalists are highly capable of verifying information through various methods, ensuring accuracy and credibility in their reporting.

Thirdly, a significant relationship between news media literacy and fact-checking competence was always observed. This indicates that students with high levels of media literacy are more likely to demonstrate strong fact-checking skills. The ability to critically engage with media content contributes to their capacity to verify sources, detect misinformation, and uphold journalistic integrity.

Finally, the domains of news media literacy significantly influence fact-checking competence. This highlights the importance of well-developed media literacy skills in shaping effective fact-checking practices. Student journalists who are proficient in media literacy are better equipped to assess information credibility, apply verification techniques, and contribute to responsible and ethical journalism.

The findings of this study, exploring the significant influence of news media literacy on fact-checking competence among student journalists and teachers, align with Media Literacy Theory, Cognitive Load Theory, and Social Cognitive Theory.

Media Literacy Theory, developed by scholars such as Potter (2004), as cited by Lee and Wei (2022), emphasizes the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media content responsibly. In this context, media literacy is crucial in developing fact-checking competence, as it equips student journalists and teachers with the critical thinking skills needed to assess the credibility of online information. Those with strong media literacy skills can discern credible sources, recognize misinformation, and apply verification strategies to ensure the accuracy of digital content. Without adequate media literacy, they may struggle to differentiate between factual information and deceptive narratives, leading to the spread of misinformation.

Furthermore, Cognitive Load Theory, developed by Sweller (2020), explains how individuals process and retain information based on cognitive capacity. In the digital age, student journalists and teachers are exposed to vast amounts of information, which can overwhelm their cognitive processing abilities. Strong media literacy skills help manage cognitive load by providing efficient verification strategies such as direct and indirect verification to assess information quickly and accurately. Without these skills, they may experience cognitive overload, making them more susceptible to misinformation and biased reporting.

Finally, Social Cognitive Theory, proposed by Bandura (1986), as cited by Firmansyah and Saepuloh (2022), highlights the role of observational learning, self-efficacy, and social influence in shaping behaviors. In the context of this study, student journalists and teachers develop fact-checking habits through exposure to reliable sources, peer interactions, and digital literacy education. When they observe responsible media consumption and fact-checking practices, they are more likely to adopt these behaviors, improving their ability to critically analyze online content. This theory suggests that enhancing students' and teachers’ media literacy through education and social engagement can strengthen their fact-checking competence, ultimately promoting a more informed and responsible approach to digital information consumption.

**6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations were proposed:

Firstly, considering that news media literacy among student journalists and teachers is at a very extensive level, it is recommended that school administrators sustain and further enhance both students' and teachers' media literacy skills. Providing workshops, seminars, and training on advanced media analysis, source verification, and misinformation detection may strengthen their ability to critically engage with news content. Student journalists and teachers may also be encouraged to participate in media literacy forums and collaborate with professional journalists to gain practical experience in analyzing and evaluating news sources.

Secondly, since fact-checking competence among student journalists and teachers is at a very extensive level, it is recommended that schools continue fostering an environment that supports responsible journalism. Establishing school-based fact-checking initiatives, encouraging participation in journalism competitions, and integrating fact-checking exercises into the curriculum can further develop students’ and teachers’ verification skills. Journalism advisers and educators may also guide students in applying fact-checking techniques to ensure the accuracy and credibility of their reports.

Thirdly, given the significant relationship between news media literacy and fact-checking competence, it is recommended that school administrators integrate media literacy education into journalism programs more systematically for both students and teachers. Schools may provide access to digital tools and fact-checking resources, allowing them to practice real-time verification of news content. Additionally, educators may consider incorporating case studies of misinformation and disinformation into lessons to enhance students' and teachers' critical thinking and analytical skills.

Finally, considering the influence of news media literacy on fact-checking competence, it is recommended that schools prioritize initiatives aimed at strengthening students' and teachers' ability to discern credible information. Collaboration with media organizations, fact-checking agencies, and academic institutions may offer hands-on experiences in news verification. Schools may also encourage student journalists and teachers to lead awareness campaigns on media literacy within their communities, promoting responsible consumption and dissemination of information. Future research may explore how specific news media literacy interventions impact students' and teachers' ability to combat misinformation, providing further insights into effective strategies for developing fact-checking skills.

Consent (where ever applicable)

This research was conducted in full alignment with established ethical standards to protect the rights, dignity, and well-being of all participants. Before any data collection began, the researcher secured the necessary approvals, including authorization from the Dean of the Graduate School at Rizal Memorial Colleges and ethical clearance from the institution’s Ethics Review Committee. The study followed ethical protocols based on the guidelines proposed by Pregoner et al. (2025), ensuring adherence to current best practices for research involving human participants in educational contexts. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and participants were thoroughly informed about the purpose, scope, and their freedom to decline or withdraw at any point without any repercussions. Informed consent was obtained to confirm their understanding and willingness to participate. To uphold privacy, no personal identifiers were collected, and all responses were treated with strict confidentiality. The collected data were used solely for academic purposes. These measures ensured the study was conducted with ethical transparency, integrity, and full professional responsibility.

Disclaimer (Artificial Intelligence)

The author(s) hereby declare that generative AI technologies have been used during the writing and editing of this manuscript. The details of the AI usage are as follows:

1. Grammarly: Used for grammar and spellchecking, as well as suggestions for improving sentence structure and overall clarity.
2. Quillbot: Employed for paraphrasing and refining sentence flow to enhance readability and coherence.

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