

THE AWARENESS OF FAKE NEWS PHENOMENON THROUGH INFORMATION LITERACY COMPETENCY IN SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES (SNS)

Arlyssa Lim, Wan Ab Kadir Wan Dollah & Safawi Abdul Rahman

Faculty of Information Management,
Universiti Teknologi MARA Selangor Branch,
Puncak Perdana Campus, 40150 Shah Alam, Selangor.

E-mail: lyssa1993lim@gmail.com

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Abstract: This study examines the relationship between Information Literacy (IL) competency and fake news phenomenon in Social Networking Sites (SNS). Data for this study has been collected from the Coursework Master level students of Faculty of Information Management (FIM) in UITM Campus Puncak Perdana by using a simple random sampling method with a total sample data of 97 respondents. The data was analyzed using SPSS version 25 and SmartPLS 3.0. The results indicated that the relationship between IL competency and fake news phenomenon in SNS is significant. On the other hand, the findings found that the level of IL competency of Coursework Master level students of FIM in UITM Campus Puncak Perdana is high. Although facing several limitations, this research makes quite a several contributions and this study has provided evidence on the relationship between IL competency and fake news phenomenon in SNS, which suggests that the IL approach will be a great alternative in addressing the fake news phenomenon.

Keywords: *Digital Age, Social Networking Sites (SNS), Fake News, Information Literacy*

1.0 Introduction

Internet, the greatest inventions brought by the digital age allows omnipresent communication to convey an ample amount of information freely and rapidly. Consequence, enriching lives, propelling progress, and transforming the industries. It does make ease our life, however, it had deliberately conquered the society and threaten our very existence which slowly turn us into a technology slave. All of a sudden, information is just one click away from us rather than residing in physical books. With just an effortless click, we can easily arrive at Google – the library without a wall. There is no doubt that life with technology does harness our Information & Communications Technology (ICT) skills, yet there is no guarantee that we will become more critical in handling the sea of information that is produced every day.

The digital age has led to the rapid advancement of Social Networking Sites (SNS) as the “instantaneous information one-stop center” which grant their users with freedom of thoughts and expression that turn everyone into the digital content producer and digital information consumer (Penzhorn, 2013). Thus, not all of the information available in SNS are reliable, anyone can edit, alter, or even fabricate it into fake news to deceive others. But still, the majority prefer SNS in their information acquisition which has interrupted the traditional approaches. Some studies stated that Malaysian do not apply their proficiency in computer and technological skills for critical reading, evaluation, and analysis of digital contents before making use of the information from the Web. Instead, they are not critical towards acquired information by simply access and download the digital content. This is supported with the study of the online activities and writing practices of urban Malaysian teenagers which proved that they contemplate the Internet as one of their primary source of information and they are more interested in information sources derived from SNS such as Facebook and Twitter (Kok, Ng, & Kim, 2010).

Behind all the convenience brought by the digital age, it left behind those who are illiterate and less tech-savvy having difficulty coping with Internet advancement. Not only they started to feel extremely tired from the continual exertion that needed to catch up with the technology, the fact that fake news transmitted rapidly than real news (Silverman, 2016) in SNS, do make their life even suffer. Even a digital native who grew up in the information-drenched online world facing difficulty in assessing the information sources' credibility or even comprehend the most basic concepts of detaching paid advertising from objective journalist reporting, what else can an illiterate person do to get a piece of the right information. Countless initiatives do accomplish concerning legislation and technological measures, yet still, we need to arm with the essential skills to avoid falling into the fake news trap. Most importantly, we must continually hold onto the principle of validation and verification above velocity and virality; quality above quantity. In this context, the Information Literacy (IL) competency approach that equips a person with critical thinking skills and educates appropriate measures on information handling will be a possible choice in counteracting the fake news phenomenon.

This study aims to clarify the relationship between IL competency and fake news phenomenon in SNS where it explores the following research questions: Is the level IL competency of Coursework Master level students of FIM in UITM Campus Puncak Perdana significantly high? Is the relationship significant between IL competency and fake news phenomenon in SNS? Numerous researches had been conducted in foreign countries and it is proved that an information literate individual is more capable to comprehend between right information and fake news. This can helps in lowering the probability of the dispersion of fake news across a country. Hence, it is a must to identify whether the IL competency level of Malaysian students is significant enough in combating the fake news phenomenon.

This paper is organized as follows. The next section presents the literature about the digital age, SNS, fake news, initiatives in dealing with fake news, IL competency, and lastly the IL competency approach in dealing with fake news. A conceptual framework and hypotheses are also developed based on the finding in prior studies. In Section 3.0, the research methodology that is adopted in this study will be discussed. The following Section 4.0 will presents the results of the study. Next, Section 5.0 presents the discussion on the contributions and limitations of the study. The last section 6.0 will conclude this paper.

2.0 Literature Review

The literature relating to the subject of the study inclusive of the digital age, Social Networking Sites (SNS), fake news, initiatives in dealing with fake news, Information Literacy (IL) competency, and IL competency approach in dealing with fake news.

2.1 Digital Age

Digital age or also known as the 3rd Industrial Revolution started somewhere in the 1980s. Since then, a rapid succession of digital innovations has taken over the marketplace (Malter & Rindfleisch, 2019). Every sector has “get hit” with this digital tsunami which leads to the creation of a knowledge-based society that is surrounded by a high technology global economy. The impact of the digital age was proved by Gupta (2018) who traces the key stages of digital revolution from early e-commerce (e.g. Amazon), to ultimate information search (e.g. Google), then Social Networking Sites (e.g. Facebook) and mobile devices (e.g. Apple) and the emerging of Internet of Things (IoT) which link all the smart home devices and appliances to each other and the Internet in his study. The influence of the digital age also reflected in the inventions of robotic personal assistants with the emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) and consumer self-manufacturing via 3D printers that offering us with daily digital experience, which seem to be pure science fiction a relatively short time ago (Ratchford, 2019). All these transformations have been rapidly evolved especially in the developing countries which leaped the earlier stages and fast-forwarded straight to digital.

The introduction of the Internet was the starting point where fast and ubiquitous communication allows a vast amount of information to be transferred freely and rapidly. Using the internet, people consume

news anytime, anywhere, and through any devices which forcing the news organization to undergo the digital transformation into a mobile-first strategy (Wu, 2018). Kudos to the Internet, with just a single “click”, any news that we desired will be displayed on the screen. The Internet allows easy online information retrieval; recording, storing, and retrieval of daily activities. Life indeed has become more convenient and easier with the assistance of internet technology.

2.2 Social Networking Sites (SNS)

The digital age has greatly removed many of the hurdles to social networks worldwide with the increasingly available and accessible personal computers, widespread Internet, and access to mobile devices. As social networks have deliberately become a part of our life, it resulting in the rapid growth of Social Networking Sites (SNS). SNS platforms have surged in popularity, in alignment with the absurd growth of mobile phone technology (Global Agenda Council on Social Media, 2016). Significantly, SNS is no longer about communication, it has triggered the evolution from desktop browser-based interactions to an information-sharing system which driven by application experiences on mobile devices. As a result, the future experiences in the digital sphere was influenced by mobile technology’s brisk advancement and SNS’s evolution from communication to service provider, as well as by battles over how information is retrieved, shared, and transmitted. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Wikipedia, LinkedIn, WhatApps, and Telegram are among the most popular SNS to be named. The development of Social Networking Sites (SNS) indicates that millions of people spend most of their daily activities in SNSs (Bigot and Croutte, 2014; EU Kids Online, 2014; Hampton et al, 2011; Lenhart, 2015). The huge number of users implies that SNS has become a critical platform for information sharing and exchange.

Aside from serving as information sources, entertainment, and social interplay at a global scale, SNS has been castigated for serving as the passage of misinformation. This was supported by Bessi (2017) who stated that SNS continues to devote to the rapid transmission of user-generated information which inclusive of hoaxes, false claims, fabricated news, and conspiracy theory. Things will become more chaotic when it associates with participation and political engagement. During the election period, most countries are facing a mutual problem due to the real-time “free” communication, within and across communities in SNS that resulting in seismic shifts in terms of protest movement and revolutions. Kudos to SNS, politically fabricated news can easily be circulated in the community with just a click on the “share” button which enables a political party to effortlessly influence the public opinion in gaining their vote and support which may bring harm to the election result as overall.

Moreover, the proliferation of SNS platforms and the ability of information to circulate rapidly within minutes when it is continuously shared and re-shared on various SNS platforms, which enable the wider reach of a global audience, have brought positive and negative impact at the same time towards a community. For instance, during an emergency crisis or natural disaster, SNS can serve well as an instantaneous platform for information retrieving and sharing which assists in transforming the shared information into formulating community action that allows search and rescue process to take place. This is helpful regardless of the victims, community, and authorities in counteracting the crisis. However, there is no guarantee that all the shared information is reliable in SNS, which is known as the conduit for misinformation. If fake news rather than real news is share across SNS, it may create a fake hope for those victims who are waiting to be rescued from a disaster and it can be even worst with the existence of opportunist who taking advantage of the victims’ calamity to seek for a donation which ends up going to their pocket. This showed how vicious can a piece of fake news be in turning the action plan into a total disaster.

2.3 Fake News

Presently, fake news occupied the SNS and become a global issue. Fake news is a kind of fabricated news that is created with the purpose of financial, political, destructive, and entertainment, which may mislead people due to false judgment. It may also be referred to as the misinformation that is untrue and erroneous which may occasionally be generated as honest mistakes (Walsh, 2010). Honest mistakes may inclusive of wrong information shared by real journalists or credible mainstream media outlets that give them a sense of authenticity (Schifferees et al., 2014) which can deceive people. Whilst

misinformation is created when a sender potentially misinforms the receiver by maneuver the way the latter construe the realization of an information structure features naturally in other settings (Hao and Li, 2013). Compare to misinformation, disinformation is another type of fake news that has become a concern nowadays. Regardless of individuals or institutions, who intentionally deceive the information consumers for their bad intentions such as altering the public belief or policies to fulfill certain purposes, may produce disinformation which eventually brings about direct or indirect damage to those who believe it (Fetzer, 2004). With the nature of SNS that allows everyone to become a content creator and consumer, worsen by the “believe blindly” attitude of most of the SNS users, there is no doubt information searching will become a challenging task in no time.

Apart from that, the term “fake news”, popularised by US President Donald Trump, became prevailing during the 2016 USA election campaign when hundreds of websites published falsified and heavily biased stories. During that time, the US National Public Radio (NPR) has tracked down a fake news creator who has to manipulate SNS for political engagement by creating fabricated news which got masses of traffic and shares over many websites (Sydell, 2016). Although the motives remained unknown, it is obviously for profit-making or for the intention of persuading the public confidence towards a political party. Fake and purposely fabricated news get meaningful attention and interaction on SNS rather than real news (Bessi, 2017). This situation is harmful to a democratic country where the public vote can easily be assured by just a tiny twist from the real news. A people voted the government will eventually turn into a corrupted government. The misfortunes caused by fake news that not just restricted to the social circumstances, but also expand in political and economic aspects, has become one of the global problems that are being faced by many countries. This has caused many countries to establish an abundance of initiatives in dealing with fake news.

2.4 Initiatives in Dealing with Fake News

The alarming concern of fake news in Social Networking Sites (SNS) has struck most of the global countries which forced them to come out with many initiatives to counteract the dispersion of fake news phenomena. One of the most common initiatives that had been implemented globally is the enactment of legislation which enables sanctions on SNS that disperse fake news, by imposing fines and ordering the deletion of the false information (The Law Library of Congress, 2019). It is also can be seen that in terms of technological initiatives, most of the SNS platforms have a “flag” button which enables the users to flag the posts that bringing misinformation (Akpan, 2016) and a “report” button which allow users to alert on the content that is abusive, illegal or offensive. Furthermore, more fact-checking resources are also being introduced by the government to enable the public to verify the reliability of the resources. For instance, “real news” sourced from government agencies and state-owned media are only circulated by a government online platform named “Piyao” which means “refuting rumors” to fight fake news in China (Qiu & Woo, 2018). Whilst in an educational perspective, Sweden had introduced a famous cartoon character named Bamse to teach the children in regards to the dangers of fake news (Roden, 2017) and a media literacy campaign was launched by the US Embassy in Kenya to stop the transmission of fake news (U.S Embassy in Kenya, 2018).

Several initiatives have been in place in Malaysia against fake news as this phenomenon is one of the local issues. Based on the statistics of the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC), more than 1000 fake news has been circulated in Malaysia (Bernama, 2017b). This is rather alarming especially when public safety is at stake which stimulates the Malaysian government to establish the Anti-Fake News Act 2018 and Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984 (PPPA) that has been applied extraterritorially as the national approach in dealing with fake news. PPPA has made it compulsory for a printing press used to apply for licensing and forbidden the use of printing presses for unlawful purposes (Laws of Malaysia, 2012). Aside from having the MCMC website as one of the fake news combating platforms, the “Sebenarnya.my” portal which also available in the form of a smartphone application was launched to allow the public to analyze the credibility of the news disseminate through SNS (The Star, 2017). This portal not only actively publishes a variety of fact-checking articles and statements on the circulated online information, but users may also report on the widely used fake news by submitting the fake news URL and contents through the portal. Furthermore, there are also a total of 561 fake news awareness programs that had been held through 18 strategic

partners and awareness campaigns conducted through public service announcements that broadcast on television and radio (MCMC, 2017). Nonetheless, although all the initiatives are appropriate means against the fake news, still more initiatives need to be devised including information literacy in dealing with both local and global issues.

2.5 Information Literacy (IL) Competency

Information literacy circumscribes the knowledge of one's information concerns and needs and also the ability to identify, locate, evaluate, organize and effectively create, use and communicate information to address issues or problems arise (Information Literacy Meeting of Experts, 2003). An information literate person will be able to apply their research skill in retrieving the right information from a sea of information and incorporate it into their knowledge base. There are many worldwide distinct definitions of competency (Alberta Education, 2010) where one of them is the combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that suitable to the context (European Communities, 2007). The terms skill and competency might often be used interchangeably but they are not identical. When information literacy combines with competency, it becomes a possession of the related knowledge, skills, and attitudes to effectively apply information technology to collect, analyze, assess, organize and synthesize information for problem-solving and decision making (Wen & Shih, 2008). As most people trust more on the online resources they read in this modern media environment, being able to retrieve information (information seeking), communicate it (information sharing), and critically evaluate it (information verification), has become a set of vital competencies need to be possessed.

There have been several theoretical models being proposed in describing the necessary competencies expected from an information literate individual (Anunobi & Udem, 2014). Among them is the three popular models: SCONUL's Seven Pillars of Information Literacy model, the Big 6 information literacy skill model, and Doyle's attribute of information literate person. However, only the Big 6 information literacy skill model propounded by Eisenberg and Berkowitz (1990) will be emphasized as it is described as a systematic information behavior (Bruce, 2004) which explains the processes undergo by an individual to accomplish the competencies in becoming information literate. Thomas (2004) noted that the Big 6 skills approach ties cognitive levels (Bloom, 1956) to various stages of the information process by identifying needs (knowledge level); relating the resources to the problem aspects (comprehensive level); selecting channels and sources (application level); identifying pertinent elements within and across information sources (analysis level); restructuring and communicating information (synthesis level); and making judgments on the information gained on specific needs (evaluation level). By including all these levels in the information retrieval activity, it will be beneficial in dealing with fake news rather than just depends on the government initiatives itself.

2.6 Information Literacy (IL) Competency Approach in Dealing with Fake News

The vast amount of information and the rapid pace of news production and distribution has become challenges in this digital age. However, it is not a big deal for an information literate individual to identify the relevant elements within an information source with his analytical skill rather than believe it "blindly". It is proved that a deficiency of clear valid sources and critical skills in fact-checking has developed a perfect rush for misinformation (Breland, 2020). With the worst circumstance nowadays: opportunistic fictions can be mistaken as standards-based journalism; politicians and pundits seeking to discredit news reports they disagree with and, sometimes, to delegitimize the press itself; the difficulty in differentiating fact and opinion, information literacy competency has become more essential than ever. These circumstances may pose a real threat to our societies when it comes to the issue of stock price fluctuations (Rapoza, 2017) which leads to economic consequences; political complications such as in the 2016 US election (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017); and Ebola (Oyeyemi, Gabarron & Wynn, 2017) which leads to health emergencies and crises. Lately, some are describing the current Covid-19 pandemic as 'the first huge pandemic of the social media age' (Ko, 2020). Anyhow, the public safety will not be threatened by all those circumstances provided that we have information literacy competency as our "shield". With fake news transmit faster than real news across SNS, even the government legislation and "report" button will not be enough to refrain the dispersion of fake news. Contrarily, better judgment and critical evaluation of information sources will do the job.

It can be seen that nowadays through SNS, we are “feed” with decontextualized news sources which often deprived details about information production. It will eventually leave those who lack information literacy competency in verifying the credibility of the source susceptible to fake news deception. It is worth noting that information literacy competency is positively associated with fake news (Jang, 2019). This is because information literacy competency is not only about being critical towards information sources by evaluating all the elements of it and relate to our needs, instead, it is also associated with our attitude in synthesizing the information sources. Whenever there is viral news circulated among the community, there are responsibilities that need to be carried out by the news creator and news spreader. The news creator will need to know the whole circumstances of the situation before reporting on news, while a news spreader needs to check on the reliability of the news sources before share it with others. If both parties have neglected their responsibilities and treated themselves as “ordinary” information users who only digest as much as information they needed blindly, there will be no ending for the fake news issue. With the advancement of technology nowadays where the production and dispersion of dubious news are easier than before, we need even more advance, comprehensive, and in-depth education on information literacy competency (Jang, 2019). Thus, government legislation and technological measures are not sufficient to ensure public security, still, IL competency will be a great alternative in combating the fake news phenomenon.

2.7 Conceptual Framework

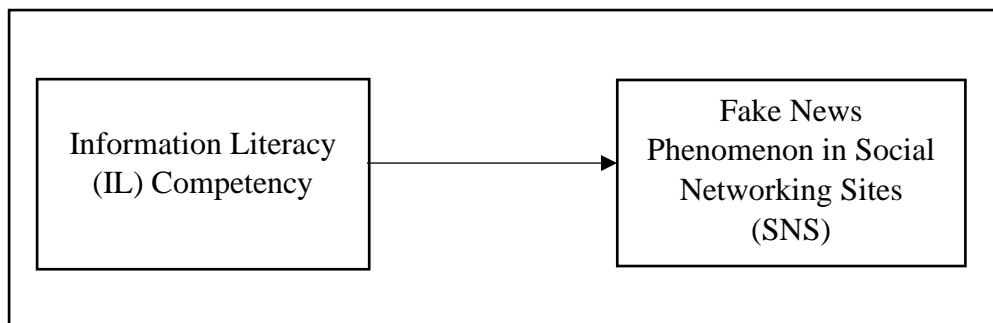


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework of the fake news phenomenon is developed from the review of related literature. Figure 1 shows that there is a relationship between Information Literacy (IL) competency (Independent Variable) and fake news phenomenon in Social Networking Sites (SNS) (Dependent Variable). Prior studies (Lor, 2017); (Walsh, 2010); (Rayess et al., 2017); (Delellis & Rubin, 2019); (Jang, 2019); and (Smith & McMenemy, 2017) have indicated that the relationship between IL competency and fake news phenomenon is significant. The following hypotheses are proposed:-

H1. The level of Information Literacy (IL) competency of Coursework Master level students of Faculty of Information Management (FIM) in UITM Campus Puncak Perdana is high.

H2. The relationship between Information Literacy (IL) competency and fake news phenomenon in SNS is significant.

3.0 Methodology

To test the proposed hypotheses, a survey study was conducted online. The questionnaire was made up of a title page and three sections: Section 1, demographic information; Section 2, Information Literacy Scale; and Section 3: fake news identification, ended with comments and suggestions section. The research population involved in this study was Coursework Master level students of Faculty of Information Management (FIM) in UITM Campus Puncak Perdana. A pilot study was first carried out with nine participants in May 2020. Then an additional 225 participants were recruited and 97 qualifying responses were finally analyzed for hypotheses testing using statistical technique of Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 and Smart Partial Least Squares (PLS) 3.0. PLS-SEM approach was mainly used as this study imply theory confirmation with small sample size

involved non-normal data distribution, both of which are conditions that fit the use of PLS rather than SPSS.

4.0 Results

Before hypotheses testing, cross-tabulations of academic course program and IL competency level which involves the elements of information seeking, information verification, and information sharing were tested for the *H1* (see Table 1 for complete results). To test the *H2*, the PLS-SEM approach was adopted using SmartPLS 3.0. Measurement model assessment was first conducted to evaluate the validity and reliability of the measurement model for the study followed by a structural model to evaluate methodically either the hypotheses expressed by the structural model are supported by the data.

Table 1: Measurement Instruments of H1

| IL Competency | Items | Response (%) |
|---------------------------------|--|--------------|
| Information Seeking | I can apply my research skill in information seeking when using SNS. | 68.0 |
| | I can evaluate the relationships between pieces of information I found in information seeking when using SNS. | 86.6 |
| Information Sharing | I often share information from a trusted source and highly believable sites in SNS. | 64.9 |
| | I often share information to allow the exchange of opinions and discussion on the specific topic in the timeline through SNS. | 53.6 |
| Information Verification | I can evaluate the source of information to examine the website's credibility in SNS. | 78.4 |
| | I often address the essential verification questions of "what, how, why, and who" in verifying the reliability of information source in SNS. | 71.2 |

4.1 Measurement Model Assessment

Two constructs were measured and specified as latent variables in the model: information literacy competency and fake news phenomenon. In PLS, measurement model assessment was evaluated in terms of internal consistency reliability, indicator reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Results indicated that the reliability and validity tests carried out on the measurement model are all satisfactory which indicates that the measurement model for the study is valid and appropriate to predict the parameters in the structural model.

4.2 Structural Model

Following Measurement Model Assessment, *H2* was tested in a structural model. *H2* predicted a positive relationship of IL competency on fake news phenomenon. Results showed significant at least at the level of 0.05, have expected sign directions (i.e., positive), and consist of a path coefficient value (β) of 0.000. Therefore, *H2* was supported. Table 2 presents the results of *H2* testing.

Table 2: Results of H2 Testing

| Relationship | Standard Deviation | T-Values | P-Values | Decision |
|--|--------------------|----------|----------|-----------|
| IL Competency -> Fake news phenomenon in SNS | 0.057 | 14.496 | 0.000 | Supported |

5.0 Discussion

This study examined the relationship between IL competency and fake news phenomenon in SNS. Specifically, this study proposed and examined the antecedents and outcomes of IL competency towards fake news phenomenon in SNS among the Coursework Master level students of FIM in UITM Campus Puncak Perdana. Survey results showed that the IL competency of the participants is high. Findings showed that the relationship between IL competency and fake news phenomenon in SNS is significant.

The main factor that contributes towards the high level of Information Literacy (IL) competency is the introduction of IL subject to all of the Faculty of Information Management (FIM) students which equipped them with the research and information skill, by emphasizing the importance of getting the right information. Not only that, but they had also familiarized themselves with the library facilities and research skills since their day one enrolled in this faculty during the library orientation tour. Besides, the fact that the Information Science students involved in information handling more frequently compared to the students from other faculties, makes them more familiar with both traditional and online resources. This will give them an advantage in recognizing the right information from the vast amount of information available.

This finding is aligned with the prior studies. The postgraduate students of Library and Information Science (LIS) in South East Zone Nigeria Federal Universities are proved to have IL knowledge with the measures on understanding the information need, how to locate, evaluate and use information have average percentage scores of 95%, 87%, 82%, and 88% respectively (Anunobi & Udem, 2015). Similar results found in the study by Odede Israel (2018). The postgraduate students of LIS in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria are information literate which all of the IL items got more than half affirmative responses. This indicates by 97.1% of respondents agreed that they were able to use online databases to find relevant information; 91.42% respondents were positive that they can find information in numerous sources in addition to contrast and critically assess if the information is timely and appropriate; 88.2% of the respondents also affirmed that they can recognize various methods of retrieving information resources and contrast and critically assess if the information retrieved is reliable and pertinent respectively. Furthermore, the later study conducted by Derya Bakbak (2019) among the architectural students also supported that on the average majority (97%) participants' Information Literacy Self-Efficacy (ILSE) at a moderate or high level. This is motivating because today's students have to assess very divergent learning resources and incorporate the information retrieved. Hence, aided with the prior literature, it is proved that the majority of the Information Science students are tended to possessed IL competency.

The finding of the relationship between Information Literacy (IL) competency and fake news phenomenon in SNS is significant, also consistent with the expectations and prior studies. In the recent study of Jang (2019) which proved the accurate fake news identification was significantly related to IL, highlights individuals' capabilities in finding verified and reliable information, but not with the other literacies: media literacy, digital literacy, and news literacy. Similarly, studies by Elmborg (2006) and Downey (2016) believed that critical IL is a compatible method to refute fake news where IL prepares an individual to critically assess information and to discern relevant from irrelevant information; search for credible sources; utilize them to create new information in a creative and contextualized way. Allcott & Gentzkow (2017) and Helmus et al. (2018) have pointed out that people still choose to trust more on their intuition towards the news stories they consume instead of checking the story's reliability, although fact-checking has become comparably easy in the information age. Last but not least, Jackson (2019) posits that people are not any more attentive in evaluating the reliability of the information they acquire and share may threaten critical thinking, and eventually leads to the propagation of fake news. All these studies proved that we need to emphasize more on the importance of IL to avoid fake news transmission.

6.0 Conclusion

These days, the bygone saying “Don’t believe everything you read on the Internet” has to turn into “Believe everything on the Web and share it widely.” With the Internet is vanquishing our life and the wide use of Social Networking Sites (SNS), we are more vulnerable to fake news. Despite of all the approaches in terms of legislation and technology to control the proliferation of fake news, people need to be well-equipped with the survival skills in recognizing the false information from the right information. Most essentially, we must consistently prioritize on the verification and validation over virality and velocity; quality over quantity. This study contributes to the literature of Information Literacy (IL) by confirming that the theory of IL competency help in combating the fake news phenomenon with the significant relationship reflected in the findings between both variables. However, every study comes with inevitable limitations. Due to the pandemic Covid-19, a virtual small-scale study without involvement of other faculties besides UITM Puncak Perdana, leads to the findings restricted only to the institutions with the same circumstances, strategies, and teaching and learning systems. Moreover, the self-reported survey applied in this study to figure out the required IL competency may possible to incorporate socially desirable responses. With the influence of social desirability, respondents incline to not report their true behaviors, beliefs, feelings, habits, and thoughts (Adams et al., 2005). Thus, the influence of social and cultural desirability of the respondents should be taken into consideration in future research.

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