

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1: Statement of the Problem

The Internet revolution and its development over time have had profound effects on society's information environment rather than the invention of the printing press. The Internet has brought changes in information communication systems, disrupting the established order of production and dissemination of news, entertainment, and information. Now, keeping up to date with anything happening in the world, from politics to government, is easier than ever. Our fingertips are always flooded with new stories, from online newspapers to social media.

So, with increased internet penetration and easier access to digital platforms, the spread of misinformation has become a significant global issue. Bangladesh is not immune to this phenomenon. The spread of misinformation is a growing concern in Bangladesh. With rapidly increasing internet penetration and the popularity of social media platforms like Facebook, misinformation is often shared without scrutiny. The implications of misinformation can be far-reaching, affecting political stability, public health, and social dynamics.

Despite efforts by various organizations and individuals to address this issue, there is limited academic research on the specific roles of media educators, professionals, and fact-checkers in Bangladesh. While organizations like FactCheck Bangladesh and several media outlets are active in debunking false information, there has been little investigation into the effectiveness of their approaches and the challenges they face. So, in combating misinformation, the vital roles of media educators (teachers and students), Professionals (journalists), and fact-checkers need to be rigorously understood

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The general aims and objectives of the proposed study are to investigate the role of media educators, professionals, and fact-checkers in battling misinformation. The following are the specific objectives of the proposed study are

- a. to examine the role of media educators in enhancing media literacy and fact-checking skills;
- b. to understand the perceptions of students about misinformation and verification;
- c. to investigate the strategies perceived by the media professionals to combat misinformation;
- d. to analyze the role of fact-checking platforms of Bangladesh in debugging truth;
- e. to identify the challenges in addressing misinformation by the media educators, professionals, and fact-checkers.

1.3: Questions of the study

Some specific questions are needed to add more insight into the study. So, there are some specific questions below.

- a. How do media educators, professionals, and fact-checkers perceive the problem of misinformation in Bangladesh?
- b. What strategies do media educators use to prompt media literacy and fact-checking skills for students?
- c. What about students' perceptions of misinformation and how they manage it?
- d. What strategies and tools are fact-checkers using to identify and counter misinformation?
- e. How do media professionals navigate the challenges posed by misinformation in reporting?

1.4: Rationale of the Study

Although the literature on fact-checking is growing, little academic research has examined how fact-checkers and journalists are responding to this growing problem. This study seeks to fill this gap by analyzing the roles, strategies, and challenges faced by media educators, professionals, and fact-checkers in combating misinformation in Bangladesh.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1: Literature Review

The spreading of misinformation and fake news is not new in Bangladesh and the effects of these are dangerous. The oldest of rumors is that the cartridges were greased with beef and pork fat, which led to the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857 (Palmer, 1966). But over time, the situation has worsened as communication tools allow sharing anything without verification and instant contact with anyone from any part of the country. Over the decade in Bangladesh, numerous incidents have occurred from rumors or misinformation like Ramu in 2012 (Sarkar, 2024). Nasirnagar in 2016 (Hossain, 2020)) to Bhola in 2019 (Dawn, 2019) and the dissemination of misinformation has sped up ahead of any movement like Shahbag (2013), Road Safety (2018) and July (2024), national election (2024), etc.

According to the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), misinformation is false news that someone intentionally creates and spreads. Also, that person knows it is fake news.

Also, according to Agence France-Presse (AFP), fact-checking involves verifying content already published on digital media, particularly social media, and establishing what is known—or not—about a subject.

In the context of widespread misinformation, many initiatives have been undertaken, such as establishing fact-checking forms as the first line of response to restore facts. In 2003, FactCheck.org, a modern fact checker, emerged in America, and since then it has expanded internationally. A report by Duke (2026) found 437 active initiatives on this topic worldwide. In Bangladesh, this type of initiative has also been undertaken by the media industry, media educators, and professional and voluntary fact-checking platforms to combat misinformation.

Michelle A. Amazeen (2020) said in a study that the relationship between press freedom and the presence of fact-checkers in a country is positive. Ease of access to the internet led to an increased quantity of fact-checking organizations parallelly, the study reads. Kamruzzaman (2024) conducted a study of 15 working journalists on fact-checking and the challenges it faces in Bangladesh. The study finds that media houses are not ready to battle misinformation, lacking a proper fact-checking system. Also, journalists opined that advanced technology skills, training, standard education, and, regulations are needed to combat misinformation.

According to Nazmul Haque (2023), verification of facts alone is insufficient, necessitating media literacy education that teaches citizens to evaluate information critically and identify trustworthy sources.

2.2: Theoretical Frameworks

2.2.1: Gatekeeping Theory

Gatekeeping, a theory of mass communication, explains how a large volume of news is filtered and how a set of items is selected for publication to audiences. So, gatekeeping is a method that helps us maintain our sanity. This means gatekeeping falls under the role of surveillance and data monitoring. These gatekeeping decisions are made every day to determine which items audiences will see. (Chris Roberts, 2005).

After World War II, German psychologist Kurt Lewin (1947) developed a theory of human behavior that focused on individual perception and understanding of one's own world. From the very beginning, it was used in human and social psychology, and later in the field of mass communication with the advent of mass-publication technology.

In 1950, David M. White developed the theory and applied it directly to news media, highlighting the individual choice of news from a vast number of items. And recently, Pamela (1991) applied this theory at multiple levels, including the individual, communication routines, organizational, and social-institutional forces. From then on, the theory is essential and also a foundational theory in media and communication studies.

In the digital age, the gatekeeping process is not limited to journalists' use; it's widely used by individuals who act as citizen journalists, thanks to the expansion of social media, fact-checkers, and media educators. So, in the study, *Misinformation and Fact-Checking: A Study on the Role of Media Educators, Professionals, and Fact-Checkers in Bangladesh*, the theory has been applied to how media professionals act as gatekeepers by verifying news before sharing, fact-checkers whose function is to identify false claims and correct misinformation in gatekeeping process and media educators who would be future journalists and train media students and promote skill and media literacy from gatekeeping essence.

2.2.2: Social Responsibility Theory

The Social Responsibility Theory holds that every individual, including journalists, media educators, and ordinary citizens, has the right to freedom of expression and is, at the same time, accountable to society. In *The Four Theories of the Press*, Frederick Siebert, Theodore Peterson, and Wilbur Schramm (1956) argued that every society has a particular communication system with regard to social structure and media organizational relationships. In the liberal system, individuals must act with social responsibility in mind.

So, whenever you discuss social responsibility in the realm of misinformation and disinformation, you, as media professionals, media educators, and fact-checkers, should verify facts, correct them, and provide truthful information for the public interest. In this research, from the point of the theory, journalists must carry out their social responsibility through verification, fact-checkers promote accountability and media educators cultivate ethical media practice and media literacy.

2.2.3: The Diffusion of Innovation Theory

The Diffusion of Innovation (Rogers, 1962) explains how new technologies, ideas and practices have been adopted within a society over time. DOI describes adoption as a staged process in which people first gain knowledge, then form attitudes, decide, implement, and finally confirm or reject continued use.

When technology adoption is a central focus, the theory applied in this study concerns the adoption of fact-checking tools and verification technologies, and the acceptance of digital verification methods among journalists and others.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS AND MATERIALS

The study's methodological approach is based on its aims and objectives, as well as the research questions the researcher seeks to investigate. The study is primarily qualitative, but media students' perceptions of misinformation and verification have been analyzed quantitatively.

The in-depth interview and field survey approaches were applied in the study to examine the role of media educators, professionals and fact-checkers in combating misinformation and understanding the perceptions of media students about misinformation and its verification process.

3.1: Sampling and Determination of Sample Size

The study population will include media educators (faculty and students) from public and private universities, journalists (professionals) at the national and fact-checkers from active fact-checking platforms in Bangladesh.

From the study's entire population, purposive sampling was used to select 18 respondents for in-depth interviews: seven (faculty members) from public and private universities, three (journalists who dedicatedly work for fact-check) from media houses, and seven (fact-checkers) from professional and voluntary fact-checking platforms in Bangladesh. Of the seven faculties, six are from public universities and one from private universities. These seven faculties are selected from universities that offer journalism, communication, and media departments. Also, three journalists cum fact-checkers were chosen from three media houses: Agence France-Presse (AFP), Aiker Patrika and The Asia Posts. The other journalists who dedicatedly work for fact-checking in mainstream media houses refused to give interviews. And, seven fact-checkers were selected from seven professional fact-checking platforms. They are from The Dissent [labeling as participant (P1)], Newschecker [labeling as participant (P2)], Boom Bangladesh [labeling as participant (P3)], Dismislab [labeling as participant (P4)], Rumor Scanner [labeling as participant (P5)], FactWatch [labeling as participant (P6)] and BanglaFact [labeling as participant (P7)]. It is mentioned that participants 1 to 5 are independent fact-checkers who work under the supervision of foreign and national finance, and that FactWatch is affiliated with the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB), while BanglaFact is run by a government institution named Press Institute Bangladesh (PIB).

On the other hand, to examine the impact of media educators on students regarding fact-checking and misinformation, and the scope of future fact-checkers and journalists, 200 students from journalism, communication, and media-related departments were selected through random sampling for the field survey. The universities are University of Dhaka (DU), Rajshahi University (RU), Jahangirnagar University (JU), Jagannath University (JnU), Khulna University (KU), Barishal University (BU), Begum Rokeya University (BRU), Comilla University (CoU), Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP), Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University

(JKKNIU), Green University (GU) and Stamford University (SU). And faculty members are from JnU, KU, CoU, BRU, BU, Daffodil International University (DIU), JKKNIU.

3.2: Collection of Data

The in-depth interviews were conducted using semi-structured questionnaires administered via mobile phones and, in some cases, in person. In addition, a structured survey questionnaire was conducted using 'Google Form' over the internet and in person. Investigators were appointed from capable graduates of the department to assist.

3.3: Data Analysis and Presentation

Data from the interviews were summarized by open coding. Similar codes will then be grouped into categories that form individual themes, which means thematic analysis was used in the study. SPSS version 25 was used to tabulate and analyze the survey data. Some statistical measures, such as mean, median, average, percentage, and correlation, are used, and graphs, charts, and tables are also used to present the analyzed data. If necessary, other computer programs will be used during the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: MEDIA STUDENTS' PERCEPTION AND CHALLENGES OF MISINFORMATION

4.1: Demographic and Educational Information of Respondents (media students)

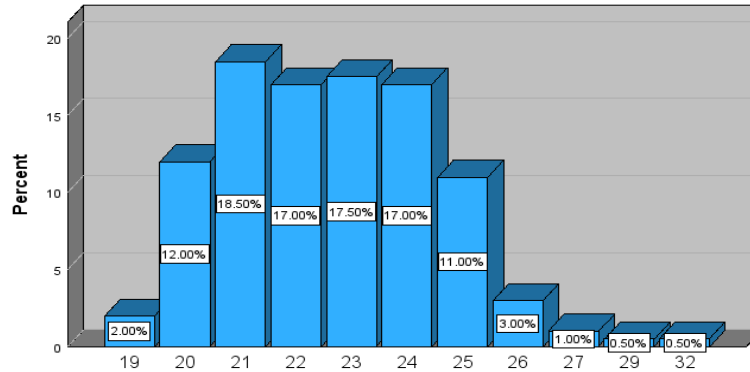
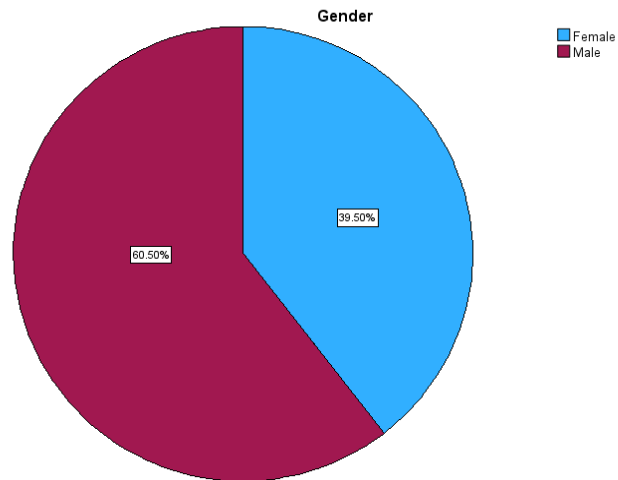


Figure 1: Age of Respondents

Source: Field Survey 2026

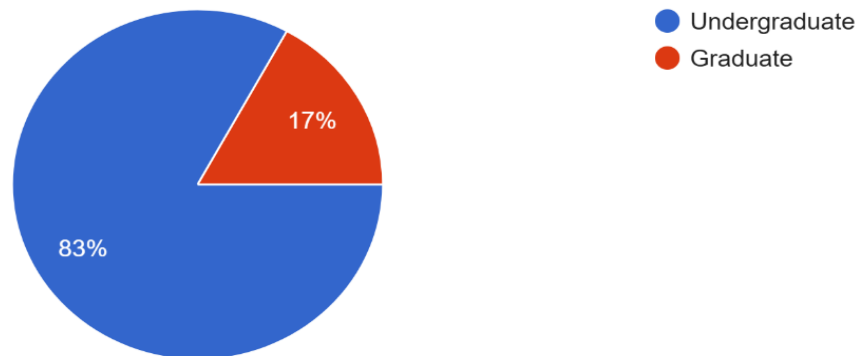
As per Figure 1, the age range of the respondents (N=200) is 19 to 32 years. This range indicates a youth group who are studying at public and private universities in Bangladesh. Among this group, students aged 21 to 24 make up 70% of the total respondents, which is prominent in the allay. The 20- and 25-year-old students ranked second with 12 and 11 years, respectively, and the fewest number of age-group students are 32, 29, 27, and 19 years.

As part of the demographic information, Figure 2 shows that 60.5% are male and the rest (39.5%) are female students studying in the university's media, communication, journalism, and film studies departments in Bangladeshi public and private universities.



Source: Field Survey 2026

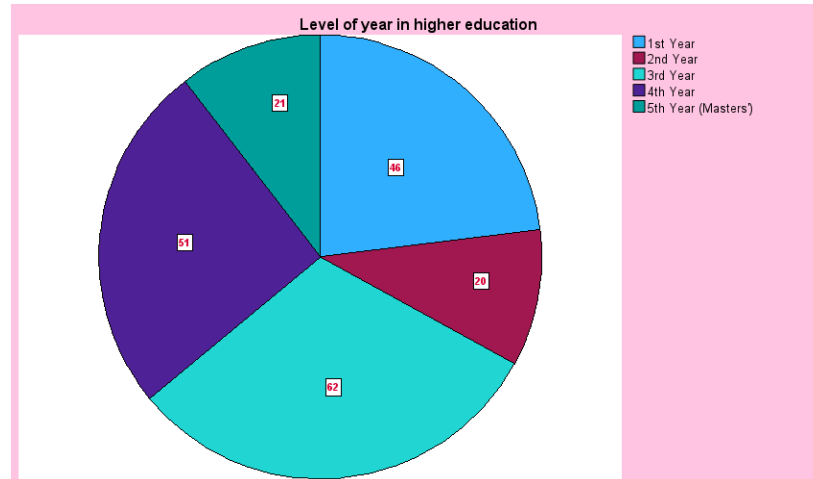
Figure 2: Gender Identity of Respondents



Source: Field Survey 2026

Figure 3: Education Qualifications of Respondents

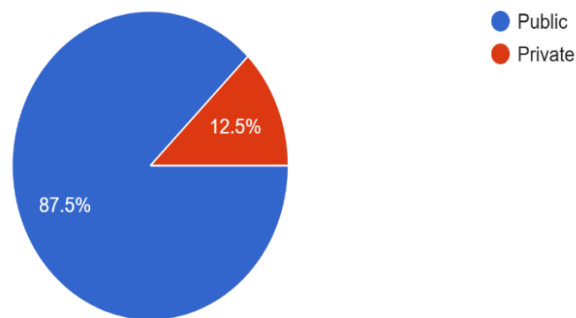
When the researcher examines the respondents' education levels, as shown in Figure 3, he or she finds that 83% of students are at the undergraduate level and only 17% at the graduate level. And at the undergraduate level, 31% and 25.5% and 23% students belong to the class of 3rd, 4th, and 1st years, and 20 students, or 10%, are studying in the 2nd year, and the rest 10.5% belongs to graduate level education, as mentioned in Figure 4.



Source: Field Survey 2026

Figure 4: Level of Higher Education

To obtain representative data, media students from public and private universities across Bangladesh are selected for the study. The results show that 87.5% are from public universities and 12.5% from private universities, as shown in Figure 5. As a large number of media students study at public rather than private universities, the percentage of students' institutional affiliation is representative of the data.

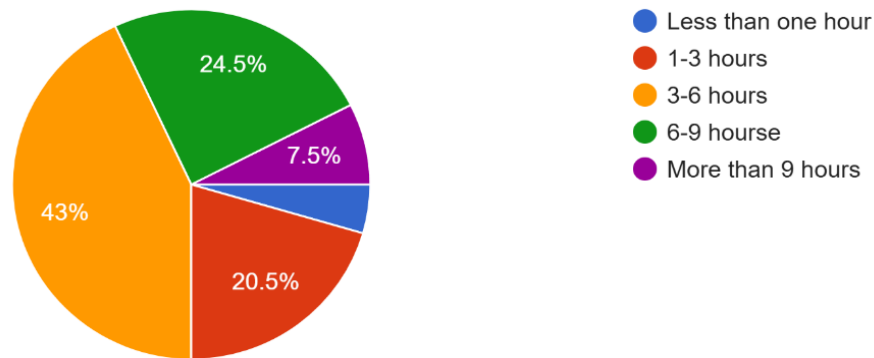


Source: Field Survey 2026

Figure 5: Types of University

4.2: Habitual Attitude towards students' digital media usage

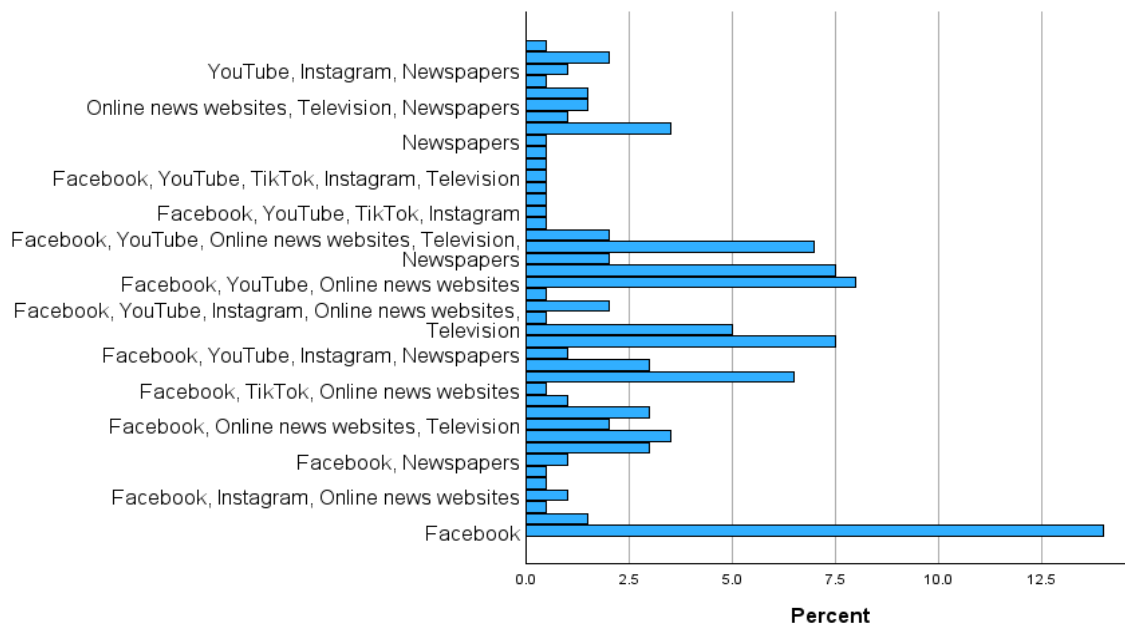
To understand how perception and awareness of misinformation and fact-checking play a role in combating the spread of misleading information across digital media, students' digital media behavioral patterns and news consumption practices must be known. So, Figure 6 indicates that the study finds 43 percent of respondents spent an average of 3-6 hours daily using digital media. And six to nine hours are spent by 24.5 percent and 20.5 percent of the participants, respectively. Moreover, more than 7 percent of students are allotted more than 9 hours for browsing itself, and, interestingly, fewer than one hour is spent by a smaller number of students.



Source: Field Survey 2026

Figure 6: Average daily time spent online

This data indicated that students are very much accustomed to spending time online, and Figure 7 reveals that most students are accustomed to using social media such as Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram, as well as online news websites, digital television broadcasting, and newspapers. In this regard, using Facebook for news consumption is unique in the alley. Facebook, YouTube, and Online news websites together, Facebook-YouTube-Online news websites-Television, and newspapers, respectively, ranked the second and third choices of students for getting news updates.



Source: Field Survey 2026
habits

Figure 7: Respondents' news consumption

4.3: Students' Perception of Misinformation and Awareness

Table 1: The frequency of students' Perception of Misinformation and Awareness

Statements	Strongly agree	agree	Neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
What misinformation means I understand	110	65	15	3	7
I can differentiate true and false information spread online	83	81	28	3	5
Handling misinformation spread online is a serious issue	134	41	14	5	6
I often face misleading information online	98	72	18	6	6
Social networking sites like Facebook are the main source of spreading false	110	56	29	2	3
Students are often influenced by misinformation without realizing it.	81	81	23	10	5
I feel confident identifying misleading headlines or posts.	58	88	39	9	6
Images and videos can easily be manipulated to spread misinformation.	112	59	12	12	5
Political, religious, entertainment, and other online information is often difficult to trust	82	85	22	6	5
Misinformation can negatively affect students' opinions and decisions.	108	68	14	6	4

Source: Field Survey 2026

Table 2: The percentage of the frequency of students' Perception of Misinformation and Awareness

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
What misinformation means I understand	55%	32.5%	7.5%	1.5%	3.5%
2. I can differentiate true and false information spread online	41.5%	40.5%	14%	1.5%	2.5%
3. Handling misinformation spread online is a serious issue	67%	20.5%	7%	2.5%	3%
4. I often face misleading information online	49%	31%	9%	3%	3%
5. Social networking sites like Facebook are the main source of spreading false	55%	28%	14.5%	1%	1.5%
6. Students are often influenced by misinformation without realizing it.	40.5%	40.5%	11.5%	5%	2.5%
7. I feel confident identifying misleading headlines or posts.	29%	44%	19.5%	4.5%	3%
8. Images and videos can easily be manipulated to spread misinformation.	56%	29.5%	6%	6%	2.5%
9. Political, religious, entertainment, and other online information is often difficult to trust	41%	42.5%	11%	3%	2.5%
10. Misinformation can negatively affect students' opinions and decisions.	54%	34%	7%	3%	2%

Source: Field Survey 2026

Table 3: The statistical frequency of students' Perception of Misinformation and Awareness

Statements	Mean	Median	Mood	Stand. Deviation
What misinformation means I understand	1.66	1.00	1	.95
I can differentiate true and false information spread online	1.83	2.00	1	0.91
Handling misinformation spread online is a serious issue	1.54	1.00	1	0.91
I often face misleading information online	1.75	2.00	1	0.91
Social networking sites like Facebook are the main source of spreading false	1.66	3.00	1	0.86
Students are often influenced by misinformation without realizing it	1.89	2.00	1 ^a	0.97
I feel confident identifying misleading headlines or posts	2.09	2.00	2	0.97
Images and videos can easily be manipulated to spread misinformation	1.70	1.00	1	1.0
Political, religious, entertainment, and other online information is often difficult to trust	1.84	2.00	2	0.92
Misinformation can negatively affect students' opinions and decisions.	1.65	1.00	1	0.90

Source: Field Survey 2026

In Table 2, the study finds strong cognitive knowledge of misinformation, awareness of it, and understanding of its consequences. The statement mainly focused on themes such as understanding of misinformation, ability to identify it, exposure to it, perceived impact of it, and perception of the importance of addressing it

4.3.1: Understanding of Misinformation

In the Likert-scale questions, the descending order indicates that most respondents (87.5% agreed or strongly agreed) expressed a clear understanding of misinformation. In Table 3 here, descriptive statistics show a mean (1.66), Mode (1), and standard deviation (.95), which are close to the mean, indicating a clear indication of all participants' perceptions regarding misinformation.

4.3.2: Ability to Identify Misinformation

Regarding media students' ability to identify misinformation, the majority of participants showed strong agreement that they can identify true and false information, that misleading headlines and posts, and that images and videos are the main sources of misinformation. Table 2 indicates that participants (82% agreed or strongly agreed) are very confident in differentiating true and false information spread online. Table 3 shows a mean of 1.83, a mode of 1, and a standard deviation of 0.91, indicating little variation around the mean.

4.3.3: Exposure to Misinformation

Table 2 also shows that participants most frequently encountered misleading information on social media, particularly Facebook and other sites, regarding political, religious, and environmental issues. Over 80% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that Facebook and other social networking sites were the primary channels for spreading misinformation, that political, religious, and entertainment-related online information was difficult to trust, and that they encountered misleading information online. These agreements give a clear indication of a high degree of consensus among all respondents in regard to low standard deviation (SD 0.91, 1.0, and 0.92) to mean (1.75, 1.70, and 1.84).

4.3.4: Perceived Impact of Misinformation

As the effects of misinformation in society are very significant, students agreed that they are often influenced by misinformation and it affects them negatively. Very rarely can students be affected by the misinformation shown in Table 2, as only 12.5% of participants indicated disagreement or strong disagreement with such a statement, as reflected in Table 3 through descriptive statistics.

4.3.5: Perception of the Importance of Addressing Misinformation

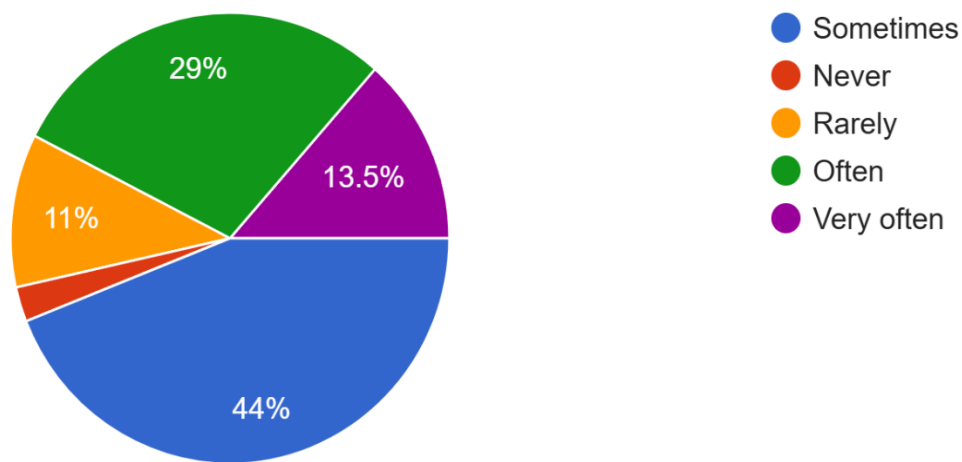
Lastly, Tables 2 and 3 indicate that most participants (87.5%) agreed that the spread of online misinformation is a serious issue nowadays. This reflects a strong recognition of misinformation as a societal challenge rather than merely a technological problem.

So, overall, the descriptive statistics support the conclusion that the mean scores (High 2.09 – low 1.54 on a five-point Likert-scale agreement), where a lower value indicates stronger

agreement, and a relatively low standard deviation indicates a high degree of consensus among participants regarding their perception and awareness of information.

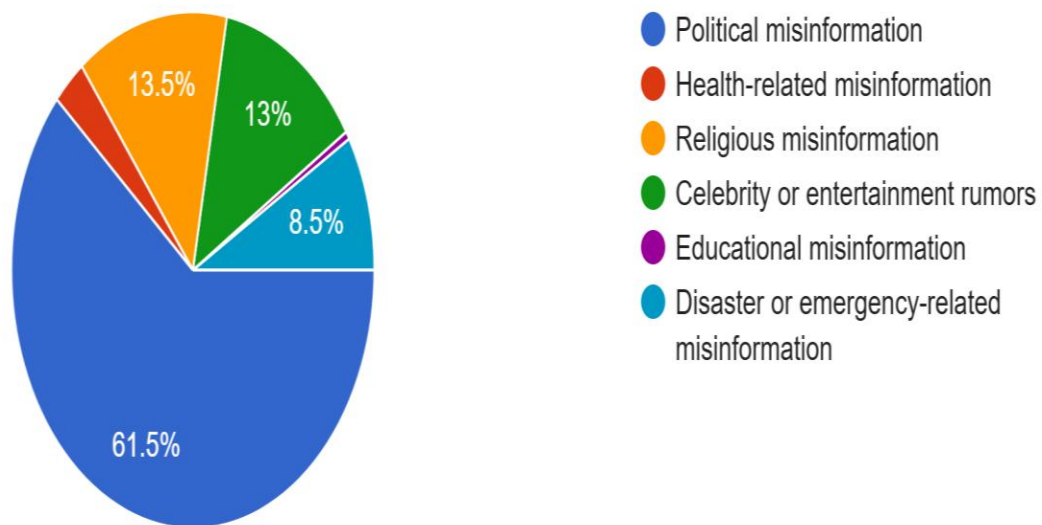
The findings suggest that media education has contributed significantly to students' conceptual understanding of misinformation and is an essential prerequisite for media literacy and fact-checking. Since media students are trained in journalism ethics, news production, and information literacy, these findings demonstrate that they are not only knowledgeable about misinformation but also recognize its psychological and social consequences.

4.4 Students' Experiences with Misinformation



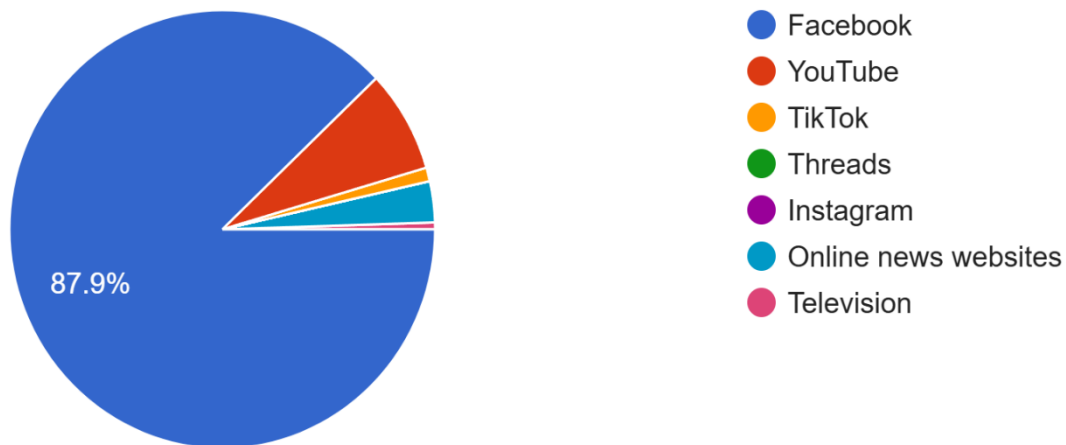
Source: Field Survey 2026
misinformation online

Figure 8: Frequency of encountering



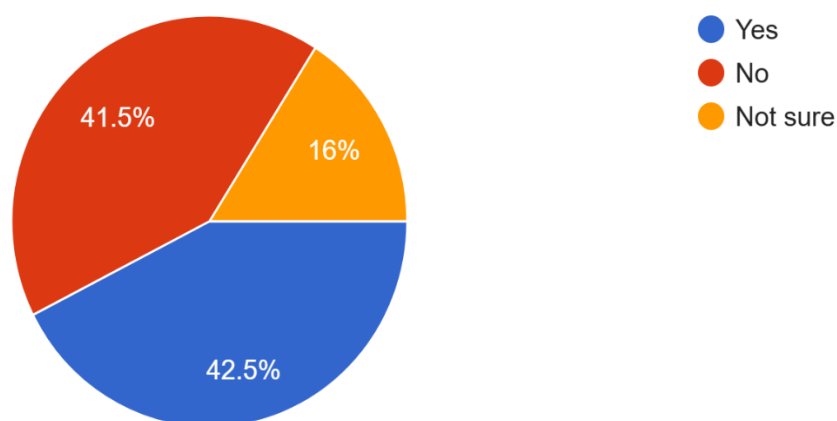
Source: Field Survey 2026

Figure 9: Types of misinformation encountered most often



Source: Field Survey 2026

Figure 10: Most commonly look up misinformation on social media platforms



Source: Field Survey 2026

Figure 11: Shared information online that later turned out to be false

4.5: Students' Verification Practices with Misinformation

Table 4: Verification Practices of Misinformation by Students in Percentage

Statements	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Before believing information online, I check whether it comes from a reliable source.	38.5%	18%	24%	12%	7.5 %
I compare the information with other news sources.	26%	26%	27%	16%	5%
3. I verify information before sharing it with others.	45%	16%	19%	14.5%	5.5%
I click the date and context of information before trusting it	38.5%	25%	19%	11.5%	6%
5. I read the full article instead of only the headline.	26.5%	22.5%	28%	16.5	6.5%
I look up the fact-checking websites or organizations.	19.5%	22.5%	28.5%	21%	8.5%
I check whether images or videos are	30%	20.5%	24%	17.5%	8%

authentic.					
I ask teachers, friends, or family members if I am unsure about information.	19.5%	22%	31.5%	21%	6%
I stop following accounts that regularly share false information	57%	14.5%	9%	12.5%	7%
I report misleading content on social media platforms.	28%	19%	20.5%	17%	15.5%

Source: Field Survey 2026

In Tables 4 and 5, the statement is dedicated to students' agreement, assessing whether students evaluate the reliability of sources, examining how students verify the accuracy of information, measuring the tendency to seek assistance when uncertain, and students' actions to stop the spread of misinformation.

Table 5: The statistical frequency of students' Verification of Misinformation

Statements	Mean	Median	Mood	Stand. Deviation
Before believing information online, I check whether it comes from a reliable source.	3.68	4	5	1.30
I compare the information with other news sources.	3.52	4	3	1.18
I verify information before sharing it with others.	3.81	4	5	1.30
I click the date and context of information before trusting it	3.79	4	5	1.24
I read the full article instead of only the headline.	3.46	3	3	1.23
I look up the fact-checking websites or organizations.	3.24	3	3	1.23
I check whether images or videos are authentic.	3.47	4	5	1.30
I ask teachers, friends, or family members if I am unsure about information.	3.28	3	3	1.17

I stop following accounts that regularly share false information	4.02	5	5	1.34
I report misleading content on social media platforms.	3.27	3	5	1.43

4.5.1: Source Credibility Verification: The students' agreement with the five-point Likert scale descending order statements indicates that the majority of the respondents (56.5% often or always) believe that before believing information, they check the information, whether it comes from real sources or not. By comparing with other credible news media, respondents in Table 4 (52%, often or always) verify that the information is true, reflecting cross-verification practices. And checking and verification before sharing is the strongest practice of combating misinformation across media. In this regard, according to the data in Table 4, nearly two-thirds (61%) often or always verify information before sharing, demonstrating that the participants are responsible digital citizens and aware of the risk of misinformation.

On the other hand, 19.5% of respondents never or rarely verify information sources, which can lead to the spread of misinformation, while 27% verify information sometimes, suggesting that verifying information before sharing is not a habit among students.

According to the data in Table 5, which presents descriptive statistics on the verification of information through credible sources, the mean score (3.68) indicates a moderate linear relationship, reflecting moderate variation among students ($SD = 1.30$) in their belief in verified information. The mean score (3.81) and Standard deviation (1.30) indicate that students' practices in the verification process for sharing information after verification are moderately good, suggesting the containment of misinformation.

On the other hand, verifying misinformation or information from other reliable media practices also indicates relatively consistent responses, as evidenced by a mean of 3.52 and a standard deviation of 1.18.

So, combating misinformation and increasing access to true information, checking and verifying information from real sources using different credible media sources before sharing and believing are crucial, where media students respond positively.

4.5.2: Information Verification Practices

Before trusting information as factual or misleading, someone goes through a whole deeper process of verification, such as checking the date and context of information, going through the entire news instead of partial or only the headline, scrutinizing related photos and videos as authentic, and browsing fact-checking websites or looking up government information providers' platforms.

In this process, respondents expressed their agreement, as shown in Table 4, as a statement of their understanding, elaborated below. 63.5% of respondents always or often check the date and context of information, indicating the strongest verification behavior among students. This is evident in the descriptive statistical analysis, where the mean score (3.79) and standard deviation (1.24) are shown in Table 5.

When reaching a decision, whether it is true or false, a deeper verification process of the information context is needed, which is relatively less strong in terms of respondents' agreement. As shown in Table 4, almost 49% and 50.5% often or always read the whole publication or news article instead of only the headline and check related videos and photos, while 28% and 24% do so sometimes. According to Table 5, the median and mode are 3 (sometimes) for students' agreement in reading the full article, indicating that many students don't engage in this practice, while the mean (3.46) and Standard deviation (1.23) reflect moderate dispersion.

On the other hand, when asked to look up fact-checking websites to confirm their authenticity, students' responses showed the weakest engagement in such verification practices. As shown in Table 4, only 42% of respondents do so, whereas 29.5% rarely or never do. It's evident from the descriptive data, where the mean is 3.24, one of the lowest agreement scores, indicating limited reliance on or occasional use of professional fact-checking websites.

4.5.3: Tendency to Seek External Assistance in Verification

Whenever a news consumer doubts the accuracy of information, he or she might seek assistance from near and dear ones who served as key informants on this. In this regard, media students also showed one of the weakest levels of agreement: only 41.5% often or always seek such assistance, while 31.5% do so sometimes, suggesting that media students rely on primary verification processes, such as reputable news sources. Descriptive data also suggest that consulting others is generally practiced only sometimes, which is indicated in Table 5, where the mode and median are 3 (sometimes). A relatively low SD (1.17) indicates greater agreement among media students.

4.5.4: Responsible Responses to Misinformation

By understanding and practicing the verification of misinformation, media students played a pivotal role in expressing agreement on combating misinformation, which is a country's curse as it pits people against each other over trifling matters. As shown in Table 4, a substantial 71.5% often or always stop following the accounts that spread misinformation. Statements such as these secured the highest mean score (4.02), and the Median and Mode also marked 5 (always), indicating that students avoid misinformation sources.

On the other hand, reporting misinformation on social media is also among the least active responses. Only 47% report often or always, and 32.5% rarely or never, that they avoid social media platforms that spread misinformation rather than report that information on social networking sites.

Overall, these findings reveal that media students demonstrate good verification practices when dealing with online misinformation. The strongest engagement with the statements includes unfollowing platforms that mislead with information (71.5% always or often), verifying information before sharing (61.5% often or always), checking the important date and context (63.5% often or always), and evaluating the credibility of information sources (56.5%). These results indicate that students have a relatively high level of awareness of responsible information consumption and sharing.

Some statements on student engagement revealed common practices, including 52% cross-checking with multiple sources, a practice performed frequently; likewise, half of the respondents (50.5%) verify the authenticity of photos and videos, highlighting these elements as significant sources of misinformation in the digital arena.

However, some findings also suggest the need to improve efforts to combat misinformation among media students. The use of professional fact-checking platforms remains relatively limited (41.5% always or often), which should be emphasized to increase usage, as primary sources and reporting misleading accounts or content is not yet a common behavior, as only 47% frequently report false information on social media

Table 6: Challenges to the verification of Misinformation by students

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I do not always have enough time to verify information.	15%	42.5%	24%	14.5%	4.0%
It is difficult to know which sources are trustworthy.	14.5%	45%	19%	15%	6.5%
I do not know how to verify images, videos and online news.	5.5%	19.5%	16.5%	37.5%	21%
Fact-checking websites are not widely known among students	24%	43%	19%	10%	4.0%
I sometimes trust information because many people share it.	17.5%	33.5%	19.5%	16.5%	13%
I rarely verify information when it supports my own beliefs	13%	30.5%	31%	16.5%	9.0%
Social media platforms do not do enough to prevent misinformation	31%	40%	16.5%	6.0%	6.5%

Mainstream media houses sometimes share misinformation	25%	39.5%	22%	11%	2.5%
Misinformation is spread through altered mainstream media logos.	36%	42.5%	13%	7.0%	1.5%
I need more training on how to identify misinformation	32%	38%	17.5%	8%	4.5%

Source: Field Survey 2026

Table 7: The statistical frequency of students' Verification challenges of Misinformation

Statements	Mean	Median	Mode	Stand. Deviation
I do not always have enough time to verify information.	2.50	2	2	1.05
It is difficult to know which sources are trustworthy.	2.54	2	2	1.12
I do not know how to verify images, videos and online news.	3.49	4	4	1.19
Fact-checking websites are not widely known among students	2.27	2	2	1.06
I sometimes trust information because many people share it.	2.74	2	2	1.29
I rarely verify information when it supports my own beliefs	2.77	3	2 ^a	1.14
Social media platforms do not do enough to prevent misinformation	2.17	2	2	1.12
Mainstream media houses sometimes share misinformation	2.26	2	2	1.02
Misinformation is spread through altered mainstream media logos.	1.95	2	2	0.94
I need more training on how to identify misinformation	2.14	2	2	1.09

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

. Source: Field Survey 2026

4.6: Challenges to the Verification of Misinformation by Students

Checking and verifying misinformation to curb its spread across media outlets is a major challenge in the realm of misinformation and disinformation, as well as in advanced technology. Media students expressed their agreement on a five-point Likert Scale, in descending order, regarding verification skills and knowledge, verification barriers, personal verification behavior, and cognitive bias, and perception of institutional responsibility and media credibility. In this regard, the survey results reveal that university media students faced challenges related to time constraints, access to reliable sources, limited awareness of fact-checking resources, cognitive bias, and weaknesses in the digital information ecosystem.

4.6.1: Verification Skill and Knowledge

According to Table 6, only 25% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that they don't know the process of verifying images, videos, and online news, whereas 58.5% disagreed or strongly disagreed. In Table 7, descriptive statistics show that media students mostly disagreed with the statement that they lack the knowledge to verify misinformation in photos, videos, and online news. As the mean of 3.49 lies between Neutral (3) and Disagree (4), while both the median and mode are proven. However, the relatively higher standard deviation (1.19) indicates a noticeable difference in the confidence level of verifying skill competence among respondents.

Hence, in combating misinformation, media students emphasized the need for additional training in verifying misinformation. Table 6 indicates that most respondents (70% agree or strongly agree) felt they needed additional training in checking and verifying misinformation. This result suggests gaps in media literacy, despite their existing knowledge of the verification process. And in Table 7, it also shows that, as per descriptive data, where the mean is 2.14, the median and Mode 2 (agree), and Standard Deviation 1.09 (relatively consistent responses), clearly indicate a need for additional training on misinformation verification

So, students' agreement with statements about verification knowledge and skills reflects, to some extent, their awareness and willingness to learn additional skills to cope with increasingly sophisticated forms of misinformation.

4.6.2: Personal Verification Behavior, and Cognitive Bias

As shown in Table 6, the survey results reveal that social influence leads people to believe information is true. About 51% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they are somehow influenced to trust information shared on social media by others. The mean of 2.47, positioned between agree and neutral, and the Mode and Median of 2 (Agree) indicate that they really depend on the popularity of information as an indicator of trustworthiness. But the higher standard deviation (1.29) indicates greater diversity of opinion.

To confirm this, students' own beliefs do not constitute facts, as 43.5% of respondents seem to treat information as their own belief. Whereas 31% remained neutral. This means factual information must be based on fact rather than someone's beliefs. In the descriptive data shown in Table 7, the mean score of 2.77 is close to the neutral point, suggesting mixed comments regarding whether students verify information based on their beliefs. So, the finding implies that confirmation bias affects a considerable proportion of students, although students expressed mixed reactions. These results are concerning because misinformation frequently exploits political, religious, and cultural or emotional beliefs. As a result, students can inadvertently become vulnerable to misinformation that aligns with their existing beliefs.

4.6.3: Verification Barriers

Battling against misinformation, information must be verified first. In this regard, media students expressed their opinions: 57.5% admitted they do not always have enough time to verify information, 18.5% disagreed, and 24% were neutral. The average score of 2.50, the Median, and Mode 2 (agree) are consistent with Data Table 7, indicating that students don't have sufficient time to verify, which is consistent across students, as reflected in the relatively low standard deviation (1.05).

This finding suggests that students mostly consume information through Facebook (Figure 7), where speed often takes precedence over accuracy. The continuous flow of news on this platform encourages students to react quickly rather than carefully verify.

In another statement regarding challenges of information verification, nearly 59.5% of the respondents (agree or strongly agree) said it is difficult to know which sources are credible. In descriptive analysis, the average response of 2.54 reflects the general agreement that distinguishing trustworthy sources from unreliable ones is challenging. Since both the median and Mode are 2 (agree), the moderate standard deviation (1.12) reflects respondents' consistency with each other. On the other hand, most respondents (67%) agreed that fact-checking websites are not widely popular among students. From the data set in Table 7, the mean score of 2.27 clearly demonstrates the same.

Nowadays, information is flooded across various sites, including social media and news portals. Students face challenges in determining which sources are trustworthy. This finding indicates that source evaluation remains one of the most significant competencies of media and information literacy.

4.6.4: Perception of Institutional Responsibility and Media Credibility

Media students somehow blamed the authority that shared information, sometimes that would be misinformation, for spreading misinformation across the media. Table 6 shows that a substantial 71% agreed or strongly agreed that social media platforms don't have sufficient preventive measures to control the spread of misinformation. The mean score of 2.17, Median and Mode 2 (agree), and relatively moderate standard deviation (1.12) echoed the same. But this type of

result does not mean that students always depend on these platforms; rather, the information provider must be responsible for this.

On the other hand, mainstream media don't engage in actual journalistic practice, as data table 6 indicates that 64.5% of the respondents believe that mainstream media sometimes share misinformation. The mean (2.26), median, and mode (2), along with a low standard deviation (1.02), indicate the consistency among students. This finding suggests that students seem to hold social media and mainstream media responsible for the spread of misinformation.

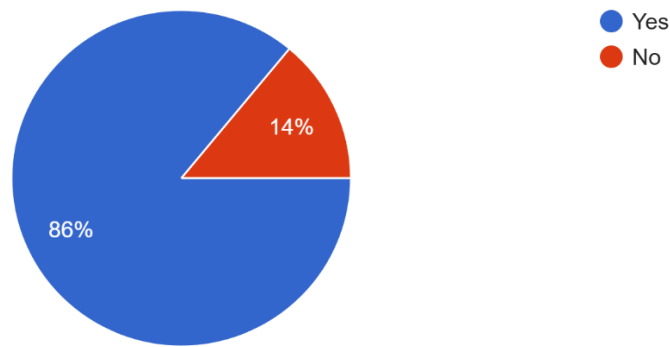
Besides, one of the greatest areas of agreement concerns fake news generated by altering the logos of mainstream media, with 78.5% of respondents agreeing that misinformation is often shared using manipulated logos of established media houses, which is also proven by the data set of Table 7, where the lowest mean is 1.95 and the smallest standard deviation.

So, the overall finding in this section show that media students of public and private university face a range of challenges in verifying misinformation. The data set show that the Mean scores range from 1.95 to 2.77, and most medians and modes are 2 (Agree). Students most strongly agree that altered mainstream media logos are used to spread misinformation (Mean = 1.95). They also see a need for more training (Mean = 2.14) and feel that social media platforms do not do enough to stop misinformation (Mean = 2.17). Many students also admit they are not very aware of fact-checking websites, have trouble finding trustworthy sources, and often lack the time to verify information.

The only statement that students generally disagreed with was 'I do not know how to verify images, videos, and online news' (Mean = 3.49; Median = 4; Mode = 4). This suggests that many students think they have basic verification skills. Still, their call for more training shows they recognize the need for more advanced skills to address complex misinformation, such as AI-generated or altered visual content. The low standard deviations for all items (0.94–1.29) show that students' responses were fairly consistent.

4.7: Media Literacy and Learning

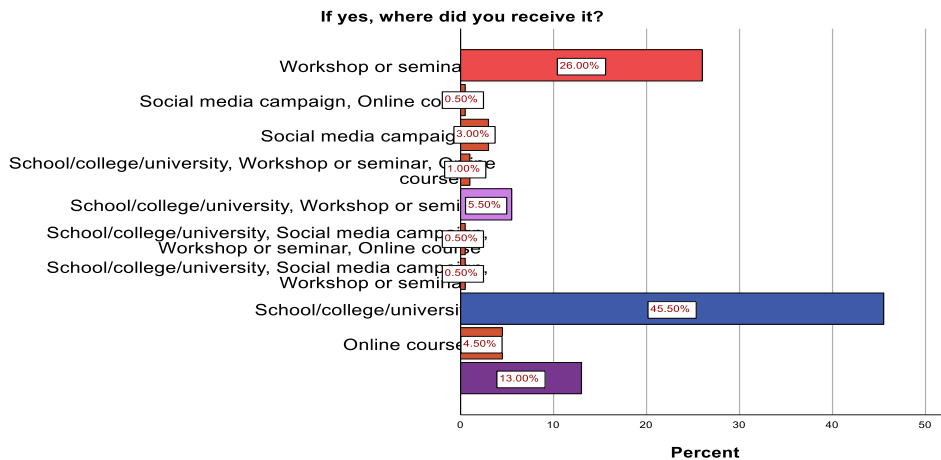
True or factual information must be available on digital media to curb the spread of misinformation. To develop the skills to identify factual information, students need academic learning or specialized training sessions. To assess students' current understanding of misinformation and fact-checking, they were asked whether they had ever received any training or education in media literacy or fact-checking. As shown in Figure 12, about 86 percent of the respondents expressed a positive opinion, and only 14 percent a negative one.



Source: Field Survey 2026
media literacy or fact-checking

Figure 12: Having academic learning and training on

Most of the students (71.5%) received this training or academic education from educational institutions and participated in workshops or seminars, while a small number reported learning about fact-checking through online courses and social media campaigns.

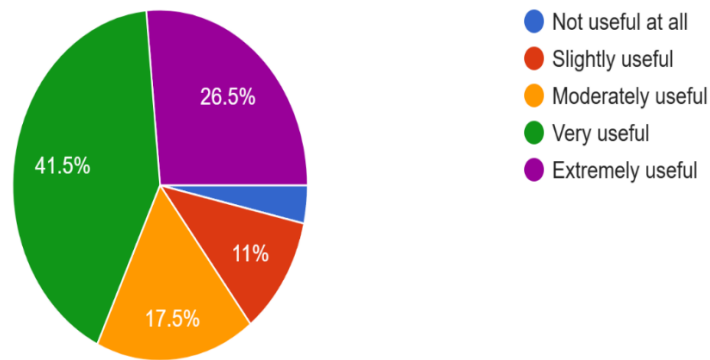


Source: Field Survey 2026

Figure 13: Training on media literacy or fact-checking from the Center

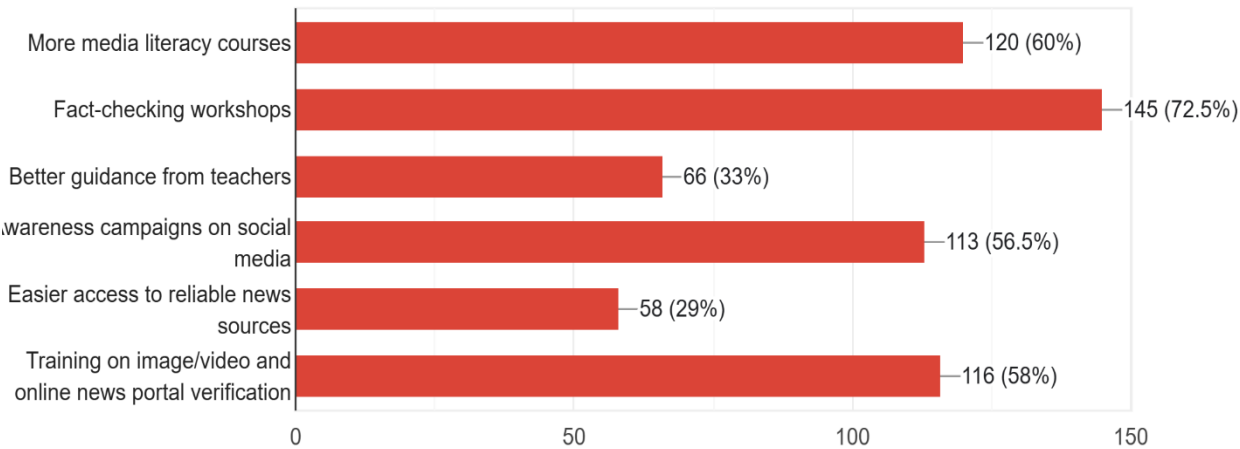
Figure 14 indicates that a large portion of the respondents (41.5%) thought that media literacy is 'very useful', while 26.5% considered it as 'extremely useful'. Together, 68% of respondents expressed a highly positive view of media literacy in combating misinformation. However, 17.5% perceived media literacy as 'moderately useful'. Although these respondents acknowledge the value of media literacy, they contend that it should be complemented by additional interventions,

including stronger platform regulation, institutional fact-checking initiatives, and enhancements in digital platform governance. Only 11 % of the respondents rated it as ‘slightly useful,’ indicating that this group has doubts about its effectiveness. Lastly, 3.5 percent considered it ‘not useful at all,’ reflecting minimal skepticism regarding its role.



Source: Field Survey 2026 **Figure 14: Importance of media literacy to combat misinformation**

As shown in Figure 15, Respondents emphasized different initiatives to improve their media literacy and fact-checking skills; here, one participant could respond to four items. They stressed for fact-checking workshops, more media literacy courses, training on image/video and online news Verification, awareness campaigns on social media, better guidance from teachers, and easier access to reliable sources. These findings indicate that students mostly emphasized learning cognitive skills regarding misinformation verification and awareness campaigns.



Source: Field Survey 2026 **Figure 15: The initiatives help students better verify information**

CHAPTER FIVE: ROLE OF MEDIA EDUCATORS

To analyze the role of media educators in developing media literacy and fact-checking skills among university media students, the media educators shared their opinions through in-depth interviews in which they answered open-ended questions. The answers to the questions are analyzed in an inductive thematic process following Braun and Clarke's six-phase approach.

Theme 5.1: Curriculum Institutionalization

The problem of the distortion of information has long been a major threat to truth, trust and decision-making in human society. From the ancient to the digital age, it has long been a burning issue. Earlier leaders used rumors and myths to control, soothing to win, biased and sensational stories printed and aired, and now the internet and social media spread misinformation, disinformation, and deepfakes across the globe, and in Bangladesh too, in seconds. Combating this problem media departments in Bangladesh come forward to create awareness, enhance skills to reach out to misinformation and debunk the truth. Departments have introduced some dedicated courses and partial courses on media literacy and fact-checking. Some departments' representatives said they initially appeared as topics or modules within various compulsory courses such as news gathering and writing, digital journalism, online journalism, and investigative reporting. But some departments ensured the introduction as dedicated courses.

Sub-theme 5. 1a: Incremental Embedding with Existing Course

Many public and private media, communication, and journalism departments in Bangladesh have taken the initiative to incorporate media literacy and fact-checking content into existing courses, such as reporting, news gathering, and writing, to provide students with a foundational understanding after the coronavirus pandemic. This step is to raise students' awareness and help them learn basic information about the burning issue.

“Right after the pandemic, around 2021, as a course instructor, I incorporated a topic based on the UNESCO publication covering misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation into the reporting course, but it was then run as a full-fledged course.” [P1]

“The department does not currently offer a standalone, dedicated course in fact-checking; however, verification methodologies and information gathering techniques are integrated within broader curriculum, such as crime reporting, investigative journalism, and general reporting courses.” [P4]

“Discussion of fact-checking occurs strictly as supplementary illustration within broader course topics rather than as structured, standalone academic modules.” [P7]

Sub-theme 5.1b: Emergence of Standalone Credit-Bearing Courses

After incorporating content regarding media literacy and fact-checking with existing courses, many departments launched it as a full-fledged and credit-bearing course, like a four-credit full course, distributed three and one credit, where three credits are for theory and one for practical to cover the issue theoretically and hands-on learning. This initiative was undertaken in response to the need for media students to combat misinformation spreading across social media. With learning media, students can play a role in fact-checking misinformation before general students and ordinary people, also creating awareness and learning.

“Recently, our department began offering a standalone course titled media literacy and fact-checking for second and fourth-year students bearing four credits, where three for theory and one for practical [P1, 3 & 5]

Theme 5. 2: Developing Critical Thinking and a Culture of Verification

Over time, misinformation spreading and impacting society has become a serious issue, so media departments in Bangladesh are trying to change their pedagogical systems, emphasizing the creation of a culture of critical thinking rather than teaching information- and knowledge-based content. Raising awareness about misinformation among students, teachers insist that they think about any information through a critical lens: first thinking, then verifying, and then sharing. Also, students are asked to view information through the lens of ‘healthy skepticism’ and use an inquiry-based approach, such as where the information originated, who made the statement, and what evidence supports it, etc. Through this pedagogical philosophy, educators are attempting to cultivate a verification mindset or culture rather than merely teaching students a collection of facts and tools for fact-checking. The underlying pedagogical goal is to transform students from passive information consumers into critical and reflective media users.

Sub-theme 5.2a: Critical Thinking and Verification Heuristics

Media teachers are trying to create a culture of critical thinking and of asking questions first, like what it is. Misinformation spreads through different forms, like using photos, infographics, videos, etc., so every form of information or misinformation must be seen critically.

“I tell my students, first verify information and then share, rather than blindly trusting any information, image, or statement upon seeing it, and then verify it. They need to check the source of a photo card, inspect the URL, and investigate whether a person actually made a statement attributed to them.” [P2]

Sub-theme 5.2b: Scaffold Questions over Direct Answer

Teachers in the media department are now trying to create opportunities for self-discovery rather than delivering direct answers, fostering a culture of inquiry-based pedagogy.

“I train students to adopt an inquiry-based mindset by asking fundamental evaluative questions: where does this information originate? Who speaks it, what empirical proof supports it, etc., and I view teaching as an effort to open intellectual pathways and foster intrinsic academic curiosity.” [P4 & 6]

Theme 5. 3: Hands-On, Tool-Based, Practical Training

Media departments teach students both theoretically and practically to develop fact-checking skills and cultivate a skeptical mindset toward misinformation and disinformation. Conducting this type of pedagogy needs institutional facilities and students’ deep interest. So, many departments have taken the initiative to furnish themselves with such facilities, and many have already established labs and other technical facilities. To make the classes interactive and effective, media students are asked to take away materials such as papers and reports on misinformation. Educators consider practice-based learning more effective than purely theoretical instruction for developing fact-checking competence. Fact-checking is treated as a procedural skill that requires repeated application rather than only conceptual understanding. In practical classes, teachers discuss and apply the various applications and software to debunk the truth. Also, teachers emphasize arranging training on fact-checking involving technical experts in this field.

Sub-theme 5.3a: Verification Labs, Tools, and Technologies and Structured Outcome

Many departments have already established well-decorated practical labs, and some are in the process of providing hands-on learning for students. These facilities help equip students with practical knowledge to identify claims and misinformation and debunk them. To debunk many advanced tools and technologies are also used.

“A digital fact-checking lab in association with international aid like MRDI, Fojo was recently established in our department. Students can use laptops, computers, and internet access there to practice fact-checking and experiment with media content creation.” [P1]

“Pedagogical outcomes would be significantly enhanced if we possessed specialized facilities which is under process, such as information forensic lab equipped with advanced verification software and information scanner for immersive and hands-on training.” [P4]

“Google Lens, Reverse Image Search, and various AI detection tools are used in the labs to identify the authenticity of images, videos, and information. The students undergo various lab tasks where they verify photos or videos through fact-checking methods and generate a structured fact-checking report.” [P2 & 3]

Theme 5.4: Use of Real World and Social Media Case Studies

Instead of treating misinformation as an abstract theoretical issue, educators expose students to the kinds of content they encounter on social media and other digital platforms. For this, many real social media content and contemporary misinformation cases are used as teaching materials

in classes. This strategy makes media literacy relevant to students' everyday information environment.

Sub-theme 5.4a: Analyze Viral Content and Spread Mechanism

In the classroom discussion, many viral content items are used as case studies, where students examine why particular content becomes viral and identify the mechanisms behind its dissemination. In this process, they know which formats are used to disseminate misinformation and which factors drive virality. If the format and factors are learned well then the verification practice would be enhanced among students.

“During lectures for existing courses, I investigate contextual discussion and real-world case studies — such as analyzing why a particular piece of content went viral and the underlying mechanism behind its dissemination.” [P7]

Sub-theme 5.4b: Deconstruction Manipulation Techniques

In the class lectures, educators discuss how misinformation spreads through social media, including fake photo cards and manipulated URLs, and use real-world examples to teach students how to analyze such content. This pedagogical system helps enhance skills in identifying misinformation, then debunking and disseminating it.

“I discuss in class how misinformation is spread on social media, how fake photo cards are created and how URL manipulation is carried out. Students are taught to analyze social media content through real-world examples.” [P2]

“By conducting thematic analysis of recurring posts from a specific individual or interest group, students can map out underlying ideological or strategic agendas.” [P4]

Theme 5.5: Connecting Verification with AI and Emerging Forms of Manipulation

The emergence of Artificial Intelligence has expanded the scope of educators' fact-checking strategies. Some department representatives specifically identify AI-generated images. Synthetic media, deepfakes, and manipulated videos pose new challenges that require additional verification competencies. So, in this regard, media educators are moving forward with AI-aware literacy, where students learn both how technology facilitates misinformation and how it can assist in detecting it.

Sub-theme 5.5a: Teaching AI Detection Tools and AI Literacy

Media educators train students to use AI tools to identify manipulated content while also learning how AI can be used to create it. In this way, students' perception of AI would be enriched and applied to detecting misinformation, as well as to creating AI-generated content to fight false information.

“What we basically do within fact-checking is introduce various AI tools that enable students to spot and de-mask manipulated content. At the same time, students learn how to create content using AI tools. As a result, they learn content creation while simultaneously understanding how misinformation is generated” [P3]

Sub-theme5. 5b: Fighting Technology with Technology

Contemporary media education needs to integrate AI, fact-checking methodologies, and propaganda analysis because synthetic and decontextualized media make verification increasingly difficult.

“Addressing AI-driven misinformation often requires deploying AI-based verification tools using technology to neutralize technological deception since manual verification alone is often insufficient against the overwhelming volume of incoming data.” [P7]

Theme 5.6: Institutional Partnership and Outreach

Formal classroom teaching is supplemented by seminars, workshops, training programs, and professional sessions. These activities provide students with exposure to current verification practices and professionals' expertise. This collaborative and practice-oriented model of media education would enrich the pedagogical system, especially regarding fact-checking.

Sub-theme 5.6a: External Funding and Training Partnerships

To equip or furnish the media labs, external funding is very crucial and this collaboration must long run for the development of this sector.

“The lab was funded and supported by MRDI and Fojo Media Institute, and a hybrid collaboration with global entities such as Reuters or Al Jazeera is highly achievable through a memorandum of understanding.” [P7]

“Although I teach the theoretical course content myself, I bring in technical experts to conduct practical training sessions, which provide hands-on training to students

Sub-theme 6b: Community-Facing Application

Not only would it teach the fact-checking process, but it would also be disseminated among general students, then a wave of fact-checking would be created among ordinary people.

“We engage students in various community outreach activities so that they can take this learning to the broader public, including the older demographic industry and raise awareness about fact -checking. And suppose you are sitting at a real stall and overhear a conversation about a Facebook photo... if you have already debunked that photo and found it to be AI-generated, you can intervene... It is precisely through informed chats at a tea stall that such rumors spread the fastest.” [P3]

Theme 5.7: Advocacy for Cross-Disciplinary and Early Education Integration

The scope of learning in media literacy and fact-checking would not be confined to the media, communication, and journalism departments in public and private universities in Bangladesh. All participants advocate for interdisciplinary and early educational integration. The educators conceptualize media literacy as a general civic and societal competency rather than an occupational skill restricted to future journalists.

Sub-theme 5.7a: Cross-Disciplinary General Education Requirement

Teachers urged for making media literacy and fact-checking a general education course for non-media students.

“I believe media literacy should be included as a general education (GED) across all university departments, not just in the media or journalism departments. [P3]

Sub-Theme 5.7b: Integration Into Primary, Secondary Curriculum

Media teachers argue for integrating media literacy and fact-checking across university departments and, eventually, at the school and college levels, while reserving advanced AI, propaganda, and fact-checking competencies for higher education institutions, such as universities.

“Just like we learned hand hygiene through textbooks and Meena cartoons, we need to communicate media literacy to children in formats tailored for school, adapt it for college students and scale it appropriately for university students and basic competencies, distinguishing facts from misattributed content, understanding digital privacy, and recognizing consent protocols for capturing and sharing media should be introduced early in primary education.” [P3 &5]

Theme 5.8: Structural and Social Constraints on Educational Impact

Political and religious polarization, along with inadequate institutional resources and technological support, can undermine the consumption of logical, evidence-based information and limit opportunities for effective practical training.

“When people are politically polarized and committed to a specific part or ideology, they often disregard truth, logic, and scientific validation. Instead, they rely on political allegiances or religious beliefs....” [P1]

“Like most public universities, we face resource constraints. Despite these infrastructure limitations, we balance theoretical coursework with practical components.” [P4]

CHAPTER-SIX: ROLE OF PROFESSIONAL FACT-CHECKERS

To analyze the role of fact-checking platforms in Bangladesh in debugging the truth, the fact-checkers shared their opinions on the strategies and tools used to identify and counter misinformation. Their answers are analyzed in an inductive thematic process following Bran and Clark's six-phase approach.

Thematic analysis of seven semi-structured interviews emerged six themes with other sub-themes, including claim identification and prioritization, core verification technique, AI and deepfake detection, institutional infrastructure and collaboration, safety, legal risk and source protection, future orientation and toward pre-bunking and human hybrid models. Each theme is presented below with its constituent sub-themes, supporting the interviewees' quotations.

Theme 6.1: Claim Identification and Prioritization

The fact-checking process begins with continuous monitoring of the digital information environment. While monitoring fact-checkers choose a claim that is very impactful for society, including political, communal, war, disaster, etc., and receive some claims requested directly by the public, platform partners. All of these things happened under the policy of a particular fact-checking platform in Bangladesh. Under the theme, constituent sub-themes such as beat-based monitoring, public tips-offs and inbound requests, prioritization criteria, and claim gatekeeping are underscored.

Sub-theme 6.1a: Beat-Based Monitoring

In fact-checking platforms, monitoring is deliberately organized rather than incidental, and responsibilities are divided by beat or platform and by keyword-based searches. This structure surveillance functions as an early-warning mechanism that feeds the rest of the verification pipeline.

“Our workflow usually begins with identifying a viral claim or piece of content. Monitoring social media, online platforms, and various social media outlets, determine which information is spreading widely among the public and is impactful.” [P7]

And another fact-checker echoed the same:

“We first observe daily trending events using various monitoring tools, selecting keywords to search across digital and social media platforms.” [P4]

Sub-theme 6.1b: Public Tip-Offs and Inbound Requests

Fact-checking platforms' employees not only work of their own will but they also emphasize public demands or requests. They directly receive verification requests from the public or

platform partners. So, inbound tip-offs play a role in selecting claims and debunking misinformation, suggesting the public is somewhat aware of it.

“Often, the public or individuals on the platform [TikTok] send us verification requests.” [p 1, 2 & 3]

Sub-theme 6.1c: Prioritization Criteria

Based on public significance and the policies of fact-checking platforms, fact-checkers select claims to debunk, such as political, sensitive, communal or religious, conflict-related, public safety, election-related, disaster-related, and viral issues. The consistency of these criteria across independently operating organizations suggests a shared, largely information profession consensus about which categories of misinformation carry the greatest social risk.

“First and foremost, come political matters, then come communal issues — such as faith-based religion-centric matters. After that come chaos or conflict-related matters — such as fights, classes, etc.” [P2]

“Selection is based on potential public impact and current virality or issues-based relevance..., By partnership guidelines, standard speeches by political figures are not fact-checked unless they involve AI-generated content, deepfakes and specific factual claims.” [P3]

“We prioritize claims that spread widely and have the potential to create public confusion ...we consider the potential severity of human harm regarding sensitive, political, communal, or public interest issues.” [P4]

Sub-theme 6.1d: Claim gatekeeping

Fact-checkers also consider the fact to select which claim is worth debunking or is an actual claim. These gatekeeping steps precede prioritization and signal that fact-checkers apply an implicit definition filter — separating opinion commentary or ambiguous content from statements that are, in principle, checkable — before committing research resources.

“First, we evaluate whether an item actually constitutes a valid ‘claim,’ as not everything posted online can be treated as one.” [P5]

Theme 6.2 Core Verification Techniques and Tools

In the fact-checking process, many advanced tools and techniques are used to identify misinformation and debunk it. So, a shared methodological core, best described as multi-source triangulation, appears in seven participants. In brief, the table below aligns the tools and techniques with fact-checking platforms in Bangladesh.

Table 8: Mapping of usage tools and techniques by fact-checkers in Bangladesh

Techniques and tools	Participants
Reverse Image Search	All
Geolocation and Google Earth & Maps	P1, P7
Keyword/Keyframe Search	P2, P3, P4, P6
Open-Source Intelligence (OSINTS)	All
Primary-Source Tracing	All
Field/Ground Level verification	P1, P5, P7
Contacting local administration, police, victims and journalists	P5, P7
Digital footprint/prior publication checks	P2, P4

Source: Field Survey 2026

Sub-theme 6.2a: Reverse Image Search and Geolocation

To detect the genuine time, date, and location of misinformation in an image, photo, video, etc., reverse image and geolocation searches are used. These tools help to identify the actual time and place of claims' recurring concern, given how frequently old or unrelated visuals are recirculated as evidence of news events.

“Reverse Image Search, Google Earth, and Google Maps are utilized to detect the misinformation.” [P1]

“I use Google search, advanced search, reverse image search, and geolocation techniques and various digital verification tools.” [P7]

Sub-theme 6.2b: Primary Source Tracing

Primary Source tracing techniques are used by all fact-checking platforms in Bangladesh, reflecting a shared editorial standard: a claim is not accepted merely because it is widely shared or attributed to a plausible-sounding source.

“We always try to reach the core source. For instance, we first look at primary sources — if information spreads citing a news outlet or photo card, we first go to that news outlet to verify.” [P2]

“We place the highest priority on primary sources ... rather than relying solely on an individual's statement.” [P6]

Sub-theme 6.2c: Open-Source Intelligence

Open-Source Intelligence is a tool used to identify the core value of information, generate leads, and then confirm them through direct contact with stakeholders on the ground.

“We always start with open source. When we gather initial data from open-source intelligence, we proceed to contact the local level stakeholders — including local administration, relevant authorities, and the victim.” [P5]

Sub-theme 6.2d: Field and Ground Level Verification

In some special cases, when other sources are not available to identify misinformation, Field and ground-level verification are used. This usage indicates a resource-conscious escalation from remote to in-person investigation.

“For critical events, we also collect photos, videos, and ground-level information from the scene through the local network.” [P1]

“If multiple verification methods fall short, we deploy our own team members to the scene.” [P5]

Sub-theme 6.2e: Manual Visual Inspection before Tool Use

As human observation is treated as the first filter of debunking misinformation, manual visual inspection is performed before digital tools are deployed. With tools used to confirm rather than to originate a judgment.

“For photos and verification, human judgment is applied first to check for visual inconsistency, weather, clothing, environment, and objects. Individuals and other visible elements.” [P4]

“Previously, AI-generated content could be identified by analyzing finger counts, eye structures, or facial anomalies through digital tools. Nowadays, these flaws have been significantly reduced. Consequently, AI detection tools frequently yield incorrect results. [P6]

Theme 6.3: AI and Deepfake — Tools assist, Human Decide

The increasing role of artificial intelligence in fact-checking is the most strongly and consistently articulated theme, as every platform participates in interviews, addressing AI tools paired with an explicit caveat about reliability. InVID, Hive Moderation, AI or Not, Google AI verification features, organization detection systems, and a specialized deepfake analysis unit have been used in the fact-checking verification process. AI is primarily used for detecting potentially manipulated content, organizing information, extracting keywords, retrieving information, identifying trends, and assisting with report presentation, but the final decision on any debunking depends on human judgment.

Sub-theme 6.3a: Name of AI tools

Various AI tools are used in different fact-checking processes. Different detection tools, general-purpose generative AI for organizing and drafting tasks and a deepfake analysis regional unit work for whole debunking process.

“If necessary, we use tools like InVID, Hive moderation, and AI or Not, use our organization’s proprietary deepfake fake news detection tools ...and submit the item directly to this deepfake regional unit and general part we use Google’s AI verification features.” [P1, P2 & P3]

“We frequently use ChatGPT or specialized AI tools to assist in verification — especially when checking or debunking fake photos and videos. Tools like Gemini are also utilized to support various aspects of our work.” [P5]

Sub-theme 6.3b: Detection Heuristics and Human Judgment

Heuristics such as lip-sync mismatch, lighting inconsistency, and sound-to-motion timing remain in use, but these are becoming less reliable as generative models improve – an erosion of tool-based detection accuracy over time. And locating AI's core weakness in its inability to judge source reliability — a task that remains entirely the fact-checkers' responsibility. So, human judgment is the final decision.

“Basic scientific principles are considered, such as whether the temporal relationship between a fast-moving object and its sound is realistic. For deepfake videos, the speaker's lip movements and spoken audio synchronization are examined.” [P4]

“In detecting AI-generated content, human observation is applied first. Following that multiple AI detection tools and verification techniques are applied.” [P6]

“Digital tools are never treated as sole conclusive proof. Final debunking relies on human judgment, analysing and contextual understanding.” [P3]

“AI pulls in whatever open-source data it finds, but not all of it is reliable. We still have to manually identify authentic, authoritative sources... AI cannot complete the process independently.” [P5]

“Sometimes AI-based tools misidentify real content as AI-generated or vice versa. Therefore, we do not rely solely on AI output.” [P1]

Theme 6.4: Institutional infrastructure and Collaboration

In the fact-checking process, fact-checkers work primarily independently but seek organizational support when needed, as they may collaborate with third parties or other organizations. However, in most cases, they work if needed, and personal communication is necessary in urgent situations.

Sub-theme 6.4a: The Mera Third-Party Fact-Checking ecosystem

Meta's program provides both a distribution-limiting enforcement mechanism (content rating) and a primary funding stream, structuring a significant share of the sector around a single platform relationship.

"Fact-Watch primarily funds from the Meta Third Party Fact-Checking program. So, Fact-Watch can use the Meta third-party ecosystem." [P6]

Sub-theme 6.4b: Informal, Event-Based Collaboration

The Absence of a coordinated cross-organizational framework in Bangladesh means that exchange happens instead informally, through personal networks, conferences such as Fact Fest, or during crises.

"Institutional collaboration on joint fact-check reports is relatively limited; however, members of various fact-checking organizations participate together in seminars, workshops, panel discussions, and professional events. For that reason, there is scope to work in personal collaboration." [P4 & 6]

Sub-theme 6.4c: Training and Education pipelines

Some fact-checking platforms conduct seminars and workshops in various organizations, such as universities, media houses, and the government. information deferment to develop skill and create awareness in this regard. On the other hand, fact-checking platforms also participated in various international seminars and workshops to develop their skill.

"Fact-Watch conducts training programs across various universities on fact-checking, digital citizenship, and misinformation resilience from the British Council and advanced training arranged for fact-checkers by the partnership organizations." [P2&6]

Theme 6.5: Safety, Legal Risk, Source Protection Strategies

Fach-checking profession is very risky and insecure as they have to debunk some claims that would go against some big fish who somehow create a chaotic situation in the country through misleading information with ill motive. So, fact-checkers must be aware of source security and their own security too. They sometimes face direct threats from anonymous and political pressure groups.

Sub-theme 6.5a: Source anonymity as standard practice

If some claims must be debunked by a local human source, the source-protection issue becomes serious. If the source doesn't want their identity, then their identity should be kept secret. But the source-protection-to-publication policy is treated as insufficient grounds for publication, meaning that multi-source corroboration functions simultaneously as a safety practice and an epistemic standard.

“Sources requesting confidentiality are kept strictly anonymous to ensure security. If information originates from a confidential or private source whose identity cannot be disclosed or presented transparently, a fact check is generally not published on that source alone.” [P3&4]

Sub-theme 6.5b: Legal Risk Mitigation

Fact-checkers must not have faced any direct legal issues, such as a cybersecurity ordinance, yet, but they must be aware of the risks of publishing sensitive content and need to seek advice from a legal expert.

“Legal advice is sought prior to publishing critical and sensitive reports. This helps minimize legal risks and makes it easier to defend our position if necessary.” [P1]

“If such laws fail to protect freedom of expression and account for unintentional user errors, they risk creating severe complications.” [P 4]

Sub-theme 6.5c: Harassment and threats response

Sometimes fact-checkers have to endure difficult experiences, including threats to their lives. Whenever fact-checkers debunk a sensitive claim with proper legal advice, they have to somehow face online harassment and even threats to their lives. In response to these types of risks, fact-checkers must take the initiative or implement digital hygiene measures such as blocking numbers, tightening security, changing office locations, etc.

“Some of our team members have even received death threats while working on militancy and extremism. In these situations, we boost security measures, change office locations if necessary, and sometimes publish investigative reports on the perpetrators.” [P1]

“To manage these (different harassment) risks, we enforce strict personal data privacy, including block number, maintain rigorous cybersecurity measures, and communicate cautiously.” [P5&6]

Theme 6.6: Future Orientation — pre - bunking and human-AI hybrid models

Where the fact-checking process goes in the future is assumed, at least in part, through the lens of fact-checkers in Bangladesh. Advanced technology would include more advanced automation, AI algorithms, augmentations, AI monitoring, and deepfakes in the generation of misinformation, as well as in the fact-checking process. But human judgment would not be replaced by anything else.

Sub-theme 6.6a: The AI-human hybrid model

Framed the future of the fact-checking field as one in which AI augments monitoring and triage but does not replace human judgment for context-heavy claims such as propaganda or political framing.

“AI will be able to automate many routine fact-checking tasks in the future ...however, human expertise will remain essential for analyzing political speeches, misleading framing, propaganda and complex narratives.” [P1]

“AI will assist in rapid data analysis, deepfakes detection, and report generation...however, human judgment will always be necessary for final decision making.” [P7]

Sub-theme 6.6b: Pre-bunking over debunking

If proactive actions are far more effective than reactive ones across every sector, then fact-checking would be no exception. So, the pre-bunking concept is a much more forward-looking concept than debunking, as if we, the general public, must be aware of developing information with media literacy, even information literacy; the debunking process would be needed rigorously. So, embedding media literacy education in the school curriculum is needed so that the audience can pre-emptively resist misinformation, shifting the burden partly away from after-the-fact correction.

“Pre-bunking is more crucial than debunking — meaning people should develop the capacity to verify false information before it goes viral. For this, media literacy is essential.” [P6]

Sub-theme 6.6c: Sustainability and funding anxiety

As the fact-checking system would be more relevant than the present one, it should be strengthened economically and technologically. Framing the fields' long-term viability as contingent on donor functioning, describing the current grant depending models as structurally fragile.

“It runs completely on grants/funding except for a government institution..., the problem is that a sustainable business model needs to be established. Otherwise, the day funding stops, fact-checking will cease to exist as well.” [P2]

“Financial insecurity is widespread across the sector, and operations are often sustained through personal sacrifice and limited resources.” [P5]

So, overall, the six themes together outline a layered approach to verification. Monitoring and triage help identify possible claims. A shared toolkit that includes reverse search image, OSINT, and primary source tracing is used to gather evidence. AI-assisted detection speeds up the process but does not replace human judgment. Institutional relationships help expand the sector's reach and enforcement beyond any one organization.

CHAPTER SEVEN: ROLE OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS

Theme 7.1: Prioritising claims based on high-impact, Harm Potential and Policy

The advent of free flow of information or misinformation over media outlets, especially social media, forced professionals to select claims based on important factors like high impact on society, high social media interactions, and house policy, which is called strategic prioritization of claims. Moreover, from a Bangladeshi perspective, misinformation concerning politics, communal issues, disasters, and violence can have consequences beyond individual misunderstanding.

Sub-theme 7.1a: High Reach and Virality

Media professionals and fact-checkers typically monitor social media sites like Facebook, X, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, as well as media outlets where misinformation spreads. Professionals select claims based on high interaction of misinformation on social media sites.

“A post with only 50-60 reactions might not always be important enough to fact-check. However, if it reaches thousands of people ... it's a significant increase.” [P 2]

Sub-theme 7.1b: Selecting claims by potential social, political etc. harm

Misinformation that is widely harmful to society, a country, or a state is chosen as a claim to debunk as truth. Politically, communally sensitive claims and content that could trigger violence or social crisis are consistently prioritised for debunking.

“We primarily work on issues of public interest—mostly focused on topics such as politics, communal issues, sports, climate, any type of disasters, and international affairs like the Middle East and other related issues.” [P1]

Sub-theme 7.1c: selection of claims based on policies and direction of seniors

Media professionals normally choose the claims based on public interest, their policies, and escalation to seniors. Means they have written internal policies that determine which issues are pursued, with mandatory consultation of seniors for government-related or other provocative issues.

“If the claims involve the government, religious matters, or provocative content, one must consult with seniors before taking the decision.” [P2]

Theme 7.2: Systematic verification and multi-source triangulations

All fact-checkers and journalists who participated in the in-depth interview echoed that they went through systematic verification before publishing a claim, followed by debunking it. All interviewees emphasized that misinformation cannot be addressed by relying on a single source

or a single verification, but a discipline of cross-verification. So, media professionals always navigate misinformation primarily through a culture of verification rather than immediate publication.

Sub-theme 7.2a: Triangulating multiple pieces of evidence

Refusing to debunk or confirm a claim based on a single source, all participants described consistent multi-source verification, such as evidence, documentation, or direct statements from the involved parties, to reach a conclusion about the claim.

“Rather than relying on a single source, we confirm information by comparing multiple pieces of source evidence and statements”. [P1]

“We follow a layered verification process, where images are examined for textual and visual inconsistencies, while videos are evaluated through their content, location, time, environment, and surrounding context. Standard sources and mainstream media are checked before social media sources and technological tools are incorporated.” [P2]

Theme 7.3: Tracing claims to their origin and archiving as a defense strategy

The debunking process for a claim starts by tracing the original sources and examining the relevant background before deciding whether the claim is accurate or false. All participants described a recurring, near-identical strategy, whether an image, video, or any claim was old, out of context, decorated or falsely attributed – through verification tools like reverse image search. And followed an archiving process because misinformation spreads rapidly but is also deleted quickly.

Sub-theme 7.3a: Tracing content to its origin

Fact-checkers worked in mainstream media houses, first identifying the claim’s origin through various tools and techniques such as reverse image search (Google Lens, Bing, Baidu, etc.), InVID, and meta-analysis.

“Whether it originates from social media or mainstream media, source verification is our very first job.” [P3]

Sub-theme 7.3b: Archiving as a defensive tactic

Fact-checkers emphasize archiving content first, since misinformation spreads on social media faster and is also deleted quickly. As the verification process begins with reaching out to the origin of the content, but whenever the content is deleted, the verification process is hampered. Also, the claim of debunking as true would be very tough to say.

“We try to archive the claim first as misinformation spreads rapidly, but is also quickly deleted”. [P3]

Theme 7.4: Combining Digital Tools with Human Judgment

All participants agreed that digital tools speed up the verification process, but never conclude the process. This means fact-checkers have adopted AI-based verification tools to debunk claims, but these tools have limitations that require human judgment. So, the verification process is completed using digital tools and techniques, as well as human judgment.

Sub-theme 7.4a: AI-based tools as a supplementary but not a verdict

To verify a claim (misinformation), AI-based tools are used to speed up the workflow, but not to serve as a decision-maker.

“We never accept the result of debunking with the help of AI-based tools as a final conclusion; instead, we use them as supplementary aids,” and “Therefore, AO tools are not used as the sole basis for verification.” [P1&2]

Sub-theme 7.4b: AI-generated content requires AI technical and audience-perception judgment

Participants described verification for AI-generated and deepfake contents combining detection software like Hive Moderation, Google SynthID, and Deepfake o meter, and with human perception and judgment, as human ideology and psychology differ from one another.

“How a relatively skeptical or politically motivated audience would receive a debunking, since audiences are sometimes reluctant to accept that content they want to believe is false whenever human judgment and digital tools prove it as false”. [P2]

Sub-theme 7.4c: human intelligence as the tactic of constant for the future

When asked about the future role of AI-based tools in debunking misinformation, all participants echoed the same direction that automation, with the help of digital tools, can collect and surface information at scale, but determining truth or falsity remains and will remain a human task.

“Technology can collect only content; the ability to accurately verify whether that content is true or false still rests with human intelligence.” [P3]

Theme 7.5: Institutional caution over ethics and legal boundaries

Fact-checking desks in the mainstream media must be concerned with ethical and legal issues. Participants expressed their cautiousness about maintaining objective, fair and ethical work. They don't violate the ethical margin of journalism, don't work on a subjudice matter. As misinformation management is a technical, editorial, ethical, and legal issue, before publishing one must ask questions such as: Is there sufficient evidence? Is publication in the public interest? Could verification itself cause harm? Does the content involve a vulnerable individual? And am I allowing personal and political beliefs to influence the judgment?

Sub-theme 7.5a: Restrain on sub judice and serious allegation

Fact-checkers have to address ethical issues in misinformation debunking. They don't work on the issue, which is under judicial review, because any kind of fact check may provoke the verdict.

"We don't debunk claims concerning matters that are under judicial consideration until a court verdict has been issued." [P1]

Sub-theme 7.5b: Maintain objectivity in profession

If the fact-check has an impact on social, political, and other aspects, this work must follow objectivity. If any debunking favors any party, then ordinary people are influenced positively and negatively. So, the workflow must maintain objectivity. Participant said they maintain objectivity in their work.

"Even if I hold personal political views, I must set them aside once I sit at the desk." [p2]

Sub-theme 7.5c: Navigating legal risk through data minimization

Fact-checkers must keep legal and ethical issues in mind when working on a claim to debunk. Generally, they maintain privacy protections, but whenever a person's data must be disclosed in the greater public interest, they do so.

"We disclose of someone's identity should only occur when justified by public interest while personal information should otherwise be protected." [P1]

Theme 7.6: Editorial Accountability and Institutional fact-checking for the newsroom

Participants echoed that fact-checking is increasingly becoming an institutional mechanism for improving journalistic accountability. Fact-checking desks change how reporters behave before publishing a report because they know their work may be checked by others (fact-checkers). Reporters of mainstream media work based on a cross-checking pattern but sometimes they don't do that. Whenever a fact-checking desk launches in and out of mainstream media, they must be alert to publish any kind of news report.

Moreover, all participants further urged that every media outlet — Television, Print, and online — should maintain a dedicated fact-checking desk because competition for rapid audience attention increases the possibility of errors.

Fact-checking desk mainly works as a pre-publishing verification mechanism, a post-publication correction mechanism, an internal quality control system, a source of accountability for reporters and a mechanism for maintaining institutional credibility.

“Reporters now think twice before publishing news or information to ensure accuracy, knowing that the fact-checking desk could review it.” [P1 &2]

Theme 7.7: Under-resourcing, Solo Operation, and Fragile Collaboration

The fact-checking desk faces major challenges, including technological and financial constraints. Verification and archiving tools are often subscription-based or unreliable, and require frequent switching to alternative tools. The work is also labor-intensive, undervalued, and collaborative, and institutional support also remains limited, relying on personal relationships, while formal training from government, NGOs, and educational institutions is minimal and largely introductory rather than practical.

Su-theme 7.7a: Technological and Financial Constraints

The most frequently cited challenge, echoed by all participants, was technological: many software programs are subscription-based, and open-source software is unreliable. The coping strategy is also redundancy, like switching to alternative tools the moment one fails.

“Verification tools are expensive, subscription-based, unreliable, or technically limited when one tool fails, another must be used, and Misinformation can disappear quickly after being exposed, so rapid archiving is necessary, but archiving tools are expensive.” [P 1 &3]

Sub-theme 7.7b: undervalued and labor-intensive

The fact-checking work is laborious and time-consuming because the entire workflow is handled by a single person. A full day’s work may produce only one fact-checker, while hours of investigation may sometimes reveal that a suspicious claim is actually true and therefore does not result in a published fact-check.

“An entire day’s work may result in the publication of only one fact checker ... a significant amount of time and effort has still been invested in the process.” [P1]

Sub-theme 7.7c: Solo operation increasing individual burden

The whole workflow of fact-checking, including monitoring, verification, writing, and publishing, has to operate mostly by a single hand to leverage individual burden.

“Operate largely single-handedly, covering monitoring, verification, writing and publishing alone”. [P 2&3]

Sub-theme 7.7d: Collaboration remains personal and informal

To support the fact-checking workflow, there needs to be institutional collaboration for rigorous work, but the situation is different. Mostly, fact-checkers maintain personal collaboration, which sometimes limits their work.

“The collaborative does not happen strictly at an institutional level; we collaborate mostly out of personal relationships.” [P3]

Theme 7.8: Audience Media Literacy and Public Engagement in the Fact-Checking Process

Perception of fact-checking sometimes depends on the audience’s media literacy. Those audiences have limited media literacy, posing a challenge to accepting the verified information provided by the fact-checking desks of mainstream media. However, audiences showed some positive changes in the fact-checking process, as they sometimes ask for sources of information related to staying idle in this regard.

Sub-theme 7.8a: Audience limited media literacy

Audiences’ limited media literacy poses challenges for the fact-checking process because, when audiences don’t understand the verification process and verified information, unverified information can spread faster than accurate information.

“Widespread access to smartphones and social media does not necessarily mean possess the ability to verify information. And when dealing with deepfakes or controversial misinformation claims, audiences face the challenge of differentiating between true and false information.” [P1 & 3]

Sub-theme 7.8b: Behavioral change among the audience

Whenever people are confused about what is correct or incorrect, especially when misinformation spreads on social media, they turn to mainstream media or fact-checking sites, which is a positive behavioral change among audiences. This change indicates that fact-checking desks in mainstream media or independent fact-checkers are playing a significant role in raising awareness of misinformation and combating it.

“People are increasingly asking for sources or consulting fact-checkers before sharing questionable information, which is a positive change.” [P2]

Theme 7.9: Managing Psychological Risk and the Future Outlook

Continuous monitoring of social media, mistakenly sharing incorrect verified information, and comments from anti-groups that are politically biased about the true nature of verified information shared via social media and websites pose a major psychological risk or challenge for fact-checkers.

Sub-theme 7.9a: Managing psychological toll

Fact-checkers and journalists mainly faced technological and psychological challenges, too, whenever overwhelming work pressure and slang reactions poured into the comment sections.

“Receiving trolling or hostile comments, particularly on politically sensitive fact-checks, and continuously monitoring misinformation on social media and other sites can create psychological pressure for fact-checkers.” [P 1, 2 & 3]

Sub-theme 7.9b: Treating errors as uniquely high -stakes and correcting fast

Ordinary people or media houses can get things wrong and correct them immediately, but whenever fact-checkers do so, they are seen as doing wrong. So, fact-checking journalists always stay alert and do their job correctly, unlike other media professionals.

“A mistaken fact-check and its immediate correction illustrate a shared strategy because a fact-checking error is seen as more damaging than an ordinary news correction.” [P2]

Sub-theme 7.9c: An AI-augmented, human-led future as an inspirational strategy

As fact-checking is a thankless and tireless job, technology could help streamline it. Participants would want automation to reduce the manual burden of monitoring; however, alongside technological verification, human judgment remains essential.

“AI and automation can play an important role in identifying and collecting information in the future, like a bot can use various keywords related to [keyword-tracking bots for elections] election, political parties or attacks to automatically track information circulating online and bring it together in one place.” [P1]

CHAPTER EIGHT: DISCUSSION

The study presents major findings that help inform policy to combat misinformation in Bangladesh. Based on the student's aims and objectives, the study's discussion is presented below.

8.1: Media students' Perception, Awareness and verification Practices

The study findings indicate that Bangladeshi university media students exhibit a high degree of conceptual understanding of misinformation and its consequences, as evidenced by a strong agreement score on the Likert-Scale items measuring awareness and perceived importance. This aligns with studies emphasizing the importance of media literacy education in developing critical evaluation skills (Haque, 2023). However, students show moderate to high engagement with verification practices; notable gaps remain, particularly in the routine use of professional fact-checking platforms and in reporting misinformation. This result supports the social responsibility theory, which posits that informed, ethical media users are essential for a healthy information ecosystem.

Students' strong belief in the importance of addressing misinformation underlines an emergent sense of civic responsibility. Yet, the practical gap between knowledge and action also echoes the diffusion of innovation theory. While awareness is widespread, full adoption of advanced verification behaviors (e.g., browsing dedicated fact-checking websites) remains limited, indicating the need for further pedagogical intervention.

8.2: Challenges in Verification and Institutional Roles

Although students show a high level of confidence in their perception of misinformation, they face barriers to persistence, such as time constraints, difficulty identifying credible sources, and limited awareness of fact-checking resources. The perception that social and mainstream media contribute to the spread of misinformation suggests a broader institutional responsibility, consistent with the social responsibility framework. Students' demand for training in fact-checking and media literacy, as well as recognition of manipulated media logos and AI-generated content as emerging threats, highlights the dynamic, evolving nature of misinformation. This reflects the theoretical expansion of gatekeeping theory (Lewin, 1947; White, 1950; Roberts, 2005), where gatekeeping functions are no longer limited to professional journalists but extend to students and ordinary digital citizens. The findings advocate for a more participatory model of gatekeeping, necessitating institutional support and curriculum reform.

8.3: The Role of the Media Department Teacher to Enhance Skills

Educators in Bangladesh's media departments have responded by embedding media literacy and fact-checking modules into existing curricula and by increasingly adopting standalone, credit-

bearing courses. Practical, tools-based learning — including digital verification labs, AI detection tools, and real-world case studies — has become central. This experimental approach is consistent with recommendations from international bodies (UNESCO, 2021) and reinforces findings by Kamruzzaman (2024) regarding the necessity of advanced technological training for journalists, teachers, and students. Pedagogically, the shift from content delivery to inquiry-based, critical-thinking instruction reflects constructivist learning theory and is supported by a theoretical model that foregrounds the importance of cognitive skills and reflective practice (Amazeen, 2020). The integration of AI literacy further extends the Diffusion of Innovation framework, emphasizing the need for continuous adaptation to technological change.

8.4: Fact-Checking Platforms: Tools, Strategies and Constraints

Fact-Checking platforms in Bangladesh have developed sophisticated, multi-layered verification processes that employ reverse image searches, open-source intelligence, AI tools, and field-level investigations. Fact-checking organizations in Bangladesh have developed sophisticated, multi-layered verification processes that employ reverse image searches, open-source intelligence, AI tools, and field-level investigations. While AI and automation enhance efficiency, human judgment remains paramount — a finding consistent with the global literature on the limitations of algorithmic variation (Grave, 2018). Challenges such as political pressure, funding insecurity, and threats to personal safety mirror issues identified in other contexts (Amazeen, 2020; Kamruzzaman, 2024). The emphasis on pre-bunking (proactive inoculation against misinformation) as a future orientation supports recent developments in misinformation research (Lewandowsky & Linden, 2021). The institutional interdependences — collaboration with global platforms and local educational initiatives — demonstrate a hybrid model of gatekeeping, where verification is achieved through both technological augmentation and social networks.

8.5: Professionals and the Newsroom: Ethics, Verification and Public Engagement

Journalists and newsroom professionals face many of the same challenges and employ many of the same strategies as fact checkers, including prioritizing high-impact claims, systematically triangulating evidence, and using digital technologies and tools alongside human judgment. Editorial accountability and institutionalization of fact-checking desks are identified as key mechanisms for improving journalistic standards and public trust. The findings reinforce the gatekeeping of their decisions from individual discretion to collective, institutionally mediated veridiction processes. Ethical dilemmas — such as data minimization, objectivity, and legal risk — remain central, underscoring the enduring relevance of the social responsibility framework. Importantly, limited audience media literacy is identified as a persistent barrier to the social effectiveness of fact-checking. This highlights the need for early cross-disciplinary integration of media literacy education, as advocated by both educators and journalists.

CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1: Conclusion

The study provides a comprehensive analysis of the rising landscape of misinformation and fact-checking in Bangladesh, emphasizing the role of media educators, fact-checkers and journalists. The study reveals that while media students possess strong conceptual awareness and moderate verification practices, they face challenges, including time constraints, source evaluation, and limited familiarity with professional fact-checking organizations. Media educators have responded by integrating media literacy and fact-checking into curricula, emphasizing critical thinking, hands-on training, and AI-driven certification skills. However, practical implementation is often constrained by resource limitations and the need for broader institutional and cross-disciplinary integration. Fact-checking platforms in Bangladesh demonstrate methodological sophistication, employing a hybrid model that combines digital technologies with human judgment. Despite technological advancements, human expertise remains indispensable in addressing nuanced or context-heavy claims. These platforms face challenges like political pressure, life threats, and online harassment. Journalists and newsroom professionals share similar challenges and strategies in the fact-checking process.

So, in conclusion, combating misinformation in Bangladesh requires a coordinated, multilevel response. Key priorities include embedding media literacy across educational levels, including secondary and higher secondary. The future of misinformation would depend on adaptive curricula, robust institutional partnerships, continuous technological innovation, and a renewed focus on public awareness.

9.2: Recommendations

Based on the study's findings on misinformation and fact-checking in Bangladesh, the following major recommendations are presented to build a resilient, informed society capable of confronting the evolving challenges posed by misinformation.

- Integrate Media literacy and Fact-Checking into the core curriculum — Media literacy and fact-checking verification skills should be institutionalized across the university's media department, other departments as well, and as a primary course, it should be integrated into secondary and higher secondary education.
- Expand Hands-on, Tools-based pedagogy—to ensure hands-on and tools-based education, well-furnished labs should be established, and the pedagogy system must be practical, along with theoretical.
- Strengthen cross-sector collaboration — Ensure shared knowledge and equipment, collaborative work must be done among the university, news media, fact-checking platforms, government, and international platforms.

- Promote public awareness and community outreach — Media educators, fact-checkers, and journalists should engage in outreach programs and public campaigns to raise awareness of misinformation.
- Support the fact-checking sector sustainability — The government, donors, and media organizations should address financial and institutional constraints faced by the fact-checking platforms supporting the development of sustainable models.
- Embed AI and Technology Awareness — Integrate AI literacy into curriculum and professional training with a focus on both the risk (deepfakes, manipulated content) and opportunities (AI-assisted verification) in misinformation management, along with human verdict, should be emphasized.
- Institutionalize editorial Accountability — All media organizations should establish a dedicated fact-checking unit to foster a culture of accountability and ethical journalism.
- Address structural and social barriers — Policymakers and educational leaders must address resource constraints, political and social polarization, and limited digital infrastructure to improve the efficiency of verification trainings and practices.

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ANNEXURE

Questionnaires for survey (students)

Section A: Demographic Information

1. Name of the Respondent
2. Age
3. Gender
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
4. Level of Education
 - a. Undergraduate
 - b. Graduate
5. Type of University
 - a. Public
 - b. Private
6. Name of the Department
7. Level of Year or semester

Section B: Habitual attitude towards students' media usage

8. Average daily time spent online
 - a. Less than one hour
 - b. 1-3 hours
 - c. 3-6 hours
 - d. More than 6 hours
9. Main sources of news consumption and information gathering (choose all that you use)
 - a. Facebook
 - b. YouTube
 - c. TikTok
 - d. Instagram
 - e. Online news websites
 - f. Television
 - g. Newspapers

Section C: Students' Perception of Misinformation and Awareness

Indicate your level of Agreement with each statement below in Likert scale

S. A= Strongly Agree (1)

A= Agree (2)

N= Neutral (3)

D= Disagree (4)

S. D= Strongly Disagree (5)

10. What misinformation means I understand

11. I can differentiate true and false information spread online

- 12. Handling misinformation spread online is a serious issue
- 13. I often face misleading information online
- 14. Social networking sites like Facebook are the main source of spreading false information
- 15. Students are often influenced by misinformation without realizing it.
- 16. I feel confident identifying misleading headlines or posts.
- 17. Images and videos can easily be manipulated to spread misinformation.
- 18. Political, religious, entertainment, and other online information is often difficult to trust.
- 19. Misinformation can negatively affect students' opinions and decisions.

Section D: Students' Experiences with Misinformation

- 20. Have you ever shared information online that later turned out to be false?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Not sure
- 21. If yes, why did you share it? (Select all that apply)
 - I believed it was true
 - The information came from a trusted friend/family member
 - The headline seemed convincing
 - I did not verify it before sharing
 - I wanted to share it quickly
- 22. Which types of misinformation do you encounter most often?
 - a. Political misinformation
 - b. Health-related misinformation
 - c. Religious misinformation
 - d. Celebrity or entertainment rumors
 - e. Educational misinformation
 - f. Disaster or emergency-related misinformation
 - g. Other: _____
- 23. How often do you encounter misinformation online?
 - a. Sometimes
 - b. Never
 - c. Rarely
 - d. Often
 - e. Very often
- 24. Where do you most commonly look up misinformation?
 - a. Facebook
 - b. YouTube
 - c. TikTok
 - d. Threads
 - e. Online news websites
 - f. Television

g. Instagram

Section E: Verification Practices

Please use the following scale to indicate how frequently you engage in each of these activities.

1 =Never

2=Rarely

3=Sometimes

4= often

5=Always

25. Before believing information online, I check whether it comes from a reliable source.

26. I compare the information with other news sources.

27. I verify information before sharing it with others.

28. I check the date and context of information before trusting it.

29. I read the full article instead of only the headline.

30. I look up the fact-checking websites or organizations.

31. I check whether images or videos are authentic.

32. I ask teachers, friends, or family members if I am unsure about information.

33. I stop following accounts that regularly share false information.

34. I report misleading content on social media platforms.

Section F: Challenges to Verification

Please use the following scale to indicate your level of engagement with each of the following statements.

S. A= Strongly Agree (1)

A= Agree (2)

N= Neutral (3)

D= Disagree (4)

S. D= Strongly Disagree (5)

35. I do not always have enough time to verify information.

36. It is difficult to know which sources are trustworthy.

37. I do not know how to verify images, videos and online news.

38. Fact-checking websites are not widely known among students.

39. I sometimes trust information because many people share it.

40. I rarely verify information when it supports my own beliefs.

41. Social media platforms do not do enough to prevent misinformation.

42. Mainstream media houses sometimes share misinformation

43. Misinformation is shared by altered mainstream media houses' logos.

44. I need more training on how to identify misinformation.

Section F: Media Literacy and Education

45. Have you ever received any training or education on media literacy or fact-checking?

○ Yes

○ No

46. If yes, where did you receive it?
- School/college/university
 - Social media campaign
 - Workshop or seminar
 - Online course
47. How useful do you think media literacy education is in helping students identify misinformation?
- Not useful at all
 - Slightly useful
 - Moderately useful
 - Very useful
 - Extremely useful
48. Which of the following would help students better verify information? (Select up to three)
- More media literacy courses
 - Fact-checking workshops
 - Better guidance from teachers
 - Awareness campaigns on social media
 - Easier access to reliable news sources
 - Training on image/video and online news portal verification

Questions for an in-depth interview for media university teachers

1. How do you define media literacy in the context of your teaching?
 2. How important is media literacy education in today's digital and information environment?
 3. How do you incorporate fact-checking skills into your teaching practices?
 4. How do you encourage students to question the credibility of information sources?
 5. What tools or platforms (e.g., fact-checking websites, AI tools, digital media analysis tools) do you use in teaching?
 6. How do you train students to use fact-checking tools effectively?
 7. Do you integrate social media analysis into your teaching? If yes, how?
 8. To what extent is media literacy included in your curriculum?
 9. Do you think your institution provides sufficient support or resources for teaching media literacy and fact-checking?
 10. What improvements would you suggest in the curriculum to strengthen these skills?
- Assessment and Outcomes
11. How do you assess students' media literacy and fact-checking skills?
 12. What indicators do you use to measure students' ability to critically evaluate information?
 13. In your view, how can media education better address misinformation

Questionnaires for In-depth interview to the fact-checkers in Bangladesh

1. How did you become involved in fact-checking?
2. What motivates your organization (or you personally) to verify information in Bangladesh's current media context?
3. How would you describe the evolution of fact-checking in Bangladesh in the past few years?
4. Can you walk me through your typical fact-checking workflow — from spotting misinformation to publishing a fact-check?
5. How do you decide which claims or pieces of content deserve verification?
6. What sources or verification techniques do you use to confirm facts?
7. How do you debunk the misinformation or claims and
8. What digital tools or platforms do you use most often?
9. Have you integrated any AI-based tools into your workflow? If yes, how do they help — and what limitations have you observed?
10. How do you handle AI-generated disinformation or deepfakes, given their increasing prevalence in Bangladesh?
11. What additional tools or infrastructure do you wish you had access to for more effective verification?
12. How do you collaborate with other fact-checking organisations, media outlets, or platforms?
13. What role do academic institutions, NGOs, or government bodies play in supporting (or hindering) your work?
14. What are the main challenges you face — financial, legal, technical, or political?
15. How do laws such as the Cyber Security Ordinance affect your fact-checking activities?
16. Have you or your team faced online harassment or pressure related to your work? How do you manage those risks?
17. How do you ensure the safety of sources and witnesses when dealing with sensitive content?
18. Have you noticed any change in public trust or user behavior as a result of your work?
19. What role do you see AI and automation playing in the future of fact-checking in Bangladesh?
20. What support or policy changes would make your work more effective?

Questionnaires for Journalists

1. How do you define misinformation in the context of your daily journalistic work?
2. What types of misinformation do you encounter most frequently (e.g., political, health, social media rumors)?
3. Can you share a recent example where misinformation significantly affected your reporting process?

4. What steps do you take to verify information before publishing a story?
5. Which tools, techniques, or platforms do you rely on for fact-checking?
6. How do you assess the credibility of sources, especially in fast-breaking news situations?
7. To what extent do you collaborate with fact-checking organizations or teams?
8. Does your organization have specific guidelines or policies for dealing with misinformation? If yes, how effective are they?
9. How do editorial decisions change when dealing with potentially misleading or unverified information?
10. What role do editors play in ensuring accuracy and preventing misinformation?
11. What are the biggest challenges you face when trying to counter misinformation?
12. Have you ever faced external pressures (political, corporate, audience-driven) that complicated fact-checking?
13. How do you communicate uncertainty or incomplete information to your audience?
14. In what ways do you balance speed and accuracy in the digital news environment?
15. How do you engage audiences to help them recognize and avoid misinformation?
16. Do you think journalists have a role in promoting media literacy? If so, how?
17. How do audience reactions or feedback influence your handling of misinformation?
18. Have you used AI tools or digital technologies to detect or combat misinformation?
19. What are the benefits and risks of using AI in fact-checking and reporting?
20. What ethical dilemmas arise when reporting on misinformation?