

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Content Analysis of Selected Fake News Fact-Checked during the 2022 Philippine Presidential Campaign and Election Period

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ABSTRACT

The surge of fake news genres on social media platforms is an ongoing problem. In the Philippines, fake news commonly prevails during relevant political events. Therefore, fact-checking and critical media and news literacies are vital in combating disinformation. This study analyzed 134 fake news articles about two leading presidential candidates during the 2022 Philippine presidential campaign and election period. The study used qualitative research, descriptive coding, and content analysis grounded in interpersonal deception theory and logical fallacy detection. Specifically, the qualitative content analysis framework of Creswell (2012) was utilized. Based on the findings, most articles contained a negative tone of publicity. The content revealed that most articles were "false" and had dubious claims. As for the warrant, the analysis interpreted that most articles denounced a presidential candidate. The study also explored the concepts and themes of the 134 fake news articles—source, patterns, ownership, and timing. Facebook was the most used social media platform for fake news publishers. The patterns of fake news articles and posts revealed capitalized words and logical fallacies. Furthermore, the publishers had account names with either words related to news or the candidates, while the timing of their posts surfaced during relevant political events and topics. It was concluded that promoting critical media and news literacies among the general public and students, especially in English language education, is crucial to reduce the detrimental effects of

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| fake news and educate people to evaluate the accuracy of every information they encounter. | |
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Introduction

In recent years, the internet and social media have contributed to the surge of fake news. The lack of content regulation in social media sites also promotes the spread of misinformation and disinformation. As a result, the rapid spread of fake news is known to lead to adverse effects affecting health, politics, and beliefs (Gupta et al., 2023). Therefore, fake news is considered disruptive and manipulative. Researchers continue to study the phenomena of fake news, misinformation, and disinformation (Aïmeur et al., 2023; Pérez-Escolar et al., 2023; Shu et al., 2020). As Pennycook and Rand (2021) claimed, fake news became prevalent during the US Presidential Election in 2016 and has continuously become a dilemma during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the Philippines, trolls and fake news peddlers influence the prevalence of fake news and disinformation. Ong and Cabañes (2018) found that fake news increasingly spreads due to political agendas through social media. Furthermore, politicians hire trolls and operators to manipulate the facts and post fallacious content as one of their campaign strategies (Ong & Cabañes, 2018). Since fake news has become pervasive in politics, there is a high potential that political leaders have been using fake news for their propaganda and agendas. In addressing the issue of fake news, fact-checking has become a practice to determine the validity and factuality of claims, arguments, and statements (Ceron et al., 2021). During campaigns where fake news becomes rampant, fact-checking becomes relevant to let people differentiate between the truth and falsehood among politicians. The process of analyzing and verifying fake news can also lessen the number of people who are prone to believe such content.

Educators continue to play a vital role in developing the students' literacy to prevent the dissemination of fake news in society. Thus, promoting critical media and news literacies contributes to combating fake news, misinformation, and disinformation. According to Share and Mamikonyan (2020), the challenge of judging the credibility and bias of information calls on English language teachers to effectively apply practices that would contribute to the demands of the literacy of students in the digital age. Additionally, Guess et al. (2020, as cited in Orhan, 2023) proved in their study that individuals who receive media literacy are likely to successfully detect fake news.

Following the events caused by an upsurge in false reports and internet misinformation that significantly affected society, scholarly discussion and debate increased (Humprecht, 2018). It is crucial to analyze the published material because scholars from various professions are becoming more interested in studying false news, and more studies are being published on the topic. Despite being a multi-sectoral problem, according to Muhammed and Matthew (2021), interdisciplinary research on misinformation on social media is rare. One of the most significant psychological issues that encourages spreading false information is "confirmation bias" (Nickerson, 1998, p. 175) which refers to the tendency to seek out or favor information that confirms one's

preexisting beliefs. It was first introduced by the English psychologist Peter Wason in 1960 during his studies on hypothesis testing and reasoning processes (Dibbets et al., 2021). However, the scarcity of research on it highlights the potential for future interdisciplinary research in data science, information systems, and psychology. Moreover, Muhammed and Matthew (2021) claimed that there are few studies on institutional measures to combat misinformation. Future research could analyze governmental and organizational efforts to regulate misinformation at the level of policies, regulatory frameworks, and communication strategies to fill the gap.

After the 2016 US presidential elections, the number of studies on false news increased, highlighting researchers' interest in this field. However, the quantitative analysis of Kanozia et al. (2022) revealed that practically every region of the world, except for North America and the USA, needs further research studies on fake news. In the context of the fake news studies in the Philippines, there are still some gaps in the content analysis of identifying the literary structure of fake news, as only a few studies have been published since 2020. Further research is also necessary for a more thorough analysis and detection of fake news to promote critical media and news literacies.

With the relevant issue of fake news, this study proposes an analysis of the fake news from the 2022 presidential campaign and election period in the Philippines. This paper contributes to the research literature on content analysis of fake news, which requires further investigation, especially in the Philippines. It also underscores the role of critical media and news literacies to teachers, students, and society in addressing the prevalence of fake news in social media, which suggests implications to language teaching and education. Moreover, the research discusses the inferences drawn from several fake news published on social media.

More specifically, the study seeks to identify whether selected fake news articles published by VERA Files (2023), a nonprofit independent media organization and a fact-checking website in the Philippines, are indeed politically motivated to spread propaganda and fallacies. The data used in this study were selected based on their relevance to the 2022 Philippine election period. The files were then analyzed using Creswell's qualitative content analysis scheme to detect the tone, content, and warrant. The study also identified the source, patterns, ownership, and timing based on the themes of Griffith University (2020) in spotting fake news to identify the implications of the data gathered. Moreover, the analysis is grounded in interpersonal deception theory and logical fallacy detection. In this regard, the study on fake news, misinformation, and fact-checking about political propaganda aims to target various disciplines, specifically politics, social sciences, linguistics, language teaching, and education. Furthermore, the analysis of the data's writing conventions and language use and the emphasis on critical and media literacy emphasize the study's contribution to the field of language teaching and education.

Thus, the research aims to answer the succeeding questions:

1. What does the data convey in terms of the following:
 - 1.1. Tone
 - 1.2. Content

1.3. Warrant

2. What concepts and themes can be drawn from the analysis of fake news?

Literature Review

Interpersonal Deception Theory

According to interpersonal deception theory (Buller & Burgoon, 1996) in psycholinguistic research, specific speech patterns may indicate a speaker attempting to distort the facts intentionally. Hedge words and other ambiguous qualifiers make a statement sound more indirect and obfuscate its interpretation, making it less direct. Examples of hedge words include "maybe," "possibly," "could," "might," "sort of," and "I think." Similarly, ambiguous qualifiers such as "somewhat," "kind of," "more or less," "around," "in a way," and "relatively" introduce uncertainty, allowing speakers to appear less certain or committed to their claims (Wang, 2022). Following this paradigm, before dialogue, both the sender and the recipient of deceit bring their expectations, goals, familiarity, and others to an engagement. The sender will start the engagement or conversation with a specific deceit strategy but change it based on perceived deception success as the interaction progresses. On the other hand, the receiver starts with some skepticism, even if it is zero, which is changed as the conversation progresses based on credibility assessments. Likely, both parties will unintentionally communicate verbal and nonverbal cues about their psychological status. Ultimately, both the sender and recipient can assess how well they can perpetrate and catch lies.

In numerous applications, linguistic features of fraud detection have been thoroughly researched (Ceron et al., 2021; Goyal et al., 2020; Guess et al., 2020; Khan, et al., 2022). In these applications, individuals knowingly lie to gain an external benefit. With these, the researchers in this study contrast various unreliable news source types produced with various intentions and degrees of accuracy. Understanding deceit is a noble endeavor, but detecting deception is a more practical challenge for the security of many institutions. The search for a perfect truth serum or infallible lie detector has achieved only modest results. After decades of research, there is still no widely accepted method for reliably detecting deception (Christopher, 2021).

This research uses the existing ideas of interpersonal deception theory to provide a basis for analyzing the gathered fake news articles. These fake news materials involve inaccurate statements leading to potential deception and consumption of misinformation from various social media platforms.

Logical Fallacy Detection

One of the intentions of using logical fallacies in arguments and statements is to misinterpret and misinform the receivers of information. Jin et al. (2022) proposed logical fallacy detection, a method that can be linked with fact-checking, to detect fallacious arguments and combat misinformation. In detecting logical fallacies, the researchers categorized some examples according to the types of general logical fallacies—which are based on Aristotle's 13 classes of fallacies. Aside from the types of

fallacies, classifying logical fallacies can be grounded in the use of words and the structure of arguments. Souratia et al. (2023) also proposed a comprehensive three-stage taxonomy framework for logical fallacies detection. Therefore, the elements and theories in logical fallacies remain relevant in the digital age as the world faces an era of the dissemination of misinformation and propaganda in news media and social media platforms. Hence, the concepts in logical fallacy detection are significant in the content analysis of verified fake news. Moreover, the analysis of the study as grounded in the theories and elements of logical fallacies is essential to identify the recent fake news and promote news and media literacies in the societal and educational contexts.

Critical Media and News Literacies

Critical media literacy significantly allows students in the digital age to evaluate various media types, such as images, music, videos, social media, and many more (Share & Mamikonyan, 2020). News literacy, defined by Tully et al. (2021, as cited in Swart, 2023), is the “knowledge around the personal and social processes by which news is produced, distributed and consumed, and skills that allow users some control over these processes” (p. 506). Concerning the rampant fake news on social media, critical media and news literacies play a crucial role in evaluating and verifying every piece of information an individual may encounter. Consequently, people can comprehensively process information based on facts and credibility through these literacies. According to Mihailidis et al. (2021), previous studies revealed that media literacy contributes to receiving factual information and knowledge of knowing fake news and misinformation. In the critical analysis of published articles on social media platforms, several experimental studies showed that critical and analytic thinking can prevent an individual from spreading and engaging in fake news (Beauvais, 2022). Furthermore, corrective action and media literacy contribute to a person's awareness of disinformation and social occurrences, especially in the political context (Huber et al., 2022). Hence, this skill and literacies in media and news have the potential to combat and correct misinformation and disinformation. Based on Lim and Tan (2020), some countries have initiated plans to increase media and digital literacies, most especially for the younger generation. Therefore, these literacies underscore the need for English language teachers to strategically teach and impart critical media and news literacies among learners of the digital age who frequently use social media. As claimed by Share and Mamikonyan (2020), English teachers must help students understand the importance of literacy, mainly because these students potentially engage with false and misleading information.

Fake News on Social Media Platforms

According to Egelhofer and Lecheler (2019), fake news contains false and manipulated content due to its intention to mislead the public. In contrast to real news, fake news typically has short texts and direct language and has less technical and substantial information (Horne & Adalı, 2017). In addition, it intentionally copies the mainstream news media for it to be believable and deceiving. Fake news can also entertain by using humor and satire. An example is news satire or political satire, which uses manipulated data and humorous remarks to promote political intentions and shape the public's perception (Egelhofer & Lecheler, 2019).

Khan et al. (2022) highlighted that social media platforms are a source of the surge in the spread of false information. Hence, mainstream media contributes to fake news (Tsfati et al., 2020). Through the accessibility of social media platforms, various forms of news and media can be viewed easily by the public without noticing that a piece of information is potentially fake and manipulated. Moreover, Gaultney et al. (2022) claimed that the creators of fake news and misinformation spread altered articles, photos, and other data to reach a specific audience. Hence, fake news on social media has covered some altered content, especially about politics, health, and marketing. As shown in Table 1, studies from different areas explored fake news on social media.

Table 1

Studies about Fake News on Social Media

| Main Focus | Sources | Findings |
|--|--|---|
| Politics (Elections and political controversies) | Igwebuike and Chimunya (2021) van der Linden et al. (2020) Mare et al. (2019) Michael and Breaux (2021) | The findings of these studies showed the use of social media applications in spreading fake news posts for political motives. Most studies revealed the implications and influences of fake news on politics published on social media. Fake news is exposed to people, creating political perceptions and propaganda. Moreover, the studies covered different settings across different countries, namely the USA, Nigeria, and Sub-Saharan African countries. |
| Health (COVID-19) | Meyrer and Kersch (2022) | The results of the study revealed how the students were able to verify the accuracy of information on COVID-19, which showed their media literacy towards the articles published about the pandemic. |
| Marketing (False advertisement) | Alnazzawi et al. (2022) Di Domenico and Visentin (2020) | The studies explored the influence of fake news on marketing. Hence, fake news in the form of ads, content, and posts served as a marketing strategy. The use of fake news as a marketing strategy attracted and influenced people, specifically the consumers who may come across the types of content mentioned. |

The Rise of Fake News

Klein and Wueller (2017) emphasized that fake news dominates social media sites and the web. Moreover, it is a long-standing practice, and today's social media platforms make it possible for disinformation to immediately reach millions of people (Balmau et al., 2019). Nowadays, fake news is a problem that has unintended consequences and is spreading like wildfire. People's lives are affected by spreading false information, and this deception could be detrimental to their welfare (Pulido et al., 2020). The advent of fake news and the spread of edited narratives that are disseminated digitally by both individuals and automated programs present an obstacle for publications and networks. Recently, there have been attempts to develop technical and human methods to sift out misleading information and reduce how bots and other schemes distribute lies and misinformation (Anderson & Rainie, 2017).

Fact-checking

A more recent definition of fact-checking is the process of publicly assessing the veracity of claims made by politicians, journalists, or other public figures. The traditional definition of fact-checking relates to internal processes for verifying facts before publication (Graves & Amazeen, 2019). Furthermore, publishing an evidence-based review of the veracity of a political assertion, news story, or other publicly available text constitutes external fact-checking. Since the first websites arose in the USA in the early 2000s, organizations specializing in "political" fact-checking have been founded in many nations. The practitioners of these outlets typically share the broad objectives of assisting people to become better informed and fostering fact-based public discourse (Graves & Amazeen, 2019). The effectiveness of various external fact-checking interventions in battling false information and advancing truthful ideas has been the subject of increasing research. In experimental contexts, fact-checking can be effective, but the well-known motivated reasoning mechanisms constrain the influence of corrections.

In the past 10 years, the field of fact-checking and academic interest in the practice has expanded significantly. Several studies have been conducted to evaluate the efficacy of corrections (Allcott et al., 2019; Baker et al., 2020; Jolls & Wilson, 2014; Teodoro, 2018). Unfortunately, fact-checking research still needs to be optimized to support fact-checkers in addressing the worldwide concerns of misinformation and deception (Dias & Sippitt, 2020). As a result, the fact-checkers' pursuit of cultural and systemic improvements has yet to be considered (Dias & Sippitt, 2020).

Fact-checking Websites

In a political climate marked by the rampant spread of misinformation, the importance of reliable and thorough fact-checking services has never been greater for assessing and filtering information (de Ridder, 2021). Hence, fact-checking websites should be scrutinized as carefully as news pieces (Jolls & Wilson, 2014). According to Baker (2020), the author of *Media Literacy in the K–12 Classroom* and founder of the Media Literacy Clearinghouse, an effective fact-checking website is one that uses neutral language, offers objective sources to back up its assertions, and provides reliable connections. These descriptions entail the credibility of fact-checking websites. In the global setting, fact-checking websites have been established, such as Media Matters, PolitiFact, and ProPublica. FactCheck and PolitiFact collaborate directly with Facebook to assess the truthfulness of stories that Facebook users have tagged as potentially incorrect (Allcott et al., 2019).

VERA Files

In today's polarized and contentious political environment, where the Philippines is at the forefront of digital innovation for political trolling, it is critical to consider the lessons learned from that experience in order to help foresee and possibly, mitigate the continued evolution and expansion of disinformation in other democracies. The Philippines is "patient zero" (Feng et al., 2021, p. 2) in the global disinformation crisis, according to a Facebook executive, and numerous election integrity interventions

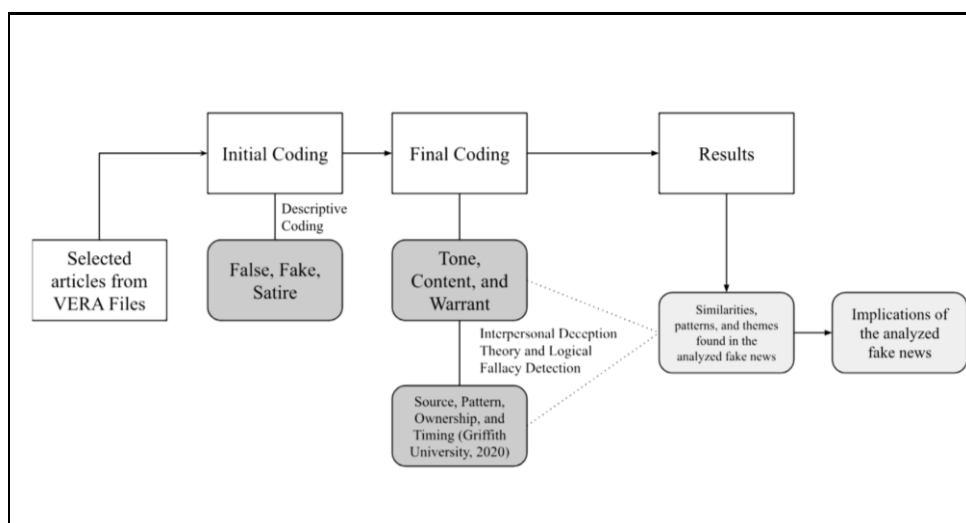
have been tested here with the intention of spreading them to other nations (Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats, 2022). With the global disinformation crisis, several fact-checking websites and organizations established in the Philippines continue to address the rampant fake news published across social media platforms. One of these is VERA Files (2023), a non-profit media organization that probes Philippine issues and fact-checks false and misleading news. It is one of Facebook's two Filipino partners in its third-party fact-checking program and a member of the International Fact-Checking Network of the Poynter Institute. The group was established in March 2008 by six seasoned Filipino journalists, with a concentration on investigative reporting and in-depth coverage of social concerns in the country (Teodoro, 2018).

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework serves as a guide for discussing the core concepts and outlining the process of conducting a study (SAGE Publications, 2021). This research's conceptual framework (Figure 1) for analyzing fake news includes key elements that guide the qualitative analysis. These elements are grouped into two categories: the sources being analyzed and the analysis outcomes.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework for the Analysis of Fake News



Before delving into the conceptual framework, it is essential to understand the primary concepts and theories that underpin this study. Interpersonal deception theory is not a static concept but a dynamic, interactive process involving the deceiver and the receiver. It provides a framework for understanding how deceptive messages are crafted and detected. On the other hand, logical fallacies detection is a practical approach that involves identifying reasoning errors that undermine arguments' logical integrity. It is a valuable tool in this study, aiding in the detection of misleading information in fake news. These theories and methods serve as lenses through which the analysis is conducted, guiding the researchers in identifying and categorizing deceptive and fallacious content in the articles.

In this framework, the sources are the selected articles that contain potential fake news. These sources undergo a multi-stage coding process to systematically analyze their content. In the initial coding stage, the selected articles from VERA Files (2023) are first subjected to descriptive coding. Here, the researchers summarize each article's general concepts in a few words, providing a preliminary understanding of the content. This part includes categorizing articles as false, fake, or satire, which helps differentiate between types of misinformation. By identifying these classifications, the analysis can better understand how misinformation manifests and spreads in the media landscape. Then, in the final coding stage, the researchers perform a detailed analysis of each article's tone, content, and warrant. The study also involves Griffith University's (2020) method of identifying fake news by analyzing the source, pattern, ownership, and timing. The analysis is grounded in two theoretical backgrounds: interpersonal deception theory and logical fallacies detection. The analysis's outcomes include identifying patterns, themes, and similarities in the fake news articles. These outcomes help understand the structural and content-related factors that contribute to spreading fake news.

Additionally, the lines in the conceptual framework illustrate the interrelation between different stages of coding and analysis. The dotted lines represent the connections between interpersonal deception theory and logical fallacies detection towards the analysis's outcomes. These two inform the coding process and help interpret the results.

The analysis of patterns and formats in fake news published online has yet to be extensively studied. Therefore, future researchers must focus on understanding how fake news is constructed to grasp its online dissemination (Baptista & Gradim, 2020). As fake news evolves with technological advancements, it becomes crucial to track its development. Understanding the structural mechanics and the factors influencing users' decisions to engage with fake news is critical to addressing its spread.

Methodology

Research Design

The research is qualitative in nature, specifically using content analysis. The selected articles are from the collection of fact-checked articles of VERA Files Fact Check. Hence, the research analyzed the phenomena of the emergence of political fake news in the local and national news in the Philippines using qualitative research and content analysis.

Data Sources

The research analyzed 134 political news articles during the 2022 presidential campaign and election period in the Philippines, fact-checked by VERA Files from January to December 2022. The selected articles fall under the categories of false, fake, satirical, and misleading, according to VERA Files Fact Check (2023). The selection process involved a comprehensive review of news articles published during the

specified period. VERA Files identified articles that contained inaccuracies or potential misinformation. Fact-checkers then evaluated each article rigorously to determine if it met the false, fake, satirical, and misleading criteria. The fact-checkers used a combination of cross-referencing with reliable sources, consulting subject matter experts, and verifying the authenticity of sources to ensure the accuracy of their assessments before categorizing the articles accordingly.

Sampling Technique

The research employed purposive sampling, which involves data sources based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives (Lavrakas, 2008). Hence, the researchers selected the fake news articles and posts fact-checked by VERA Files (2023) about the two leading presidential candidates during the presidential campaign and election period in 2022.

Ethical Consideration

The materials owned by VERA Files are protected by copyright. Copyright law grants exclusive rights to the copyright holder, typically the author or organization. According to Stim (2021), fair use, which allows limited use of copyrighted material without permission, is determined on a case-by-case basis and considers the factors:

1. Objective and nature of the use: This factor includes whether the use is transformative (e.g., commentary, parody, education) or non-profit.
2. Nature of the copyrighted work: Factual and published works are more likely to be considered for fair use compared to highly creative or unpublished works.
3. Amount and substantiality of the portion used: Fair use favors using small or less significant portions of a work rather than large portions, depending on the context and purpose.
4. Effect on the potential market: Fair use analysis also considers whether the use would harm the market value or potential earnings of the original work.

VERA Files qualified as a signatory of the International Fact-Checking Network's code of principles. The International Fact-Checking Network is an organization that "advocates for information integrity in the global fight against misinformation and supports fact-checkers through networking, capacity building and collaboration" (Poynter, 2024, para. 1). Using fact-checked data from VERA Files aligns with ethical standards, particularly when the material is employed in a transformative manner such as for commentary or educational purposes. By adhering to the principles of fair use, including the use of small portions and ensuring minimal impact on the market for the original work, users can responsibly utilize data while respecting the rights of the copyright holder (American Library Association, 2022; Stim, 2019).

Data Analysis

The analysis of the 134 fact-checked fake news articles from VERA Files Fact Check involved a methodical examination using content analysis. Content analysis involves systematically analyzing textual or visual content to identify patterns, themes,

and relationships (Columbia University, 2023). Specifically, Creswell's (2012) qualitative content analysis scheme guided this process. Creswell's approach organizes and interprets textual data to uncover underlying categories and themes. The researchers systematically applied this scheme during the coding stages to identify patterns, relationships, and insights in the articles. This framework ensured a rigorous and structured analysis, facilitating a deeper understanding of the content's nuances and implications. The data were collected according to specific categories defined by VERA Files: false, fake, satire, and misleading. Here are brief and clear explanations for each category:

1. **False:** Refers to factually incorrect information. These articles contain claims that can be proven objectively untrue based on evidence or reliable sources.
2. **Fake:** Involves deliberately fabricated content presented as genuine news. These articles are intentionally deceptive and often designed to mislead readers into believing false information.
3. **Satire:** Uses humor, irony, or exaggeration to critique or comment on political issues. Satirical articles are not intended to be taken literally and often employ exaggeration or absurdity to highlight social or political absurdities.
4. **Misleading:** Refers to information that gives the wrong idea or impression. These articles intentionally or unintentionally mislead readers.

After the data gathering procedure, the researchers organized and grouped the articles into codes in the initial and final coding phases. In the initial coding, the researchers used descriptive coding to summarize the articles and their general concepts in a few words. A tabular format of the data was created based on the following criteria: headline, content, author/publisher, social media platform, number of interactions, content, and category in Google sheets. After the data had been categorized, the researchers used content analysis in the final coding. In the final coding, the researchers evaluated the articles collected by determining the common patterns and themes. They based the findings on the tone, content, and warrant of the articles. Furthermore, several themes about the classifications of fake news were identified. Then, the researchers discussed the implications and insights that can be drawn from the analysis of fake news.

Based on the analysis of fake news in the initial coding and final coding, the researchers decoded the underlying themes through content analysis. Hence, the themes were adapted from the acronym on spotting fake news by Griffith University (2020), namely source, patterns, ownership, and timing.

Scope and Limitations

The research aimed to cover the analysis and classification of fake news based on the tone, content, and warrant. It also determined the patterns and themes in the 134 fake news articles. During the 2022 presidential campaign and election period in the Philippines, there was a surge of fake news on social media platforms. As such, the research intended to study fake news articles during the 2022 presidential campaign and election period published on social media platforms from January to December 2022,

fact-checked by VERA Files. Therefore, questions about the perceptions of the receivers of misinformation are beyond the scope of this research.

Results and Discussion

Results

Tone, Content, and Warrant

Tone

Tone in writing refers to the writer's attitude towards the subject matter and audience, conveyed through the choice of words, phrasing, and style of expression (Delfino, 2022). This definition emphasizes the communicative goal of influencing reader perceptions or responses through effective textual communication strategies. As shown in Table 2, the focus of the analysis was on the two leading 2022 presidential candidates, the number of articles written about them, the tone of publicity or appeal to emotion, and the content when analyzing the tone and claims of the articles.

Table 2

Tone of Publicity

| Candidate | Number of Articles | Tone of Publicity | Excerpts from the Articles Posted by VERA Files |
|---|--------------------|----------------------------|---|
| Maria Leonor "Leni" Gerona Robredo | 68 | 66 negative 2 positive | Positive Tone of Publicity: <i>LOOK More than 70 thousand people attended the Robredo-Pangilinan Grand People's Rally at Paglaum Sports Complex, Bacolod City</i> Negative Tone of Publicity: <i>"MaMa LEni Nyo Nagkakat na ng FAKENEWS. Ito ba ang gusto nyo Leader mukhang DESPERADA na ah? #thevoice (Leni's spreading fake news. Is this the leader you want? She looks desperate.)"</i> |
| Ferdinand "Bongbong" Romualdez Marcos Jr. | 66 | 23 negative 43 positive | Positive Tone of Publicity: <i>BONGBONG MARCOS PROMISES FILIPINOS MORE JOBS, PLANS TO OPEN MORE BRANCHES OF KRUSTY KRAB AND EDI SA PUSO MO (IN YOUR HEART).</i> Negative Tone of Publicity: <i>NO DEBATE FOR THE CANDIDATES OF UNITEAM FROM THE PRESIDENT TO COUNCILOR</i> |

Note. Total: 134 articles (89 articles [negative tone] and 45 articles [positive tone])

Most of the articles about Maria Leonor "Leni" Gerona Robredo exhibited a negative tone of publicity, with 66 articles. Examples of this tone include headlines such as "[ROBREDO] SPENT HALF A BILLION PESOS ON ADVERTISEMENTS BUT BEGS FOR DONATIONS TO BUY SARDINES AND RICE FOR THE VICTIMS OF THE TYPHOON" and "There is a screenshot circulating PINKLAWAN WILL CONTROL FB and YT?! HOW TRUE??? I thought Leni Boldero was an advocate of

free speech? Why is there something like this? #LENITUNAYNADICTADOR is the truth?!"

In contrast, the articles about Ferdinand "Bongbong" Romualdez Marcos Jr. predominantly had a positive tone, with 43 articles. Instances of this tone include headlines such as *"LOOK: Oxford University Registrar's Office installed a sign outside their building pertaining to BBM's alleged college degree"* and *"GUINNESS WORLD RECORD LONGEST MOTORCADE BBM."* Overall, 89 articles depicted a negative tone, while only 45 articles showed a positive tone of publicity.

Content

Fake news contains content that engages its targeted audiences for a specific agenda (Huber et al., 2022). Therefore, fake news articles feature text and visual content that provides support or evidence for a claim. The analysis identified various types of misleading content in the fake news articles from the 2022 presidential campaign and election. As shown in Table 3, the articles were categorized as false (66 articles), fake (32 articles), misleading (24 articles), and satire (12 articles). Most of the fake news articles were analyzed as false, revealing untrue information. Specifically, Table 4 shows the nature of these fake news articles. Out of the 134 fake news articles, 34 articles were identified as dubious claims, 30 articles were spliced, altered, misleading, false, or erroneous video, 22 articles were manipulated or fabricated image and text, 15 articles used fake quote cards, 14 articles were out-of-context, 10 articles used false statements, 5 articles contained satire and memes, and 4 articles contained misleading information.

Table 3

Classification of Fake News Articles: What Makes Them Fake?

| Category | Number of Articles | Excerpts from the Articles Posted by VERA Files |
|------------|--------------------|---|
| False | 66 | <i>A video circulating on Facebook (FB) falsely claims that Vice President and presidential aspirant Leni Robredo threatened there would be chaos should she lose in next month's election and that she had an "alliance" with the New People's Army (NPA).</i> |
| Fake | 32 | <i>Netizens are sharing a screenshot of a counterfeit tweet made to look like Vice President Leni Robredo said she will "bring back the Aquino government" if elected president in the May polls</i> |
| Misleading | 24 | <i>A video on Facebook (FB) claims President Ferdinand Marcos was astonished by United States (U.S.) President Joe Biden's shocking decision to "arm" the country with nuclear power. It is misleading. The talks with the U.S. referred to a possible deal on nuclear energy, not weapons.</i> |
| Satire | 12 | <i>On Sept. 11, a TikTok account reposted a fabricated quote card with the text "Wow, maka BBM si Queen Elizabeth" (Wow, Queen Elizabeth supports BBM) and the caption "Queen Elizabeth is for BBM #queenelizabeth2 #londontiktok #MAHARLIKA #PBBM."</i> |

Table 4

Nature of the Fake News Articles

| Nature | Number of Articles | Excerpts from the Articles Posted by VERA Files |
|--|--------------------|--|
| Dubious claims | 34 | <i>A Facebook page exaggerated Vice President Leni Robredo's media presence during a donation event for typhoon victims, minimizing the donated items to "three kilograms of nails, 20 pieces of 2"x2" lumber, and 5 sheets of corrugated GI sheets," while highlighting the number of reporters present.</i> |
| Spliced/altered/ misleading/false/ erroneous video | 30 | <i>A Facebook video falsely suggests that President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos addressed former senator Leila De Lima about her remarks concerning his administration's decision not to rejoin the International Criminal Court (ICC). Published on August 6 by multiple Facebook pages, the video carried the misleading headline: "Just In: matindi Top Duterte Pres Marcos Harap Harapang Sinagot Si Delima Nilantad rappler Fake News (Intense Duterte, Pres Marcos confronted De Lima exposed Rappler fake news)."</i> |
| Manipulated/ fabricated graphics/image and text | 22 | <i>A manipulated photo that shows Vice President Leni Robredo holding up a piece of paper with the text "Bong-Bong MARCOS FOR PRESIDENT" written on it has been circulating online since October last year.</i> |
| Fake quote cards | 15 | <i>A fake quote card of presidential candidate Vice President Leni Robredo about stopping President Rodrigo Duterte's drug war has resurfaced on Facebook. The made-up quote attributed to Robredo read: "Wala akong sinabi na 'ihinto' ang drug war ang sabi ko 'not to continue' (I didn't say 'stop' the drug war, I only said 'not to continue')."</i> |
| Out-of-context content | 14 | <i>On May 10, a Facebook (FB) page posted old photos of a lighted Kuwait Tower to claim that Kuwait celebrated the victory of presumptive president Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. and vice presidential running mate Sara Duterte-Carpio.</i> |
| False statements | 10 | <i>A vlogger claimed that former vice president Leni Robredo admitted there was no electoral fraud during the May 10, 2022 election. "Leni Robredo finally admitted that no electoral fraud happened during the election!" the title of a Dec. 10 video by Facebook page Badong Aratiles claimed.</i> |
| Satire and memes | 6 | <i>Netizens believed a satirical photo supposedly from Vice President Leni Robredo's April 23 grand rally in Pasay City. The original publisher clarified it was intended as a joke. The photo, which first appeared on the day of the rally, showed a large crowd of pink-clad Robredo supporters on Diosdado Macapagal Boulevard. The image was edited to include crowd shapes forming buildings in the background. The caption humorously exaggerated: "WALA NA! FINISH NA! Grabe kayo PASAY! Daog na! Daog na! (It's done! It's finished! You're so great, Pasay! We won! We won!) CROWD ESTIMATE: 90000 Billion Million Thousand People!"</i> |
| Misleading | 3 | <i>A Facebook video used a misleading headline claiming President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. completed the longest bridge in Asia. The video, published on October 18, referred to the 2.16-kilometer-long San Juanico Bridge connecting the Samar and Leyte islands. The misleading headline stated: "WOW! PINAKAMAHABANG TULAY SA ASIA TINAPOS NA NI PBBM GOODJOB! FPRRD SUMALUDO (PBBM HAS FINISHED THE LONGEST BRIDGE IN ASIA! FPRRD SALUTED)!" In reality, the video featured a news report about the October 19 switch-on ceremony of the P80-million San Juanico Bridge Aesthetic Lighting and Sound Project.</i> |

Warrant

Warrant refers to the underlying assumption of how writers use their evidence to support their claims (American Psychological Association, 2023). Furthermore, it can be interpreted by how the writers use their evidence and claim to denounce, promote, or accept information. Based on Table 5, the researchers discovered that out of the 134 articles analyzed, 55 articles were found to aim at denouncing a presidential candidate, 49 articles were found to aim at promoting a presidential candidate, and 30 articles were found to aim at accepting an idea. In summary, this result suggests that the majority of the analyzed articles had political aims and were either promoting or denouncing a particular presidential candidate. Johnson et al. (2018) provided further support for the warrant of the analyzed articles. Their study suggested that false news segments circulated on social media in 2016 concerning political candidates revealed that positive messages were less likely to be present during presidential elections than negative messages. This result implied that the pervasiveness of fake news items that tried to disparage political candidates, as seen in the evaluated research publications, is a typical pattern in the dissemination of incorrect information (Johnson et al., 2018).

Table 5**Warrant**

| Classification | Number of Articles | Excerpts from the Articles Posted by VERA Files |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|--|
| Denouncing an idea or statement | 55 | <i>Netizens are sharing a doctored tweet falsely attributing a statement to Vice President Leni Robredo, claiming she plans to “bring back the Aquino government” if elected president in the upcoming May elections. A reverse image search revealed that the image accompanying the fake tweet, showing Robredo with Aquino, was originally published by the Philippine Star on Aug. 22, 2018, taken the day before during the commemoration of Ninoy Aquino’s 35th death anniversary. On Feb. 7, Twitter user @OrmanPogi also posted the manipulated image with the caption: “Thank you #MaDumb for reinforcing my resolve not to vote for you! #NeverAgainNoynoying.”</i> |
| Promoting an idea or statement | 49 | <i>Jay Sonza misled people by using a photo from a different event in a Facebook (FB) post congratulating the supposed 412,000 attendees at Vice President Leni Robredo’s April 23 #ArawNa10To! rally in Pasay City. The photo he shared was actually taken at a rally in Mandaue City, Cebu on April 21. Despite the rally in Pasay being held on a long stretch of road, Sonza’s photo showed an open field with sparse attendance. Some netizens criticized Sonza for misleading the public, as the location and attendance figures did not align with reality. The post received significant engagement, with 17,000 reactions, 3,300 comments, and 736 shares as of April 27. A reverse image search confirmed that the photo Sonza used was originally from the “CeBoom! Cebu Grand People’s Rally 2.0” for Robredo on April 21.</i> |
| Accepting an idea or statement | 30 | <i>A quote card showing a fictional Saudi princess allegedly praising presidential aspirant Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr was shared on Facebook. This is fake. The lady in the photo is not a Saudi princess but a former porn actress.</i> <i>The featured quote of a certain “Ameera Nasir Khalifa” read: “I, the Princess of Saudi, would like to express my support to Bongbong</i> |

Marcos because he is a visionary leader. I hope someday I will met [sic] him. His bashers are the worst citizens in his country."

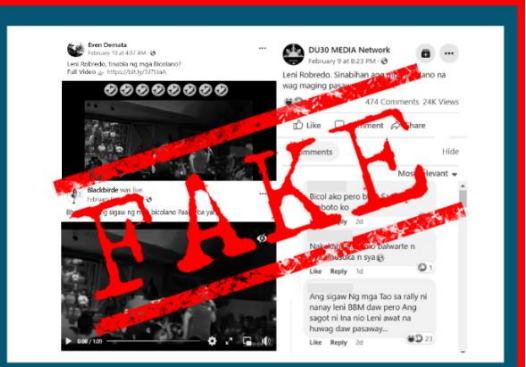

Concepts and Themes

Source

The source of the analyzed articles in the research was primarily social media platforms, with Facebook being the top platform where fake news articles were published. Out of the 134 analyzed fake news articles, 108 were published on Facebook, 30 on YouTube, 21 on TikTok, and 6 on Twitter. Some fake news articles were published on 2 social media platforms. The findings revealed that social media platforms play a significant role in spreading fake news and misinformation. Furthermore, the findings shown in Table 6 align with the study of Guess et al. (2020), which concluded that Facebook remained the primary source of false information during the 2016 and 2020 US presidential elections.

Table 6

Platforms and Number of Published Articles

| Platform | Number of Published Articles | Sample Photos Posted by VERA Files |
|----------|------------------------------|--|
| Facebook | 108 |  |
| YouTube | 30 |  |

TikTok 21



Twitter 6



Patterns

The study observed language patterns from the excerpts of fake news articles and posts. As depicted in Table 7, 44 used capitalized words, 9 had grammatical errors, 5 had excessive and inappropriate use of punctuation marks, and 8 used a combination of the three mentioned observations. The findings align with the study of Horne and Adalı (2017), claiming that fake news follows a pattern, such as using long and capitalized headlines.

Table 7

Language Conventions

| Classification | Number of Articles | Excerpts from the Articles Posted by VERA Files |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|---|
| Capitalized words | 44 | <i>GUMASTOS NG KALAHATING BILYONG PISO SA ADVERTISEMENT PERO PAMBILI NG SARDINAS AT BIGAS PARA SA BIKTIMA NG BAGYO HUMIHINGI NG DONASYON</i> <i>Translation: [ROBREDO] SPENT HALF A BILLION PESOS ON ADVERTISEMENTS BUT BEGS FOR DONATIONS TO BUY SARDINES AND RICE FOR THE VICTIMS OF THE TYPHOON</i> |
| Grammatical errors | 9 | <i>Just In : Malacanang Goodnews Pres Bbm Naia Papalitan Na Atty.gadon Pinakita Ebdensya Dilawan Iyak</i> <i>Translation: Just In : Malacanang Goodnews Pres Bbm Naia will be replaced Atty.gadon showed evidence Dilawan cried</i> |
| Excessive and inappropriate use | 5 | <i>Panay puna nyo sa pagsuot ng barong ni PBBM...pinuna nyo ba suot ng Ina nyo naka see through nung nagpunta sya sa Middle</i> |

| | | |
|-----------------------------|---|---|
| of punctuation marks | | <i>East na very conservative country</i> |
| | | <i>Translation: You guys keep criticizing PBBM for wearing barong... did you criticize your Mother wearing see through clothes when she went to the Middle East which is a very conservative country??...</i> |
| Combination of two or three | 8 | <p><i>May kumakalat na screenshot na KOKONTROLIN NG PINKLAWAN ang FB at YT?! HOW TRUE??? Akala ko ba advocate si Leni Boldero ng free speech? Bakit may ganto? #LENITUNAYNADICTADOR pala ang totoo?!</i></p> <p><i>Translation: There is a screenshot circulating PINKLAWAN WILL CONTROL FB and YT?! HOW TRUE??? I thought Leni Boldero was an advocate of free speech? Why is there something like this? #LENITUNAYNADICTADOR is the truth?!</i></p> |

Aside from the language conventions, the researchers also analyzed patterns regarding the write-ups of fake news articles and posts. The study supports the findings of Igwebuiké and Chimuanya (2021) on fake news containing logical fallacies as a form of deception. As presented in Table 8, some of the selected fake news articles depicted several types of logical fallacies.

Table 8

Logical Fallacies in Selected Articles

| Logical Fallacy | Headline | Excerpts from the Articles Posted by VERA Files |
|--|--|---|
| Ad hominem (directed against a person rather than a person's position) | <i>PRES. MARCOS JR. PLEADS SUCS TO INVITE HIM AS KEYNOTE GUEST SPEAKER FOR GRADUATION RITES</i> | <p><i>A satire posted on Facebook (FB) made netizens believe that President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. “pleaded” with state universities and colleges (SUCs) to invite him as the keynote speaker in their commencement ceremonies.</i></p> <p><i>While some in the comments section asked for proof, many netizens took the post at face value, ridiculing the president for his “uninspiring” educational background as a college dropout.</i></p> |
| Red herring (using an argument to mislead or distract an audience) | <p><i>Akala ko ba malinis ang record.Parang SOGO daw. So clean So Good..</i></p> <p><i>Translation: I thought she (Leni Robredo) has a clean Record. Just like SOGO. So clean So Good..</i></p> | <p><i>For the third time this year, netizens have revived a two-year-old 24 Oras news report about the charges filed against Vice President Leni Robredo in 2019 to insinuate that she does not have a “clean record.” But the circulating posts mislead: it excludes the fact that the charges have already been dismissed.</i></p> |
| Causal fallacy (making an incorrect conclusion without any proof) | <p><i>“Pag ang ulan tumila tapos biglang umaraw climate change na iyun. Iyun na ang climate change. Kaya huwag natin gawing biro kung di naman tayo seryoso.”</i></p> <p><i>Translation: “When the rain stops pouring then the sun suddenly shines, that’s climate change. That is climate change. So let’s not make fun of it when we are not serious.”</i></p> | <p><i>A TikTok video wrongly claims former vice president Leni Robredo made a simplistic definition of climate change. Posted on Sept. 28, the TikTok video shows a quote card supposedly of Robredo describing climate change as merely a change in weather. She was named “Leni ‘Angat’ Robredo” in the graphic, alluding to her Angat Buhay Foundation.</i></p> |
| Appeal to hypocrisy (hypocritical or pointing out a) | <i>Panay puna nyo sa pagsuot ng barong ni PBBM...pinuna nyo ba suot ng Ina nyo naka see through nung nagpunta sya sa Middle East na very conservative country</i> | <i>Several social media posts claim former vice president Leni Robredo dressed inappropriately when she supposedly met with officials in the Middle East. These are false.</i> |

contradictory behavior)

Translation: You guys keep criticizing PBBM for wearing barong... did you criticize your Mother wearing see through clothes when she went to the Middle East which is a very conservative country??...

Posted on Nov. 14, two Twitter posts featured a photo collage of Robredo wearing an olive green below-the-knee lace dress over a gray slip. Two frames in the collage zoom in on her outfit.

Ownership

The study found that the publishers of fake news had distinct characteristics. Based on the data presented in Table 9, the account names of the publishers of fake news articles and posts contain words that are associated with news and the two leading candidates during the 2022 Philippine presidential campaign and election period. Specifically, 58 had account names with words related to news, 39 had account names related to Marcos Jr., and 5 had account names related to Robredo. The findings of the study support the prior study of Gelfert (2018)—revealing that “fake news websites typically mimic the “look and feel” of mainstream sources to garner credibility” (p. 91). Therefore, the result showed that the account names of publishers who had words related to news such as *balita* or news updates, daily, viral, and television, impersonate credible media and sources as a form of tactic for deception. Furthermore, the results imply that the political and partisan motives of the source of the fake news articles were predominant, with a particular bias in favor of Marcos Jr.

Table 9

Publishers of Fake News

| Classification | Number of Publishers |
|---|----------------------|
| Account names with words related to news (<i>balita</i> or news, updates, daily, viral, <i>showbiz</i> , and TV) | 58 |
| Account names related to Marcos Jr. | 39 |
| Account names related to Robredo | 5 |

Timing

Fake news on social media platforms is often related to the surge of political bias, perception, and propaganda (Igwebuikie & Chimuanya, 2021; Michael & Breaux, 2021; van der Linden et al., 2020). Therefore, fake news is usually rampant during political elections and campaigns. With the data gathered from the 2022 presidential campaign and election period from January to December 2022, the timeliness of fake news is evident, as there were 134 news articles about the presidential candidates. Furthermore, fake news about previous political issues resurfaced during the time frame. The researchers also observed how fake news articles and posts appeared and resurfaced near crucial dates or events such as presidential interviews, campaign rallies, election periods, global occurrences, and rising political issues, proving that fake news is indeed timely and rampant during political campaigns and elections.

Discussion

The researchers analyzed 134 verified fake news by VERA files from different publishers on various platforms, including Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, and Twitter. Based on the results, 89 out of 134 articles showed a negative tone, while 45 out of 134 articles showed a positive tone of publicity. Positive publicity happens when candidates focus on their strengths, while negative publicity criticizes the opponent's weaknesses. Therefore, having a positive or negative tone may influence the publicity of political candidates (Burlington Press, 2022). Furthermore, the content of fake news is classified into different natures. The findings showed that 66 articles were categorized under "false," and 34 had the intention of presenting dubious claims. Aside from the mentioned category and nature with the most numbers, the articles were also categorized as fake, misleading, and satirical news. Aside from having dubious claims, the articles also contained spliced, altered, erroneous, or false video, manipulated, fabricated, false, or inaccurate image and text, fake quote cards, out-of-context content, false statements, satire and memes, and misleading information. With these findings, the study agrees with the claim of Desai and Oehrli (2022)—pointing out that fake news contains inaccurate information and is fabricated through unverified facts, texts, images, sources, or quotes. The findings also showed that fake news sections are frequently written to promote or denounce political politicians, with Facebook as their main distribution channel. Furthermore, the findings revealed a format and pattern of the headlines containing capitalized headlines and captions, similar to the claim of Horne and Adalı (2017). According to their research, only a handful of publishers are responsible for the majority of false news pieces, which suggests that combating the issue of fake news necessitates a focused and all-encompassing strategy that targets the underlying reasons for this phenomenon. Additionally, the fake news publishers had account names with words related either to news or to the candidates, while the timing of their posts surfaced during political events.

With the findings of the study, it highly emphasizes how important media literacy abilities are for assisting individuals in identifying and avoiding false news sources. Media literacy interventions can be successful in assisting people to better recognize and evaluate false news items—which supports these implications (Johnson et al., 2020). Hence, interventions that emphasize honing people's critical thinking abilities can be successful in halting the spread of false information (Tandoc et al., 2019). Therefore, the study underscores how crucial it is for people to understand critical media and news literacies to identify and avoid false news information.

Conclusion

While fake news may be pre-categorized, the study emphasizes the crucial process of evaluating false information. Knowing how fake news is fabricated and manipulated, specifically in claims, texts, images, videos, quotes, screenshots, and other sources, is essential, especially when fake news is rampant during political events and other occurrences in the digital age. Undoubtedly, analyzing fake news can elicit critical thinking, which is essential in media and news literacies. Determining the implications of fake news also allows individuals (as consumers of media) to practice their literacy skills.

English language learners and the general public must possess the skills to critically evaluate the reliability of sources and conduct thorough analyses of media messages. This capability is crucial in today's information-rich environment, where misinformation and biased reporting can easily influence perceptions and decisions. Critical media and news literacies play a vital role in language teaching and learning by equipping learners to discern between credible and unreliable sources, assess the validity of information presented in various media forms, and understand the underlying biases or intentions behind media messages. Integrating critical media literacy into language education fosters language proficiency and critical thinking skills that are essential for navigating a globalized world. Educators can empower learners to question, verify, and interpret media content effectively, enabling them to become informed and discerning information consumers. By teaching media analysis and source evaluation strategies, language learners gain the tools to engage critically with diverse perspectives, strengthen their understanding of language nuances, and develop a broader cultural and social awareness. Incorporating critical media literacy into language teaching could encourage learners to approach language acquisition or learning not just as a linguistic endeavor but also as a means to navigate and understand the complexities of the information landscape, promoting informed citizenship and active participation in the society.

Given the prevalence of fake news in the digital era, people should know how to know the difference between reliable and misleading information. These abilities are necessary for participation in conversations, debates, and other forms of discourse where false information might spread. Therefore, English language education should prioritize the development of media and news literacy skills to equip learners to navigate the complexities of the media landscape. In today's interconnected world, where information is abundant and often accessed through multiple digital platforms, the ability to critically analyze media content and discern credible sources is essential. Emphasizing media and news literacies in language education empowers learners to effectively evaluate the reliability of information, identify biases, and understand the persuasive techniques used in media messages.

In language learning and education, media and news literacies are crucial to the learning of the young generation because they are part of the digital age and digitally-driven world. Hence, social media consumers, children and adults, must acquire skills in fact-checking to reduce the consumption of fake news, misinformation, and disinformation. Furthermore, fact-checking, together with media and news literacies, could aid social media users in critically assessing false information using several credible sources and knowing how to reverse image search, texts, and videos. At the same time, the researchers urge policymakers and social media companies to play a major role in tightening laws and regulations to stop the spread of fake news. Additionally, raising public awareness of the dangers and repercussions of disseminating false information, particularly its ability to undermine democratic processes, organizations, and people should be heightened. The research aims to propose practical strategies that develops critical thinking among the public, especially Filipino social media users. These strategies involve advocating for educational initiatives that equip individuals with the skills to discern misinformation, critically evaluate media sources, and make informed decisions. By fostering media literacy and

promoting responsible media consumption practices, language teachers empower individuals to navigate today's complex information landscape confidently and accurately. This proactive approach seeks to reduce the spread and influence of fake news and aims to cultivate a more informed and engaged society. Lastly, all future researchers who can study the effects of fake news consumption on learners, assess the level of media and news literacies of students and teachers, and explore the fact-checking processes of individuals must consider pursuing this area of research.

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Declaration of Ownership

The authors of this study declare that this paper is their own and original work.

Conflict of Interest

The authors of this study declare that the paper has no conflict of interest.

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