"We Learned in LIS How to Verify and Detect":
The Impact of Media and Information Literacy on University Students' Discernment and Sharing of Fake News

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ABSTRACT

Background. Concerns about the spread of fake news in digital spaces frequently surface in political discourse, highlighting the risks it poses to public perception and opinion on key sociopolitical issues. Understanding how Media and Information Literacy (MIL) education influences students' ability to assess the accuracy of online content and their willingness to share it may offer valuable insights into combating fake news.

Objectives. The goal of this paper is to assess the impact of MIL-focused courses in students' evaluation of the accuracy in headline veracity and their intentions to share fake news.

Methods. A total of 66 students, comprising those who had taken MIL-focused courses (LIS 10 or LIS 50) and those who had not, were asked to evaluate the accuracy of various headlines and indicate their likelihood of sharing them. One-way ANOVAs were conducted to analyze differences in accuracy and sharing scores. Additionally, qualitative responses were thematically analyzed to gain deeper insights into participants' evaluative strategies.

Results. MIL takers are not significantly different to non-MIL takers when it comes to evaluating the accuracy of the headline and their sharing intentions. However, students with MIL coursework demonstrated more structured and reflective strategies in evaluating content, often referencing skills learned from their classes, whereas those without such coursework tended to rely on heuristics and personal judgment.

Contributions. This study highlights the importance of equipping students with targeted evaluative strategies through MIL education. Its findings can guide institutions, educators, and policymakers in designing more effective interventions that empower learners not only to identify fake news but also to critically navigate and resist misinformation in their daily digital interactions.

INTRODUCTION

In the Philippines, being online increasingly means being on social media. Filipinos seek most of their information needs online including their daily dose of news. About 99.4% of users in the Philippines visited social networking sites in the first half of 2025, with Facebook emerging as the top social media site used (Kemp, 2025). Its popularity has positioned Facebook as a key platform shaping not only social relations but also news and politics in the Philippines (Pei et al., 2021). Filipino users typically go online to stay connected, find information, and research on how to do things (Kemp, 2025). While social media use has been a useful tool to maintain a networked culture, it has also contributed to growing public anxiety around false and misleading information. Content that has the characteristics of an online misinformation, defined as "false or misleading information," and disinformation, which refers to "deceptive and misleading information," spreads rapidly among social media networks (Wardle, 2020). A Reuters report (Chua, 2025) shows that concerns regarding online mis- and disinformation have been expressed by 67% of respondents, the highest level recorded in the last four years.

Heightened concern over mis- and disinformation became particularly evident in the Philippines during the politically charged 2025 midterm elections, underscoring the tense political climate in the country and the erosion of public trust in journalism. The political feud between President Ferdinand Marcos Jr and Vice President Sara Duterte and the arrest of former president Rodrigo Duterte by the International Criminal Court (ICC) fueled the spread of false and harmful content online against opposing parties and journalists, and threatened the integrity of the press to the public. While both academic research (Ong & Cabañes, 2018) and everyday users have identified political actors as key sources of disinformation, recent findings show that distrust toward journalists in the Philippines now exceeds the global average by five percentage points (Chua, 2025). Although often used interchangeably with mis- and disinformation, the term "fake news"—defined as "false and misleading information in the form of news content" (Lazer et al., 2018)—more precisely captures the nature of attacks on the media. It is a term widely recognized by the public and regularly invoked in political discourse, particularly during campaign season (Esguerra, 2025).

The spread of fake news poses a significant threat to the public's ability to make informed political decisions. Fake news on social media works by agitating the readers and sensationalizing news stories, particularly when targeting political opponents. This tactic has intensified political divisions, with the 2022 Philippine presidential election serving as an early example of the growing polarization among politically engaged users (Quilinguing, 2024). In the Philippines, Filipinos are being divided online through fake news, mirroring the same problem observed in the United States (Presidential News Desk, 2025).

Yet while partisanship and politically motivated reasoning are often cited as explanations for belief in fake news, research suggests these factors are insufficient on their own. Scholars argue that belief bias and other cognitive variables may better account for susceptibility to false content (Druckman & McGrath, 2019; Evans et al., 2013; Tappin et al., 2020).). More crucially, a growing body of literature points to gaps in media and information literacy as a major factor behind the failure to detect fake news (Guess et al., 2020; Jones-Jang et al., 2021; Lee, 2018; McGrew et al., 2023; Pennycook et al., 2021).

Media and information literacy (MIL) initiatives have emerged in the Philippines in recent years. They often come in the form of seminars and workshops conducted by the media, library, and education sectors. Formal college-level courses have also been introduced. The School of Library and Information Studies (SLIS) of the University of the Philippines (UP) offers undergraduates both LIS 10: *Information and Society* and the LIS 50: *Information Literacy* with the latter focusing on the "development of information literacy initiatives for implementation in libraries and other information institutions"(Santos, 2024). While such initiatives continue to be improved, studying its impact on students' discernment of mis- and disinformation remains underexplored. In addition, recent research highlights that even when people recognize content as false, they may still share it (Pennycook & Rand, 2021b), raising questions about the relationship between perceived accuracy and sharing intentions.

For these reasons, this study examines how MIL education influences students' ability to evaluate the accuracy of news headlines and their willingness to share fake news. We analyzed responses to a sampling of real and fake headlines by students who completed an MIL course offered by UP SLIS and students who have not taken any.

Our findings show that there is no measurable advantage in fake news detection between students who completed MIL-focused courses and those who did not. However, the two groups differed in the strategies they used when evaluating information and deciding whether to share it on social media. Students with formal MIL education tended to assess headline veracity through a more structured and systematic approach to information evaluation, often citing fact-checking practices, ethical considerations, and skills gained from their coursework. They were also more likely to treat accuracy as a precursor in their decision to share content. In contrast, students without MIL education relied more on intuition, emotional response, and source familiarity when making judgements and determining sharing intentions.

This study contributes to both theory and practice by assessing how formal MIL education offered by Library and Information Science programs shapes information discernment and sharing behavior online. The results offer insight into the impact and limits of such programs with the aim of strengthening them to help students navigate an increasingly complex and politicized information environment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The burgeoning definition of fake news

The contemporary information environment is characterized by the use of what is broadly termed "information disorder" to refer to false or misleading content such as misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation. While the colloquial term "fake news" is widely used in communication research(Mansoor, 2024), "information disorder" is considered a more comprehensive and accurate descriptor of this phenomenon. It manifests in diverse formats, ranging from news satire and parody to outright fabrication and manipulation, making its identification increasingly challenging for the average individual.

Meanwhile, fake news studies (Lazer et al., 2018) whose framework this study adopts for understanding information processing, retains the use of the term "fake news" given its value as a distinct scientific construct in psychology, and its political relevance helps highlight an important issue in multidisciplinary discussions. More importantly, the term is also widely used and understood more by people, making it easier for researchers to relay information about the phenomenon to the general public albeit with caution (Quilinguing, 2019).

Fake news pervades PH electoral politics

Fake news research continues to dominate political discussions globally. Earlier studies investigated the spread of "highly misleading political 'news' stories" in social media sites regarding the 2016 US Presidential Election and the UK Brexit Referendum (Lazer et al., 2018), which further heightened during the COVID-19 pandemic (Loomba et al., 2021) and the 2020 US Presidential elections (Pennycook & Rand, 2021). The influence of hyperpartisan news to people may lead to further political polarization which can affect how people consume information and make political and health-related decisions.

In the Philippines, the 2016 Presidential Elections, dubbed as a "social media election"(Quitzon, 2021), became the springboard for false claims to be widely spread in social media sites. A report (Ong & Cabañes, 2018) detailed how a "networked disinformation"—defined as an organized production of deceptive political content—involved social media influencers under the care of ad and public relations executives with community-level fake account operators. So-called "trolls" provoke political polarization through volatile virality by spreading fake news using populist rhetorical styles through fake news sharing, hate speech, and artificially trending hashtags. These mechanisms aim to distort historical narratives and silence political opponents in order to stir public anxiety, tap into anger and resentment, and influence political decisions. The same machinery was observed in the 2022 Philippine Elections, with the fake news

campaigns attributed to then presidential candidate Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr (Quitzon, 2021) involving Facebook pages and groups, YouTube channels, and social media influencers who propagated false claims meant to alter public perception by glorifying the previous Marcos' regime, and vilifying critics (Bagayaua-Mendoza, 2019; Quitzon, 2021). This undermines how the issue remains systemic and deeply rooted in the society.

Sharing does not imply (fake news) belief

The common narrative that partisanship is sufficient to explain the perceived accuracy in news does not reflect recent findings on the association of political concordance with news veracity (Kahan, 2017). People are still more likely to believe true but politically discordant news than false but politically concordant news (Bago et al., 2020; Pennycook et al., 2021; Pennycook & Rand, 2021). Evidence from cognitive psychology suggests that people who engage more on deliberate thinking are less likely to believe fake news, regardless of its consistency with their political beliefs (Bago et al., 2020; Bronstein et al., 2019; Pennycook & Rand, 2021; Ross et al., 2023). Prior political knowledge was found to be positively correlated with correctly evaluating the accuracy of news, as well as media literacy and general information literacy (Amazeen & Bucy, 2019; Brashier et al., 2021; Jones-Jang et al., 2021; Vegetti & Mancosu, 2020).

However, there seems to be a disconnect between what people believe and what they willingly share on social media. While the assumption that people who believe in an information would subsequently share it seems plausible, new evidence suggests otherwise. Recent work shows that people may still share information they previously identified as inaccurate (Pennycook et al., 2021). Possible explanations for this finding include (1) genuinely (but mistakenly) believing fake news to be accurate, (2) preferring politically concordant news, and (3) not attending to accuracy due to factors in the social media context (e.g., likes, shares, comments, clicks). Among these, this study focuses on reducing the impact of fake news when people genuinely commit mistakes, with the assumption that partisanship and the social media context may override the effects of MIL education in students' evaluation of fake news.

The critical role of Media and Information Literacy

A report (Lazer et al., 2018) shows that interventions against fake news involve empowering individuals through fact-checking and education, but teaching media and information literacy to students was found to be more likely to be an effective strategy than fact-checking alone. Media and information literacy (MIL) was defined by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as an interrelated set of "competencies that enable people to critically and effectively engage with information"(Santos, 2024). The theoretical underpinnings of MIL rests on the inoculation theory which suggests "building resistance to persuasive messages through preemptive actions" (McGuire, 1964). In particular, technique-based inoculation by teaching students how to discern fake news from real news and the persuasion techniques used in it is aligned with MIL (Huang et al., 2024; Roozenbeek et al., 2020).

Recent work on LIS education in the Philippines (Santos, 2024) investigates the development of an MIL-focused course, LIS 50:*Information Literacy*, in UP SLIS which aims to provide the necessary skills to promote information literacy initiatives in libraries and other information institutions. Both the teacher and students facilitate different enrichment activities in the context of information literacy through games, lectures, and presentations to analyze a given information and identify whether it is accurate or not. Specifically, discussion on the evaluation of an information's' source credibility and content soundness is essential for students to discern what is factual from what is fabricated.

Similarly, *LIS 10 Information and Society*, a General Elective (GE) course offered by the UP SLIS, was originally conceptualized as a course on information literacy development, but then revised to focus on student recognition and understanding of information issues to cater non-MIL students (Dar Juan, 2023). Nonetheless, this study primarily investigates the extent to which the two courses, LIS 50 and LIS 10, contribute to the development of students' media and information literacy (MIL) competencies. Specifically, it aims to evaluate their effectiveness in fostering critical thinking, evaluative judgment, and

analytical skills essential for navigating and engaging with the complexities of the contemporary information environment.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Participants were recruited via Formbricks on the UP SLIS Facebook page and website (N=66). Eligibility criteria included: (a) *LIS students who completed LIS 50 or non-MIL students enrolled in the General Education course LIS 10*; and (b) *non-LIS students who had not taken LIS 10 or LIS 50 (control group)*.

Materials

Headlines: 28 Facebook-style headlines (14 real, 14 fake) posted between February and June 2025. Real headlines were drawn from the Facebook pages of leading Philippine news outlets (*GMA Network*, *Manila Bulletin*, *Super Radyo DZBB*, *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, *TV5*, *ABS-CBN*, and *The Philippine Star*). Fake headlines were obtained from *Tsek.Ph*, an IFCN-accredited fact-checking platform focusing on debunking election-related fake news.

Survey Items

For each headline, two binary items: (a) Accuracy Judgment ("To the best of your knowledge, is this claim in the above headline accurate?"; Yes/No), and (b) Sharing Intention ("Would you consider sharing this story online through Facebook?"; Yes/No).

Procedure

Participants first completed demographic and social-media usage questions. Headlines were then presented one at a time in randomized order. After each headline, participants indicated an accuracy judgment and a sharing intention. Finally, open-ended questions captured rationales for their judgments and sharing decisions.

Data Analysis

R Packages: Analyses were conducted in R (v4.x) (R Core Team, 2024) using readx (Wickham & Bryan, 2025) and dplyr (Wickham et al., 2023).

MIL Exposure Coding: Participants were classified as "MIL" if they had taken LIS 10 or LIS 50, and "No MIL" otherwise.

Flag Computation: For each of the 28 accuracy items, responses were compared against the answer key to generate binary flags (corr1…corr28). For each of the 28 sharing items, responses were coded into share1…share28 (Yes = 1; No = 0).

Score Calculation: A row-wise sum of corr* flags yielded an accuracy_score (0–28). A row-wise sum of share* flags yielded a sharing_score (0–28).

Statistical Tests: One-way ANOVAs assessed differences in accuracy_score and sharing_score by MIL exposure. Statistical significance was evaluated at = .05.

Qualitative Analysis: Open-ended responses were thematically coded to identify the criteria used for accuracy judgments (e.g., source credibility, language cues, verification strategies) and motivations for sharing or withholding content.

Transparency and Reproducibility: All materials used in this paper's preprint (datasets, code, instruments) are publicly available at: https://github.com/panda-lab-slis/informationliteracy.

FINDINGS

Consistency Without Advantage: Patterns in MIL-Educated Students

As can be seen, Table 1 displays descriptive statistics for accuracy and sharing scores by MIL exposure. Both groups performed nearly identically in identifying true versus false headlines (MIL: M = 9.91, SD = 1.63; No MIL: M = 9.90, SD = 1.92). Sharing intentions were also similar (MIL: M = 2.59 shares, SD = 2.33; No MIL: M = 2.43 shares, SD = 2.70).

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics by MIL Exposure*

MIL Exposure	Mean Accuracy	SD Accuracy	Mean Sharing	SD Sharing
MIL	9.91	1.63	2.59	2.33
No MIL	9.90	1.92	2.43	2.70

One-way ANOVAs tested whether MIL exposure explained variance in scores. Table 2 shows the test for accuracy: the sum of squares attributable to MIL was virtually zero (SS = 0.001), producing $F(1, 60) = 0.0006$, $p = 0.989$, indicating no significant group difference.

Table 2. *ANOVA for Accuracy Score by MIL exposure*

term	df	sumsq	meansq	statistic	p.value
MIL_exposure	1	0.001	0.001	0	0.989
Residuals	60	189.419	3.157	NA	NA

Similarly, Table 3 presents the ANOVA for sharing intentions, with $F(1, 60) = 0.063$, $p = 0.803$, confirming no significant effect of MIL exposure.

Table 3. *ANOVA for Sharing Score by MIL exposure*

term	df	sumsq	meansq	statistic	p.value
MIL_exposure	1	0.398	0.398	0.063	0.803
Residuals	60	379.085	6.318	NA	NA

Contrary to studies (Guess et al., 2020; Jones-Jang et al., 2021) demonstrating that targeted MIL interventions can boost fake news detection, our findings show that students who completed an MIL coursework (LIS 10 or LIS 50) is not significantly different from students who did not take any in terms of their abilities to detect fake news headlines ($F_{(1, 60)} = 0.0006$, $p = 0.989$) or decide to share it ($F_{(1, 60)} = 0.063$, $p = 0.803$). Accuracy scores and sharing scores were virtually identical between those with and without MIL exposure, suggesting that a single course may be insufficient to shift underlying cognitive and behavioral patterns. As shown in Table 1, both groups are nearly identical in what they deem accurate (MIL: M = 9.91, SD = 1.63; No MIL: M = 9.90, SD = 1.92), and what they would share in social media (MIL: M = 2.59 shares, SD = 2.33; No MIL: M = 2.43 shares, SD = 2.70). This aligns with research (Pennycook & Rand, 2021) suggesting that singular educational exposures may produce short-lived or subtle gains, and that sharing behavior is influenced by emotional or social motivations beyond mere detection skills. It would be more beneficial when MIL principles are embedded within broader curricula rather than standalone courses. This can reinforce critical evaluation skills across multiple classes and contexts to deepen retention.

Interestingly, MIL takers show more consistency in their accuracy (MIL: M = 9.91, SD = 1.63; No MIL: M = 9.90, SD = 1.92) and sharing scores (MIL: M = 2.59, SD = 2.33; No MIL: M = 2.43, SD = 2.70), as seen in the narrower spread of their scores. This suggests that MIL education may foster greater

confidence or conviction when evaluating content and deciding what to share. One possible assumption is that MIL courses foster students to similar strategies or frameworks that guide their information evaluation. However, future research is needed to explore how this consistency emerges from their MIL education.

From Intuition to Strategy: How Students Evaluate and Share News by MIL Exposure

While the findings indicate that completing MIL coursework (LIS 10 or LIS 50) does not produce statistically significant improvements in students' abilities to discern fake news headlines or alter their intentions to share such content on social media, several strategies in information evaluation emerged from the qualitative responses of MIL and non-MIL takers. Source credibility and reputation emerged as a primary consideration by identifying whether the headline came from a trusted or recognizable outlet. As one non-MIL taker puts it, "I trusted it because it came from a major news outlet." Meanwhile, MIL takers often extended this to include an assessment of journalistic credibility. For instance, an MIL taker said, "I considered if the site is reputable or if I've heard of it before." Trust in recognized news outlets and fact-checkers guided judgments. This supports inoculation theory's emphasis on equipping learners with heuristics to preempt misinformation (Huang et al., 2024; McGuire, 1964).

Notably, critical thinking skills learned from coursework surfaced among MIL takers. Several explicitly referenced applying strategies acquired from their MIL-focused courses, such as one MIL taker said, "We learned in LIS how to verify facts and detect misleading headlines, so I used those steps." Also, cross-referencing with other sources was another common strategy particularly among MIL takers. Students noted the importance of verifying information through other credible platforms. For instance, one student commented, "I checked if other credible websites reported the same thing." This active strategy reflects deeper analytic engagement and parallels findings that deliberative thinking reduces fake-news belief (Bago et al., 2020). Content evaluation and plausibility also informed judgments of accuracy. Participants flagged sensational phrasing, exaggerated claims, or grammatical errors as red flags. This mirrors techniques employed in technique-based inoculation, where understanding persuasive tactics fosters resilience (Roozenbeek et al., 2022). Non-MIL takers often relied on personal intuition, as illustrated by one student who said, "If it sounds too exaggerated, I assume it's fake." In contrast, MIL takers articulated a more systematic approach: "I looked at the wording and checked for bias or sensationalism."

Contrary to an earlier findings (Pennycook et al., 2021) that people are still willing to share information they previously identified as inaccurate, accuracy seemed to serve as a precondition for sharing, especially among MIL takers. An MIL taker reported, "I only share after confirming it's factual." But across both groups, perceived importance and relevance as well as emotional appeal motivated sharing to social media. "If it's relevant and people need to know about it, I share it," said an MIL taker. Non-MIL takers similarly emphasized personal and community relevance: "I only share if it affects my friends or community." In terms of emotional appeal, a non-MIL taker commented, "If it made me really angry or happy, I'd post it." Outrage, amusement, or emotional resonance sometimes overrode accuracy concerns, consistent with research on affect-driven sharing (Roozenbeek et al., 2022).

Both MIL and non-MIL takers cited that they were discouraged from sharing a headline when they doubted its due to accuracy, feared that they share a fake news, perceived that the information is biased, and the content seemed irrelevant to their audience. Non-MIL takers were doubtful when the information seem uncertain. One non-MIL taker said, "If I wasn't sure it was true, I wouldn't share it." Notably, MIL takers expressed a stronger ethical concern regarding fake news sharing, with one taker who commented, "I don't want to be part of spreading fake news." Similarly, both groups were wary of biased or sensational content. For instance a non-MIL taker stated, "If it looked like clickbait or political propaganda, I avoided it." Finally, some decided not to share based on their network. One of them answered, "I don't post things that my friends won't care about."

All in all, MIL takers demonstrated more structured evaluative strategies, often referencing fact-checking, ethical considerations, and the application of critical thinking skills learned from their

coursework. Non-MIL takers, in contrast, relied more heavily on intuition, emotional reaction, and source familiarity in their judgments and sharing behaviors.

From Insight to Intervention: Implications, Limitations, and Paths Forward

This paper carries important implications for both theory and practice. Theoretically, it builds on existing research by examining the evaluative processes that shape the decision-making strategies of both MIL and non-MIL takers when assessing headline accuracy and deciding whether to share them. Findings suggest that MIL takers, in particular, employ distinct strategies in this regard. Moreover, this study extends prior work on the (dis)association between accuracy judgments and sharing intentions (Pennycook et al., 2021) by showing that, to some extent, MIL takers rely on accuracy as a prerequisite for sharing, challenging earlier claims that individuals often share information they mistakenly believe to be accurate. This tendency may, in part, be attributed to the MIL education received by MIL takers, which could help reduce errors in judging headline accuracy, aligning with Pennycook et al. (2021) assertion that misidentifying false information as true often stems from MIL illiteracy. On the practical front, this paper offers implications for institutions, MIL educators, and other sectors to deal with fake news in social media. For MIL educators, efforts to combat fake news may come from integrating MIL instruction across multiple courses, rather than confining it to a single elective, in order to strengthen students' evaluative strategies and practice their abilities in different contexts.

These implications notwithstanding, the paper contains limitations that need to be acknowledged. One, participants were drawn from a single institution, potentially reflecting shared baseline competencies. Therefore, caution is advised when interpreting and generalizing the results. A large sample of participants, preferably from different colleges or institutions, can be more adequate for future studies. Two, binary forced-choice items may not capture nuanced evaluative processes, thus, more graded or additional open-ended accuracy assessments other than those used in the paper could reveal subtler improvements. Three, sharing intentions may not correspond to actual behavior, thus, tracking real sharing activity on social platforms would enhance ecological validity. Four, headlines were limited to election-related items from a narrow timeframe, and including diverse topics and formats (e.g., images, videos) could test MIL applicability across contexts. Addressing these limitations will strengthen future research and support the design of robust MIL interventions that yield measurable improvements in both critical evaluation and sharing behavior.

Future research can expand the work to study multiple sessions of exposure to fake news as it was found to have stronger effects for the success of the intervention (Huang et al., 2024) and incorporate techniques that shift the attention of students in accuracy (Pennycook et al., 2021) when encountering a potentially fake news in social media to lessen their sharing. Longitudinal assessments may be helpful in observing long-term effects of MIL education by implementing follow-up evaluations months after instruction to detect longer-term impacts and refine interventions accordingly. More interactive in-class activities can help reinforce detection and simulate real-life encounters with fake news in social media. These include (1) activities where students track and reflect on their real-world sharing behaviors over time, linking accuracy judgments with social and emotional factors that drive sharing, (2) immersive scenarios— such as role-playing or interactive fake-news outbreaks—to practice detection under realistic time pressure and peer influence, mirroring real social media dynamics, and (3) group-based fact-checking projects where students collaborate to verify emerging claims, fostering both analytical skills and social accountability.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how students, with and without formal Media and Information Literacy (MIL) education, evaluate and decide whether to share fake news headlines on social media. While the quantitative findings reveal no statistically significant difference between MIL takers and non-MIL takers in terms of accuracy detection and sharing intentions, the qualitative data point to meaningful differences in how students approached these tasks. Those with MIL exposure demonstrated more structured and reflective

evaluative strategies, often referencing fact-checking practices, source verification, and critical thinking skills learned through their coursework. In contrast, students without such training tended to rely on intuition, emotional cues, or source familiarity. These findings suggest that MIL may not immediately translate into improved detection scores, but it fosters habits of discernment, ethical reflection, and strategic judgment that are critical in navigating a saturated and politicized information environment.

In the Philippines, where social media platforms continue to shape political discourse and distort public memory, MIL education holds urgent relevance. The rise of networked disinformation, the erosion of press credibility, and the entrenchment of political polarization demand more than just the ability to spot fake headlines. What is needed is a deeper cognitive and ethical engagement with how and why we share information. This study affirms that formal MIL instruction, particularly within and through of Library and Information Science education, plays a crucial role in cultivating such engagement.

However, the findings also point to the limitations of relying on a single course or elective to counter the complex dynamics of fake news. For MIL to have a lasting impact, it must be integrated across disciplines and reinforced throughout the student experience. A sustained and embedded approach to MIL education, led by LIS educators and institutions, can help students build resilience, think critically, and act responsibly in the digital public sphere.

The differences we observed between MIL takers and non-MIL takers point to important avenues for deepening cognitive engagement and ethical reflection in digital spaces. As fake news continues to circulate widely, eroding trust in the press and intensifying political polarization, MIL education remains an essential, though still underutilized, tool for resistance. This study affirms the necessity of not only teaching students how to recognize fake news, but also empowering them to resist its influence in their everyday online lives. Resisting fake news is not merely a matter of detection, but of discernment. It demands more than accuracy judgments; it calls for ethical awareness, civic imagination, and critical attentiveness to how information circulates, persuades, and polarizes. Social media platforms like Facebook play a central role in shaping political discourse and influencing public perception, and confronting their influence requires MIL education that goes beyond surface-level fact-checking. The potential of MIL lies in its capacity to equip the public to participate thoughtfully, ethically, and accountably in the making and sharing of information, especially in highly polarized and politicized contexts.

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