



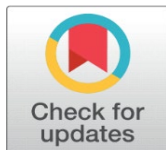
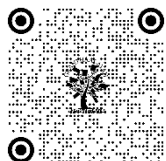


DIGITAL MEDIA LITERACY AND FAKE NEWS AWARENESS AMONG DIGITAL IMMIGRANTS OF TIRUNELVELI DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

The advancement of technologies and the effect of globalization make our world into a small village. This effect has also undergone significant changes in the media. It is made available to everyone around the world without any limitations. As a result, the mass media experienced tremendous growth. It takes a lot of time of ours with itself. And also, it has vast content to explore. We can get a million results on the tab with one click on the internet. So, it is called "information overload." Because of this, it will quickly change our thoughts and actions until we do not get the desired results. The only way to solve this problem is to educate the public on using digital media effectively. That means, "Digital Media Literacy". Some countries, like India, have a greater need for it than others. This is due to their dismal showing on a global proficiency index with digital media. However, not everybody was independently proficient in digital media. Economic, political, or geographical reasons all have a role in creating this chasm. Consequences include an increase in cybercrime and the proliferation of disinformation. These things have a significant bearing on our culture. Governments like India struggle to address these socioeconomic problems. It directly impacts people and completely upends their lives. Therefore, it is necessary to explore the connection between digital media literacy and the dissemination of fake news. Consequently, the purpose of this study is to analyse the issue by employing the quantitative research method. The data for the study will be collected using Survey Method in the Tirunelveli District of Tamil Nadu State.

Keywords: Fake News, Digital Media Literacy, Misinformation, India, Social Media

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. NEW MEDIA CHARACTERISTICS AND OUR SOCIETY

New media became an indispensable aspect of human existence. It plays an important role in their lifestyle. It also contains user-oriented features that are immersive. Thus, the number of users of new media is increasing worldwide. Likewise, new media technologies are gaining prominence through the daily implementation of new technologies. Currently, we are in the transitional phase

between Web 2.0 and Web 3.0; the Web 3.0 window is only one step away. In addition, there are many ongoing experiments in the fields of artificial intelligence and virtual reality. A notable example is Chatgpt. Whereupon it grew to become the most effective instrument of democracy in our most democratic world. Because it can be referred to as the people's media, which is in the hands of everyone, Everyone now holds a smartphone, through which they can easily access new media platforms. A few decades ago, the mass media invented the notion of celebrity. During that time, however, only actors, singers, politicians, and businesspeople were extremely famous in our society. But the new media turned it on its head. It provided a stage for everyone who rose to fame due to their talent. And considerably the majority of them use new media for entertainment, information sharing, the creation of new memories, etc. It teaches us to view the world from varying perspectives.

1.2. MEDIA LITERACY DEFINITION

New media shapes the way of life, our beliefs, and the way we make decisions. Most importantly, it brings about significant cultural change. It creates a single, borderless world for everyone. Therefore, everyone has the chance to adopt new ideas that are suitable for them. Thus, both individual life and our society are directly impacted by new media. There is also a tonne of content to explore. This diverts our attention from our ideas and viewpoints. An "Information Overload" is what it is. This prevents us from achieving our goals, but we are still happy with the results we receive from these New Media websites. However, a large number of people use new media without even realising it, and daily, the number of users of new media increases. Most importantly, the majority of people like Indians are new to using the internet. Therefore, we couldn't guarantee that they would be knowledgeable about these media. Therefore, we gave them a skill called "Digital Media Literacy" that enables them to use these media efficiently and to be self-protective. The majority of people believe that digital media literacy involves critiquing media components. In actuality, however, that is the one that encourages responsible media consumption from both an individual and societal development perspective. The concept of "digital media literacy" succinctly captures the skills and knowledge needed to successfully traverse complex and fragmented information ecology. [Eshet \(2004\)](#)

1.3. MEDIA LITERACY AND FAKE NEWS CONNECTION

It is true that the term "fake news" has become popular in recent years, and the spread of false information has become a significant problem, particularly in the realm of new media. With the proliferation of smartphones and the ease of sharing information, it has become easier than ever for false information to go viral and cause harm. One of the primary factors driving the spread of fake news is political or economic interests. Individuals and groups with specific agendas may spread false information to advance their cause or discredit their opponents. However, it is also true that many members of the general public may unknowingly spread false information, highlighting the need for digital media literacy. Digital media literacy refers to the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media in various forms. It is essential for individuals to be able to distinguish between fact and fiction, particularly in the era of social media and user-generated content. However, there is little information available regarding the efficacy of fostering digital media literacy to combat online misinformation. According to reports, misinformation that went viral and was spread via WhatsApp in India stoked racial tensions and violence. [McLaughlin \(2018\)](#) However, the general public in new media also spreads

false information without being aware of it. It highlights the issue that they lacked adequate knowledge of the components and uses of new media. As "Digital Media Literacy," it can be described. Theorists early recognised the link between digital media literacy and false information. Misinformation—and disinformation—breeds as quickly as creativity in the "fever-swamp of personal publishing," according to a key introduction to the subject. To distinguish fact from fiction, users will need to use all of their critical thinking abilities [Glister \(1997\)](#). The effectiveness of increasing digital media literacy in battling online disinformation is not well-documented, despite the attention and funding these projects have received. Scholarly work on digital and media literacy is usually qualitative in character or focused on specific subpopulations and/or issues. Randomised controlled trials are still rare, and the outcomes of observational studies vary. [Jones-Jang et al. \(2019\)](#)

1.4. DIGITAL IMMIGRANTS

[Prensky \(2001\)](#) Created a concept based on Digital Technology usage patterns. He proposed two concepts, which are Digital Natives and Digital Immigrants. The term "digital immigrants" refers to individuals who were born or grew up before the advent of digital technology and have had to adapt to the digital age. These individuals may have learned to use technology later in life and may not be as comfortable or proficient with it as "digital natives," who were born into a world where digital technology was already ubiquitous. Digital immigrants may experience challenges when it comes to using digital technology. They may feel overwhelmed by the rapid pace of technological change, struggle to keep up with new software and hardware, and find it challenging to adapt to new ways of working and communicating.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This concept of media literacy first appears in 1992 at the Aspen Institute's National Leadership Conference on Media Literacy. The ability to access, assess, evaluate, and disseminate messages in a wide range of ways was described as media literacy during this conference [Aufderheide & Firestone \(1993\)](#). To grasp hidden signals and to raise awareness of issues caused by the media, media literacy is crucial.

Media literacy, according to [Martin \(2006\)](#), is the knowledge of and skill with which a person uses technological resources offered by various digital resources to further knowledge, establishes communication with others, and builds social networks.

Access, Understand, and Create are the three dimensions of media literacy that David Buckingham proposed. The first dimension is a worry about media content and whether it is suitable for a person's needs. Access includes compiling and using the information that is available. When someone says they have understood a message, they mean that they have read the message's content and have done something with it. The third factor of media literacy is concerned with literacy as it relates to both reading and writing communications. People that are media literate are better able to manage how media messages affect them, are less negatively affected by them, and as a result, show less hatred towards the subject. [Liang \(2011\)](#)

W. James Potter offered a model for the efficacy of media literacy in his cognitive theory for media literacy in 2004. He examines how people pay attention to, recall, and learn media effect dimensions in his theory. [Potter \(2008\)](#) also categories the five of knowledge structures for the development of media literacy have been

further identified, and they are as follows: media effect, media content, media industries, the real world, and the self. In the context of the media effect pattern, he also included media literacy. He contends that people's media literacy determines how the media affects them; messages will have an impact on people based on their media literacy. According to research by Harris and Sanborn from 2014, the study of media effect is a method for examining mass communication. Three aspects of its impact are taken into consideration: direct, conditional, and cumulative.

What ought we to call today's "new" students? They are sometimes referred to as the N-gen or D-gen (for digital). However, I have found that "Digital Natives" is the most useful term to describe them. The digital language of computers, video games, and the Internet is a language that all of today's students are "native speakers" of. What does that mean for the rest of us then? They will always be compared to us as the term "Digital Immigrants" refers to those of us who were not born into the digital world but who, at a later time in our life, developed a fascination with and assimilated many, if not most, features of the new technology. [Prensky \(2001\)](#).

Academic theories suggest that older adults are more susceptible to fake news online because they have lower levels of digital literacy [Brashier & Schacter \(2020\)](#). Here, we use the term "digital literacy" to refer to what academics have also referred to as "digital information literacy," or the capacity to analyse and evaluate information found online, including determining the veracity of the information or assessing the sources and supporting data [Kozyreva et al. \(2020\)](#). In general, research shows that older persons are less proficient than younger people in digital and internet-related abilities [Hargittai et al. \(2019\)](#). Because they played a lower part in their personal and professional life, older folks, unlike younger people, are not "digital natives" and may have less expertise using modern media technologies and platforms [Friemel \(2016\)](#). Additionally, due to the design of technologies (such as small text sizes and dependency on touch screen inputs), older people usually have a harder time using them. 2017 (Berenguer) Even under ideal conditions, it might be difficult for most consumers to distinguish between high-quality and low-quality news content because they lack the knowledge and contextual skills required.

According to [Guess et al. \(2020\)](#), Although studies have shown that teaching young people about digital media literacy improves their capacity to spot online misinformation [Kahne & Bowyer \(2017\)](#). It is not yet known if older adults can benefit from this type of programming in a similar way. One outcome is that older adults' ability to recognise false information online is unaffected by digital literacy training. This notion is supported by recent results from a big digital media literacy effort in India that wasn't especially aimed towards older individuals [Badrinathan \(2021\)](#). Further studies have shown that older persons frequently have doubts about new technology or think that using them will be difficult [Vaportzis et al. \(2017\)](#). This uncertainty and concern could be barriers to new digital media literacy training.

In the modern world, media tools are crucial for effective communication, which can only occur when these technologies are used creatively and independently. Consequently, studying Media Literacy is crucial in the 21st century. [Buckingham \(2013\)](#), [Warlick \(2008\)](#)

3. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study primarily examines the Media Literacy and Fake News Awareness Levels of Tirunelveli District Digital Immigrants. It then analyses their social media usage patterns as well as their news consumption patterns via mainstream media and social media. Most crucially, it aims to look into how media literacy affects the ability to spot fake news.

4. METHODOLOGY

The survey method is a widely used method in social and psychological research, and it involves collecting data from a selected sample through the answers to questions. In this case, the researcher has selected the Tirunelveli district, which has a good population and is known for its willingness to adapt to new technology and innovations. As a sample strategy, the researcher utilised snowball sampling, which entails a primary data source proposing additional prospective data sources for the study. This method is based on referrals and helps the researcher generate a sample. The sample size for this research is 100 respondents between the ages of 20 and 50+ years, and the respondents are evenly split between males and females. Furthermore, all the respondents are digital immigrants who have adapted digital technology to their lifestyle. This information is important because it helps to understand the characteristics of the sample and how it relates to the research question. It is worth noting that the use of snowball sampling may introduce some biases into the sample, as the participants may be more likely to nominate others who are similar to themselves. Therefore, it is important for the researcher to be aware of this limitation and to interpret the results of the survey accordingly. Overall, the use of the survey method and snowball sampling in this research can provide valuable insights into the experiences and attitudes of digital immigrants in the Tirunelveli district towards digital technology.

5. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

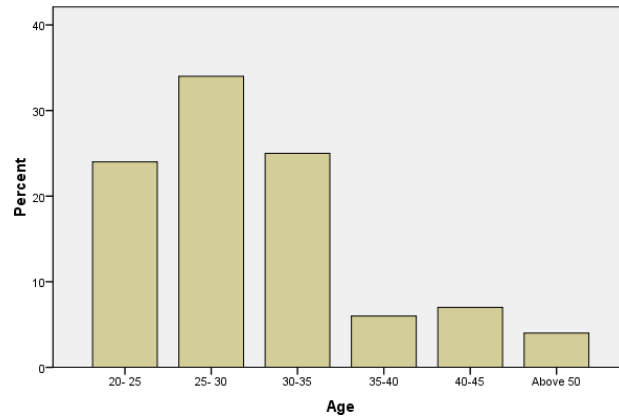
- 1) To understand the Social Media usage of the Digital Immigrants in Tirunelveli District.
- 2) To assess the Media Literacy Level of the Digital Immigrants in Tirunelveli District.
- 3) To analyze the Understanding level of Digital Immigrants about Fake News.
- 4) To comprehend the Influence of Media Literacy on fake news Identification.
- 5) To ascertain the News Consumption Level of Digital Immigrants in Tirunelveli District.

6. DATA INTERPRETATION

Demographic Details

Age

24% of respondents are 20-25 years old, 34% are 25-30 years old, 25% are 30-35 years old, 6% are 35-40 years old, 7% are 40-45 years old, and 4% are 50+ years old.

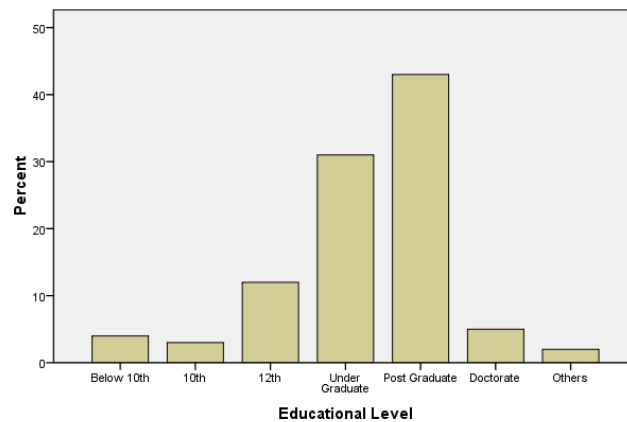


Gender

50% are men and 50% are Female.

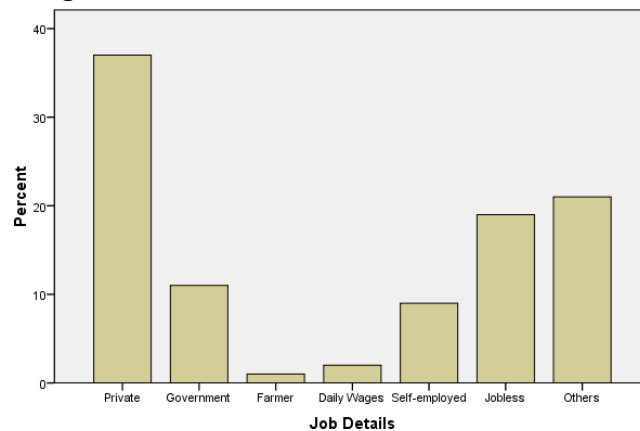
Educational Level

Among the respondents, 4% are below 10th grade, 3% are 10th graded, 12% are 12th graded, 31% are Undergraduate, 43% are Postgraduate, 5% are Doctorate and 2% are not listed.



Job Details

37% are Private Employees, 11% are Government Employees, 1% are farmers, 2% are Daily wages, 8% are Self-employed people, 22% are Jobless people, and 19% are doing some other not listed works.



Smartphone Price

Among the total respondents 13% are having below 10,000 priced smartphones, 67% are having 10,000 – 20,000 priced smartphones, 9% are having 20,000-30,000 priced smartphones, and 11% are having above 30,000 priced smartphones

SIM Card

49% are having only one SIM card, 50% are having two SIM cards, and 1% is having 3 and more SIM cards.

Laptop/Tablet Details

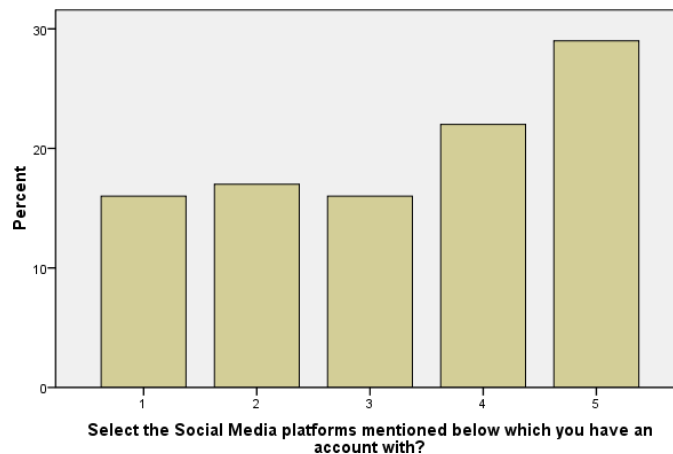
62% are having Laptops/Tablets and 38% are didn't have Laptops/tablets.

Attitude towards the use of Familymember's Smartphone:

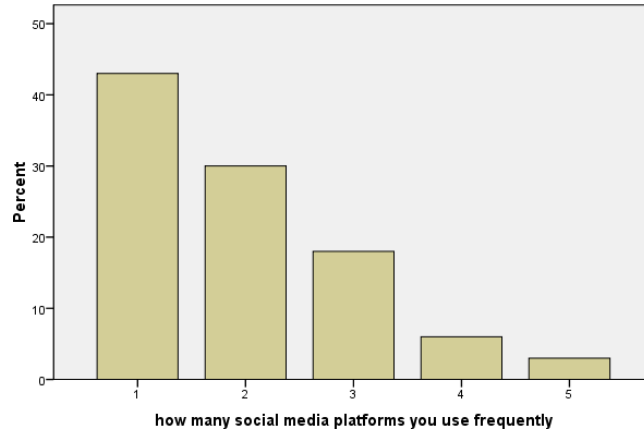
34% are having an attitude to use their Family member's smartphones while they don't have a smartphone. 40% didn't use their relative Smartphone. 26% are sometimes having the attitude to use their Family member's smartphones while they don't have a smartphone.

RQ 1. To understand the Social Media usage of the Digital Immigrants in Tirunelveli District.

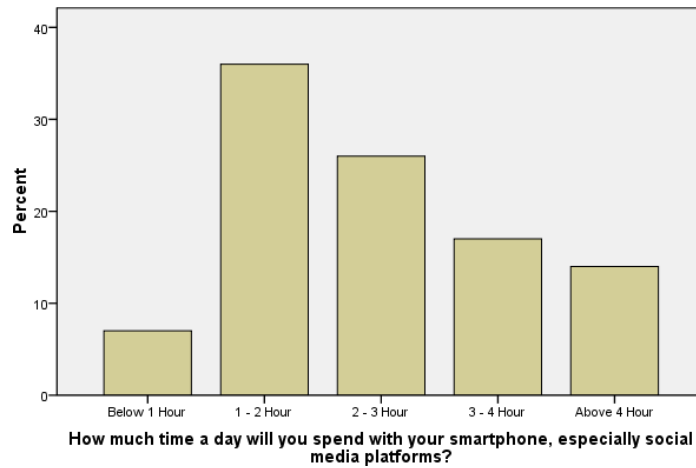
29% of the respondents have accounts on the majority of the social media platforms listed, 22% have accounts on four social media, 16% on three social media, 17% have accounts on two social media and 16% have accounts on only one social media.



Among them 43% are actively using only one Social Media platform listed, 30% are actively using Two Social Media platforms listed, 18% are actively using Three Social Media platforms listed, 6% are actively using Four Social Media platforms listed, 3% are actively using Five Social Media platforms listed.

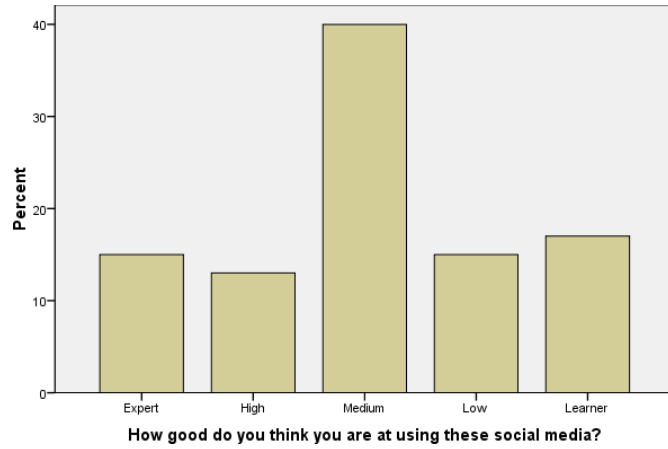


7% of the respondents are spending below 1 hour with these social media platforms, 36% of our respondents are spending 1-2 hours with these social media platforms in a day, 26% of the respondents are spending 2-3 hours with these social media platforms in a day, 17% of the respondents are spending 3-4 hours with these social media platforms in a day, 14% of the respondents are spending above 4 hours with these social media platforms in a day.

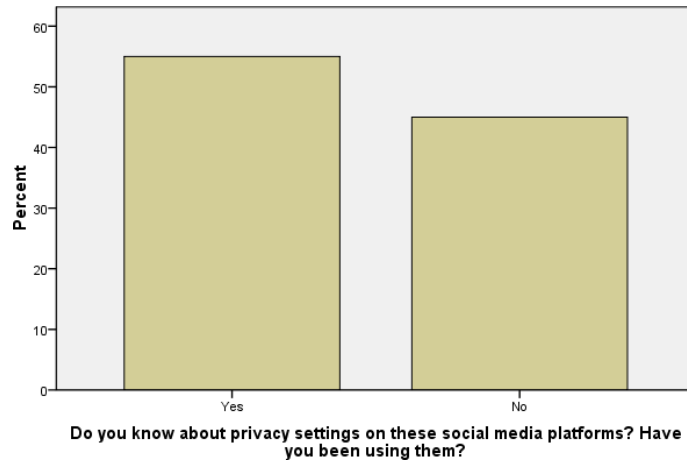


RQ 2. To analyze the Media Literacy Level of the Digital Immigrants in Tirunelveli District.

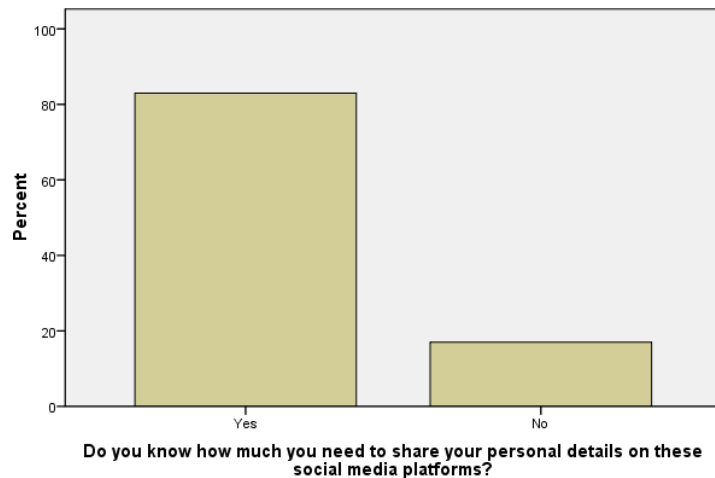
15% of the respondents are has a believe that they higher grade knowledge level about using these Social Media, 13% of them are having a believe that they has high level of knowledge about using these Social Media, 40% of them are having a believe that they has medium level of knowledge about using these Social Media, 15% of them are having a believe that they has lower level of knowledge about using these Social Media, 17% of them are having a believe that they has least level of knowledge about using these Social Media.



But, only 55% of them have awareness about the Privacy Settings on these Social media platforms, and 45% of them didn't have awareness about the Privacy Settings on these Social media platforms.

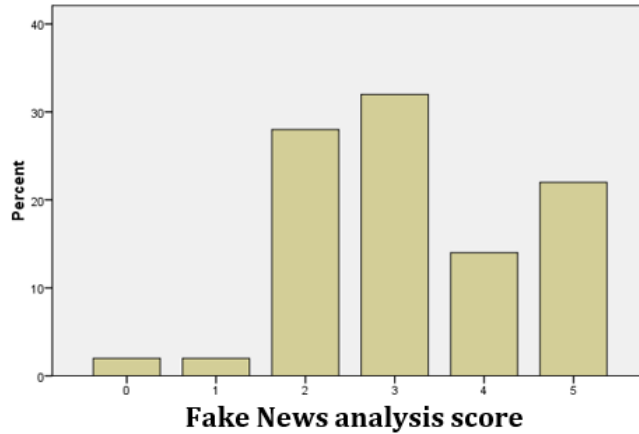


Then, 83% of them had the awareness about sharing personal details on these social media platforms, 17% of them didn't have the awareness about sharing personal details on these social media platforms



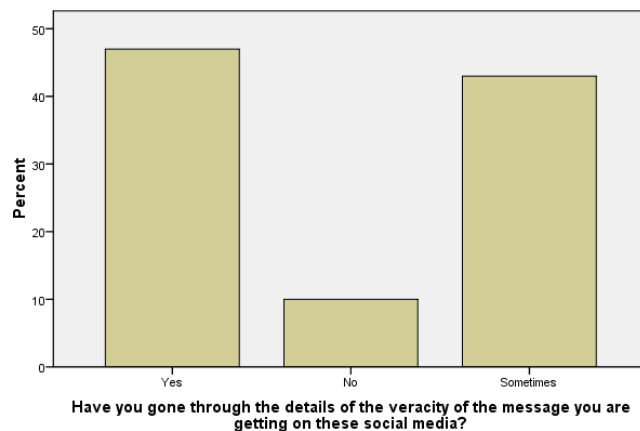
RQ 3. To analyze the Understanding level of Digital Immigrants about Fake News.

The graph derives that 2% of the respondents secured a 0 Score on the analysis to find out the fake news, another 2% of respondents also secured One Score on the analysis to find out the fake news, 28% of respondents secured Two Score on the analysis to find out the fake news, 32% of respondents secured Three Score on the analysis to find out the fake news, 14% of respondents secured Four Score on the analysis to find out the fake news, 22% of respondents are secured Full Score on the analysis to find out the fake news.

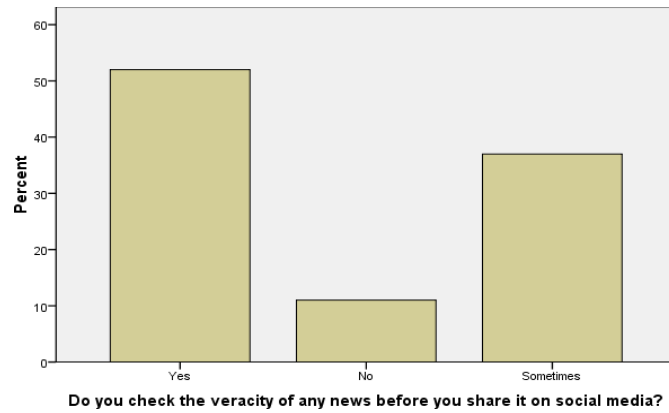


RQ 4. To Understand the Influence of Media Literacy on fake news Identification.

The graph derives that 45% of them are gone through the details of the veracity of the message they getting on these social media. 12% of them didn't verify the details of the veracity of the message they getting on this social media. 43% of them rarely verify the details of the veracity of the message they getting on these social media

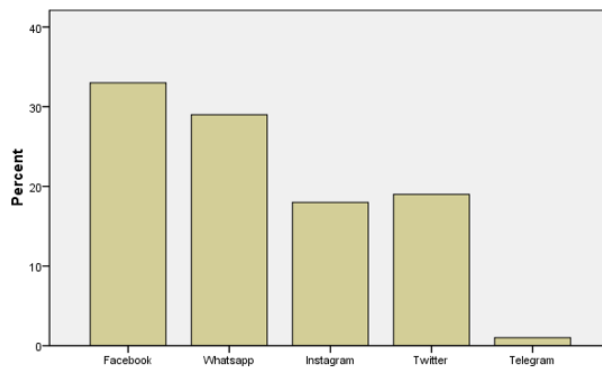


Then, 42% of the respondents are checking the veracity of any news before they share it on the Social media platform. 21% of the respondents didn't check the veracity of any news before they share it on the Social media platform. 37% of them rarely checking the veracity of any news before they share it on the Social media platform.



RQ 5. To Understand the News Consumption Level through Social Media of Digital Immigrants in Tirunelveli District.

Our respondents responded that 33% of them get news from Facebook, 29% are them get news from WhatsApp, 18% get news from Instagram, 19% get news from Twitter, and Only 1% of them get news from Telegram.



News Consumption level through Social Media

But, 53% of them having faith in the news they get from the Newspaper, 21% of them having faith in the news they get from the Television, and 26% of them having faith in the news they get from Social Media.

7. FINDINGS

29% of the respondents have accounts on the five social media platforms listed, which are Facebook, Whatsapp, Instagram, Twitter, and Telegram. 22% have accounts on four Social Media 16% have accounts on three Social Media 17% have accounts on two Social Media platforms; and 16% have an account on one Social Media platform. Whatsapp is the most popular social media platform among our respondents, and according to the Reuters Digital News report 2019, Whatsapp has 400 million or more active Indian users.

There is a distinction in their active use of social media platforms. But, majority of them are active users of only one social media platform, Whatsapp, with a few others using Facebook and Instagram. As a result, the majority of our respondents are active users of three Social Media platforms. But these Three Social media

platforms are owned by the same network which is "Meta". But, they spend the larger time with these Social Media platforms. So that, Social Media platforms are became, their prime and only source to gain information. Furthermore, our Chi-square Analysis shows that our respondents' demographic values of age, gender, work, and educational level have a greater significance with their social media account holding behaviour.

Respondents revealed that 68% of them having more of knowledge about using these Social Media, only 32% of them having least level of knowledge about using these Social Media.

However, only half of them are aware of the Privacy Settings and how to use them on social media platforms. Another 50% were unaware of the Privacy Settings and how to use them on social media platforms. Despite the fact that 80% of them are aware of the sharing of their personal information on social media. Only 17% of them were unaware of this information. As a result, they have a below medium level of Media Literacy but they not experts. So that, lower level of Media Literacy impacts on their knowledge gaining process. It leads them to stuck in-between the particular theme based info only. They are unaware about any other information. And also, it makes them to believe the all information they get on these Social Media platforms. They cannot easily specify which is true and which False is. In addition, earlier studies have indicated that older persons frequently have doubts about new technologies or think they will be challenging to use (Vaportzis, Giatsi Clausen, & Gow, 2017). This doubt and worry could prevent people from learning new digital media literacy skills.

Importantly, Chi-Square Analysis concludes that the respondents' Education level has a greater significance with the awareness of privacy settings and the sharing of personal news on social media platforms, both of which are closely associated with Media Literacy.

Despite their limited media literacy, they were unable to effectively identify fake news. Our major respondents received a 1-3 Score on our fake news identification-based questions, while another 36% received a 4-5 Score. As a result, the link between media literacy and fake news was irresistible.

And also 55% of them did not and rarely verify the details of the veracity of the message they received on social media. Then, 58% of them also did not and rarely check the veracity of any news before sharing it on a social media platform.

As a result, our respondents have a lower level of knowledge on identifying fake news as well as verifying the veracity of the message they are receiving and verifying the veracity of any news before sharing it on a social media platform. As early mentioned lower level of media literacy makes them to properly identify the veracity of news. Instead of this they also share that news within their friends also. It leads to the easy spread of Fake news. So that, it is larger thread to the peace and harmony of the society. Then, the country like India it easily creates larger social issues and affects larger number of the people.

Most importantly, our Chi-Square Analysis confirms that educational level and media literacy level have a greater significance in checking the veracity of the message they receive on these social media platforms, as well as checking the veracity of any news before they share it on the social media platform.

72%, of the respondents responded that they actively follow news content on these social media platforms. Then, most importantly, 33% receive news from Facebook, 29% receive news from Whatsapp, 18% receive news from Instagram, 19% receive news from Twitter, and only 1% receives news from Telegram.

But most importantly, 53% of our respondents trust the news they get from newspapers, 21% trust the news they get from television, and 26% trust the news they get from social media. As a result, the majority of them only trust news from traditional media sources. But, their medium of news consumption gradually changing to the new media. So, we must ensure the validity of the content circulated in the New Media. It also increases the trust level of New Media contents. Furthermore, Chi-Square Analysis shows that gender, age, and educational level have a greater impact on news consumption and trust in mass media.

8. SUGGESTION

A country like India gains daily new users of new media. However, they lack the necessary literacy to utilise it effectively. It is closely related to the growing number of societal issues. Then, compared to other young people, Digital Immigrants suffer significantly more from these issues. Scholars hypothesise that the limited digital literacy of older adults may explain their heightened susceptibility to online fake news [Brashier & Schacter \(2020\)](#). Therefore, government authorities conduct media literacy campaigns to increase the media literacy of the populace. Likewise, the propagation of fake news can lead to the emergence of numerous problems in our society. Occasionally, it causes the government authorities a greater burden. Therefore, we must raise awareness of fake news and its identification methods through Media literacy campaigns. In addition, there are very few studies on Fake News and Media Literacy. Therefore, more research on Fake News and its spread is required.

9. LIMITATIONS TO THE STUDY

This study has some limitations, the most significant of which is that the total sample size is limited to 100 digital immigrants who live in the Tirunelveli District which fall into the Tier - III category. And they are all smartphone users with some level of literacy. As a result, the results may not be applicable to another region. The Snowball sampling technique is then used to collect our samples. As a result, this sampling technique has some limitations on its own. However, I assure you that the study has greater internal and external validity. During the research, I did not jeopardise the study's quality.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

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